

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES MEETING HELD ON
11th FEBRUARY 2009 AT CARADOG HOUSE, CARDIFF.**

Commissioners

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

Secretariat

Mr. E H Lewis (Secretary)
Mr. S Halsall
Mr. D Carr
Mrs. L Brough

1. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

1.1 There were no new interests declared.

2. MINUTES OF THE COMMISSION MEETING HELD ON 13th JANUARY 2009

2.1 These were agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

One Voice Wales (OVW)

3.1 The Secretary advised that he had attended the OVW Larger Local Councils Committee meeting where he had given a presentation on community council elections and the forthcoming electoral review.

Merthyr Tydfil Powys Boundary Review

3.2 A letter had been sent to the Sponsor Division outlining the two options for resolving the preserved county boundary issue as agreed at the last meeting. A response had been received from the Sponsor Division requesting further details from the Secretariat in order to determine the scope of any further review. These details had been provided to the Sponsor Division and a further response was now being awaited from them in respect of this.

3.3 It was confirmed that Review procedures had now been strengthened and added to the risk register.

Workshop feedback

3.4 The Secretary advised that he had looked at the possibility of the Commission having a stand at the annual Welsh Local Government Association and OVW conferences and had established that it was likely that there would be a cost involved. The Commission considered that if they were to have presence at these conferences then it would be desirable to produce an information leaflet on the Commission in plain English and Welsh.

Commission Newsletter

- 3.5 The Commission considered the draft newsletter. **It was agreed** that Members would have 24 hours to consider the content and forward any comments they may have to the Secretary. **It was agreed** that if no comments were received the Secretariat would arrange for translation and distribution of the newsletter to both the principal and community councils. **It was agreed** that the newsletter would be emailed to the Electoral Services Manager for each principal council with instruction that electronic copies be sent to all council members. **It was agreed** that 5 hard copies of the newsletter would be sent to the community councils to be distributed amongst members. This arrangement would be reviewed to ascertain whether the correct number of copies was being sent.

Publication Scheme

- 3.6 The Secretary had written to the Sponsor Division regarding the implications of the new publication scheme. It had been determined that the impact of implementing the new scheme was not as significant as had been initially thought. It was therefore possible for the Commission to largely follow the Welsh Assembly's lead. **It was agreed** that a progress report paper would be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

4. BRIDGEND COMMUNITY REVIEW – FINAL REPORT

- 4.1 The Secretary advised Members of a request from Bridgend County Borough Council to submit a late representation. **It was agreed** that the Commission would deny the Council's request on the grounds that it had been submitted some considerable time after the deadline for representations and no compelling reasons had been given as to why representations had not been made earlier.
- 4.2 The Commission considered that the Executive Summary in the report was not a true Executive Summary. **It was agreed** that it would be amended to "Summary of Proposals" for all future reports.
- 4.3 The Final Proposals report for Bridgend Community review **was agreed** subject to legal advice and minor amendments.

5. CAERPHILLY COMMUNITY REVIEW – CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT REPRESENTATIONS

Penmaen / Crumlin

- 5.1 The Commission considered the representations from Caerphilly County Borough Council supporting the suggested realignment of the boundary between the Communities of Crumlin and Penmaen proposing that the development at the Park Bevan site be transferred from Crumlin into Penmaen. They accepted the Council's reasoning that the development would extend further westward into Penmaen thereby creating an anomaly in the existing boundary.

- 5.2 The Commission also noted the representation received from Mr. R G Evans suggesting that the whole of Croes-pen-maen including the Parc Bevin development site be transferred from the Community of Crumlin into the Community of Penmaen. It was reported that a site visit of the area of Croes-pen-maen had determined that the suggested boundary was not clearly defined in several areas, although Mr Evans suggested in his representation that it should be possible to find alternatives for those areas. The Commission considered that the Caerphilly County Borough Council boundary was to be preferred as there was no clearly defined boundary on the ground for the alternative proposal of transferring the whole of Croes-pen-maen into the Community of Penmaen.
- 5.3 **It was agreed** that the Commission would adopt Caerphilly County Borough Council's suggested boundary for their Final proposals.

