

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES MEETING HELD ON
13th JANUARY 2009 AT THE COPTHORNE HOTEL, VALE OF GLAMORGAN.**

Commissioners

Mr P J Wood (Chairman)
Rev. H M Davies (Deputy Chairman)
Mr J Bader (Member)

Secretariat

Mr. E H Lewis (Secretary)
Mr. D Carr
Mr. R Handscomb
Mrs. A Prescott-Bird
Mrs. C Thomas
Miss L Jones

In Attendance

Mr R Phillips (Treasury Solicitor)

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Commission extended their congratulations to Mrs Susan Smith who had recently been awarded an OBE for her work for local government.

1. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

1.1 There were no new interests declared.

2. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

2.1 The Chairman moved that Rev. Davies should be appointed Deputy Chairman. This was seconded by Mr Bader.

3. MINUTES OF THE COMMISSION MEETING HELD ON 26th NOVEMBER 2008

3.1 These were agreed.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Community Council Election Results

4.1 The Secretary advised that he had received a very helpful reply from One Voice Wales (OVW) giving their views on the Community Council Election results. They had also invited him to make a presentation at a meeting of their Larger Local Councils Committee at Llandrindod Wells later in the month.

Blaenau Gwent Community Review

4.2 The Draft Proposals report for Blaenau Gwent had now been sent to translation and would be published after the translation had been checked.

Swansea Community Review

- 4.3 A large number of representations had been received in response to the Draft Proposals for the Swansea Community Review. A number of these had included new suggestions for boundary changes which would need to be investigated. Some of these suggestions would require a further field visit to the area. **It was agreed** that a summary and analysis of the representations would be presented to the March meeting.

Wales Audit Office Report

- 4.4 It was agreed that the progress in implementing the report recommendations should be monitored and placed on the agenda as a standing item.

5. BRIDGEND COMMUNITY REVIEW – CONSIDERATION OF REPRESENTATIONS

- 5.1 The Commission considered the representations received for the Bridgend Community Review Draft Proposals Report and considered three options that had been suggested for the boundary between the Communities of Bridgend Town and Merthyr Mawr which were:

- To modify the boundary for the Island Farm estate to follow the A48 eastwards to the Waterton Roundabout and include all of the dwellings south of the A48 within the Merthyr Mawr Community.
- To modify the boundary recommended in the Draft proposals to follow the A48 to the Ewenny Roundabout and then to follow the B4265 (Ewenny Road) until it meets the County Boundary at the River Ewenny.
- To modify the boundary recommended in the Draft proposals to continue along the A48 to the Ewenny Roundabout and then to follow the B4265 (Ewenny Road) until it meets the Railway line that bisects this area and for the community boundary to follow the railway line until it meets the County Boundary at the point where the railway crosses the River Ewenny.

- 5.2 It was noted that there was evidence to suggest that some of the residents to the east of the B4265 did not support the first option. Additionally there had been few responses from the Island Farm estate itself to the questionnaire circulated by Bridgend Town Council. The Commission noted that there was a potential planning development for the area and there was no clear timescale for this should planning consent be obtained. The development did not include additional housing. The Commission remained of the view that it was inappropriate to make any observations relating to the viability of the Merthyr Mawr Community Council or reduce the present electorate. The Commission considered that there was little difference between options two and three, however, option three which left the B4265 (Ewenny Road) to follow the railway line had the least impact on the current arrangements. **It was agreed** that the Commission were minded to adopt option three for the final report and would give further consideration at a later meeting.

6. CONWY COMMUNITY REVIEW – FINAL REPORT

- 6.1 The Commission noted the Final Report for Conwy Community review. **It was agreed** that the report be translated and published.

7. CARDIFF COMMUNITY REVIEW- FINAL REPORT

- 7.1 It was reported that the Secretariat had consulted residents of Duncan Close to ascertain their opinion on being transferred into the Community of Old St Mellons. The responses received from the residents all supported a move to Old St Mellons with only one objection. **It was agreed** that the final report would propose that Duncan Close be transferred to the Community of Old St Mellons. **It was agreed** that the Final report would be sent to the Treasury Solicitor for the normal legal scrutiny prior to being translated and published.

8. REVIEW OF THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN THE COUNTIES OF POWYS AND MERTHYR TYDFIL

- 8.1 The Commission's report and proposals for the Review of the boundary between the Counties of Powys and Merthyr Tydfil had not included any reference to proposals for consequential changes to the preserved County Boundary between Powys and Mid Glamorgan and the police boundary between Dyfed Powys and South Wales.

- 8.2 This had been brought to the Commission's attention by the sponsor division and consequently the Secretary had sought the advice of the Commission's legal advisor on what action could be taken to resolve this omission. The Treasury Solicitor outlined to the meeting the two options that were available to the Commission:

- That the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) could modify the Commission's proposals so as to include consequential changes to the County boundary; or
- That the Commission could obtain a direction from WAG to conduct a supplementary review.

