LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES MEETING HELD AT 10:00 AM ON 25 OCTOBER 2023 AT HASTINGS HOUSE AND VIA MS TEAMS

Present: Mrs Bev Smith (Chair) via teams; Mrs Dianne Bevan; Mr Frank Cuthbert; Mr Michael Imperato; Ms Ginger Wiegand via teams.

LDBCW Officers attending: Mrs Shereen Williams (Chief Executive); Mr Tom Jenkins (Head of Policy and Programmes); Roger Ashton-Winter (Senior Project Manager); Mr Dave Carr (Finance Manager); Mr Paul Elliott (Review Officer); Miss Caitlin Lowry (Team Support Officer).

Apologies:

Time Started: 10:04
Time Finished: 12:21

1. Declarations of Interest

1.1. No Declarations of Interest were made.

2. Chair's Briefing

2.1. The chair **briefed** that members of the LDBCW secretariat have been asked to give evidence for the Senedd Bill on 22 November and the Elections Bill on 30 November.

2.2. The chair **briefed** that the IRP draft report proposal for 2024/25 has been circulated.

2.3. The chair **briefed** that the WECB board meeting is being held tomorrow and **noted** that this will be picked up in the transition board update.

3. Minutes of the Commission meeting held on 20 September 2023

3.1. It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2023 as a correct record of the matters considered subject to minor amendments.

4. Issues Arising

4.1. It was **Resolved** to accept the Report noting any issues for later discussion in the meeting, and updated progress was noted on the following issues:

4.2. **(Issue 1)** The Commission did not receive any FOI requests between 13 September 2023 and 17 October 2023.

4.3. **(Issue 2)** It was **noted** that the Commission is currently undertaking Community Reviews for the Vale of Glamorgan, Caerphilly, Ceredigion, Swansea, and Pembrokeshire.

4.4. **(Issue 3)** It was **noted** that this issue will be discussed under item 5.

4.5. **(Issue 4)** It was **noted** that WG officials contacted the Commission on 23 September 2023 and that a joint meeting to outline next steps was attended by the CE, HoB and HoPP, and a further meeting attended by the HoB and the FM. It was **noted** that questions regarding ICT have been agreed and costings are due to be sent to the Commission to enable preparation of the 24/25 budget. It was **noted** that further information has been sent in relation to various measurements and timelines and that the Commission has received confirmation on the 12-month lease extension request to Hastings House with a 6 month notice period. It was **noted** that the Commission is planning towards a moving date of May 2024.

4.6. **(Issue 5)** It was **noted** that ORS will provide a presentation at the December meeting. It was **noted** that it would be of benefit to those attending to be provided with some information from ORS ahead of time regarding their findings. It was **agreed** to invite IRP members to join this meeting.

4.7. **(Issue 6)** It was **noted** that the Commission received 10 applications for the ARAC Member role and of those, 5 have been invited to meet with the Chair of the Commission and the ARAC Chair on 9 November 2023. It was **noted** that the Commission anticipates recruiting 2 independent members with a staggered start date.

5. Transition Programme (for discussion)

5.1. The CE **briefed** on the Transition Programme.

5.2. Chris Llewellyn from the WLGA joined and spoke.

5.3. It was **noted** that the main issues within the Transition Programme include governance, structure and staffing.

5.4. It was **noted** that the Commission has had the go-ahead on a future staffing structure and work can now go ahead with creating Job Descriptions.

5.5. It was **noted** that the Commission aims to have EMB staff in place by October or November 2024.

5.6. It was **noted** that the Review Team will look to expand grow within the next 6-8 months.

5.7. It was **noted** that the Job Descriptions for the Chair and Deputy Chair of the EMB have been completed.

5.8. It was **noted** that the Finance papers should henceforth be tabulated within a document.

5.9. Discussion was held regarding the grade and salary of the role of Head of Democratic Health.

5.10. It was **noted** that it would be useful to define political terms such as 'democratic health' within Commissioner Job Descriptions in order to attract Commissioners from a wide range of backgrounds.