- 8.3 Following a discussion with the Treasury Solicitor, **it was agreed** that in order for the Commission to discharge their duties a letter would be sent to WAG outlining the two options available requesting a response as to which option they preferred.

- 8.4 **It was also agreed** that review procedures would need to be strengthened to ensure that this oversight did not occur again and the Secretariat would draft a set of procedures for checking review report before they are published. **It was further agreed** that this would also be added to the risk register.

9. REVIEW OF ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

- 9.1 The Secretary advised that a letter from the Minister together with the Directions for the electoral review had now been received. A proposed timetable for the review programme was tabled and noted by the Commission.

- 9.2 It was noted that the Directions made no direct reference to rural sparsity and allowed the Commission to set their own timetable and tranches for conducting the review. It also required the Commission to obtain public support for any changes to the existing arrangements for single and multi member electoral divisions.
- 9.3 The Commission gave consideration to the implications of the directions and the impact of the Councillor to elector ratio of 1:1750. **It was agreed** that the Secretariat would draw up a model showing the impact on the principal authorities from the strict application of the 1:1,750 ratio together with models showing allowances for 10%, 20% and 30% variations of the 1:1750 ratio.
- 9.4 The Treasury Solicitor responded to a series of questions relating to the content of the Direction and outlined the range of actions open to the Commission during the Review process in determining the arrangements for each Principal Authority in Wales.
- 9.5 It was considered that in order to establish the outcome of rural sparsity on the review procedure it would be desirable if both Gwynedd and Powys reviews were undertaken in the same tranche and before the review of Merthyr Tydfil. **It was agreed** that the Secretary would ascertain whether this was possible and report back.
- 9.6 **It was agreed** that a digest would be produced outlining the legal implications and the interpretation of the contents of the direction. The Treasury Solicitor was prepared to contribute to this process.

10. ELECTORAL REVIEWS INFORMATION BOOKLET

- 10.1 It was reported that the current information booklet had been sent to the Plain English Campaign which had produced an amended copy conforming to the Plain English standard. The amended copy had been sent to the Commission's legal advisor who had been concerned that some of the technical and legal content which needed to remain in the booklet had been removed by the Plain English campaign.
- 10.2 Following discussions with the Treasury Solicitor during the meeting, **it was agreed** that the Commission needed an information booklet which was robust legally, but which also retained as much of the plain English amendments as possible. The Commission retained the idea of a possibility of producing a simpler Plain English document should it be required in the future.

11. AGOM 2008 – EVALUATION OF THE FEEDBACK

- 11.1 A report was presented which indicated that the 2008 AGOM was very successful and the feedback had been very positive. It was considered that it may be more beneficial in the future to alter the format to three consultation workshops to be held in October, November and December around Wales.
- 11.2 **It was agreed** that the Commission should also consider having a presence, in a form of a stand, at the Annual WLGA and One Voice Wales conferences.

12. EVALUATION OF WORKSHOP EVENTS

- 12.1 A report was presented concerning the 2008 workshops. This indicated from the comments received that they were very successful and feedback had been very positive.

13. ANALYSIS OF WORKSHOP EVENTS

- 13.1 A summary of the three workshops was tabled. Feedback from the workshops identified the need for improved communication between the Commission and its stakeholders. Also there was a consensus that boundaries should take account of Community identity and geographical and historical factors.
- 13.2 A draft newsletter format was tabled. **It was agreed** that the Commission would adopt the format which would be issued periodically as required. **It was agreed** that the first newsletter would include feedback from the three workshops and work being currently undertaken by the Commission. **It was agreed** that copies of the newsletter would be sent to the Principal Councils and the Associations of Community Councils with a request that copies be forwarded to the Community Councillors.

14. PUBLICATION SCHEME

- 14.1 It was reported that a letter had been received from WAG outlining the revised publication scheme which came into effect on the 1st January 2009. The letter was dated the 16th December 2009 and received on 2nd January 2009.
- 14.2 The revised publication scheme would require a considerable amount of work as it was much more detailed than the existing scheme. It was not considered that there were any significant risks arising from the delay in implementation beyond the 1st January 2009 deadline. The progress will be reported back in three months.
- 14.3 The Commission expressed concern about the small amount of time which had been allowed for implementing this scheme. **It was agreed** that the Secretariat would ascertain when the new scheme had been announced and whether there had been any delay in informing the Commission of the requirements. **It was agreed** that a response would be drafted to the Sponsor Division, stating that the Commission would endeavour to implement the scheme requirements, but they were not happy with the time scale for implementation.

15. DRAFT OPERATIONAL PLAN 2009/10

- 15.1 The Secretary advised the Commission that he had contacted the sponsor division requesting advice on the format of the operational plan in light of the recommendations made in the recent WAO report. No response had been received to date. **It was agreed** that a draft operational plan would be put on the agenda for the next Commission meeting.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

16.1 There was no other business.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17.1 The dates of the next meeting were set at:

11th February 2009

18th March 2009

12th May 2009