5.11. Discussion was held regarding the transfer of Commissioners from LDBCW to DBCC.

5.12. **Action:** SPM to make amendments to Job Descriptions.

6. Future Work Programme

6.1. Consideration was given to the Future Work Programme Report dated 18 October 2023 by the CE.

6.2. FC and SPM gave an abridged outline of the Senedd Cymru Bill and the Elections and Elected Bodies Bill.

6.3. It was **noted** that the Chair of the EMB will need to be a former ERO or RO.

6.4. Consideration was given to the electoral pilots function of the Elections and Elected Bodies Bill including any additional costs which will come with this.

6.5. Consideration was given to concerns regarding possible legal advice costs linked to future EMB work.

6.6. Consideration was given to the Voter Information Database and the procurement responsibility as well as expectations of when it will go live.

6.7. Consideration was given to the clause "we must seek to minimise change" in the Senedd Reform Bill and concerns were raised regarding issues this might cause in the future.

6.8. Consideration was given to the possibility of one of the Bills failing and the possible delays to other Bills caused by this.

6.9. **Action:** SPM to circulate highlights report for the 3 Bills currently going through the Senedd.

7. Budget Report 2023-24

7.1. Consideration was given to the Budget Monitoring Report dated 25 October 2023 by the FM.

7.2. It was **noted** that some changes were made to increase budget categories with funds being transferred into several budgets to address estimated overspends. The main change was the addition of a Media and Advertising category to address the advertising costs for the new Independent ARAC Member.

7.3. The overall underspend to the end of September 2023 was **noted** and it was reported that expenditure for the remainder of the year was expected to remain within the Commission's budget for 2023-24.

8. Risk Management – Risk Register

8.1. Consideration was given to the Risk Management Report dated 25 October 2023 by the FM.

8.2. It was **noted** that there had been no change to the Risk Register since the last meeting. The Commission considered that Risk CR2 should be reworded to reflect the risks associated with the EMB as the Commission would only be hosting it but still have liability for it. Risk CR2 should also refer to the separate Future Work Programme Risk Register and include it as a mitigating action.

8.3. Consideration was given to the role of the secretariat and the structure of the new EMB. It was **noted** that the liability of the EMB should be considered and explored.

8.4. It was **noted** that the Risk Register for Future Work Programme should be shared in future meetings.

8.5. **Action:** Role of secretariat in new EMB and liability of the EMB to be discussed with WECB and Lisa James at WG. Formal questions to be sent to WG regarding role of the EMB.

8.6. **Action:** Risk CR2 to be reworded and made into a separate risk for the transition programme.

9. Reviews Progress Report

9.1. Consideration was given to the Reviews Progress Report dated 17 October 2023 by the HoPP.

9.2. It was **noted** that there are currently 5 community reviews taking place, all at different stages.

9.3. It was **noted** that the initial meeting in Pembrokeshire was well attended and that members of the Review Team have been invited to a follow-up meeting with the deputy Chief Executive next week.

9.4. Consideration was given to the Pembrokeshire Council Size Policy.

10. Ceredigion Community Review

10.1. Consideration was given to the Ceredigion Community Review – Draft of the Draft Proposals Report dated 17 October 2023 by the RO.

10.2. It was **noted** that feedback from the Welsh Language Commissioner for the Ceredigion Review states that where two communities are dissolved and a new community created, an ‘and’ should be included in the new Community name.

10.3. The Draft Proposals Report was **agreed**.

11. Calendar of Events

11.1. Consideration was given to the Calendar of Events.

11.2. Future LDBCW Commission meeting dates were agreed for the entirety of 2024.

12. AOB

12.1 It was **noted** that Lisa James from WG will be attending a meeting with the LDBCW Commissioners later.

Date of Next Meeting: 13 December 2023