Penmaen / Blackwood / Pontllanfraith

- 5.4 The Commission considered the representations from Caerphilly County Borough Council and Blackwood Town Council who both objected to the Commission's proposal to transfer Woodfieldside from the Community of Penmaen into the Community of Blackwood. The Commission noted the points made in both Councils' representations that the River Sirhowy had been the long standing historical boundary between the two Communities and that the road links between Woodfieldside and Blackwood were not as strong as those with Penmaen. Also noted was the additional workload which such a change to the boundary would place on Blackwood Community Councillors.
- 5.5 The Commission considered the representation from Mr R G Evans who said that Woodfieldside was more logically part of Pontllanfraith but that the existing boundary should not be changed if the Community of Penmaen did not gain areas and electors as a result of other proposals involving the Communities Crumlin and Argoed.
- 5.6 **It was agreed** that the Commission would not retain their draft proposal to realign the boundary between the Communities of Penmaen, Blackwood and Pontllanfraith and that the existing boundary would be retained between Penmaen and Blackwood as the river Sirhowy for the Final Proposals.

Maesycwmmmer / Pontllanfraith

- 5.7 The Commission noted the representations from Caerphilly County Borough Council and Councillor Woodyatt objecting to the proposed realignment of the boundary between Pontllanfraith and Maesycwmmmer to transfer 5 properties to the south of the A472 from Maesycwmmmer into Pontllanfraith. **It was agreed** that the Commission would write to the residents of the 5 properties to seek their views.

Caerphilly Town

- 5.8 The Commission noted the representation for Caerphilly Town Council supporting all the proposed changes to the boundaries of their Community. **It was agreed** that the Commission would adopt their draft proposals in respect of the Community of Caerphilly Town as their final proposals.

Llanbradach and Pwll-y-Pant / Penyrheol Trecenydd and Energlyn

- 5.9 The Commission noted the representation from Llanbradach and Pwll-y-Pant Community Council objecting to the proposal to transfer the part of Energlyn estate currently in their Community into the Community of Penyrheol Trecenydd and Energlyn. The Council were also disappointed that the Commission had not supported their suggested realignment of the boundary which they considered would resolve the issue of the existing anomaly with minimum impact on their Community. The Commission considered that the draft proposals proposal was preferable to the suggested boundaries put forward by Llanbradach and Pwll-y-Pant as it was clearer and united the built-up area. **It was agreed** that the changes proposed in the Draft proposal report would be adopted for the Final Proposals report.

Maesycwmmer / Llanbradach and Pwll-y-Pant

- 5.10 The Commission noted the representation made by Cllr Woodyatt objecting to the proposed realignment of the boundary between Maesycwmmer and Llanbradach and Pwll-y-Pant because the historical boundary had always been the Rhymney River and that there was no logical reason for change. The Commission considered that as no electors were affected by the proposed change of boundary that the existing boundary of the Rhymney River should be retained.

Penmaen / Argoed

- 5.11 The Commission noted the representation made by Cllr Evans that Manmoel be transferred from the Community of Argoed into the Community of Penmaen. They considered that the area involved was too large and would leave the Community of Argoed too small to be viable. **It was agreed** that the existing boundary between the Communities of Penmaen and Argoed would be retained.

Gelligaer

- 5.12 The Commission noted the representation made by Gelligaer Community Council that the boundary between the Cefn Hengoed and Tir-y-berth Wards be realigned to transfer the housing development at Glan Rhymney Farm into Tir-y-berth ward. The Commission were unable to recommend any change to this boundary, however as they were making no proposals to the Community boundary of Gelligaer.

6. ELECTORAL REVIEWS TIMETABLE.

- 6.1 It was noted that the proposed timetable was subject to the completion of the Community Council reviews. The Secretary reported that he had recently made a presentation to the Electoral Review Group outlining the possible problems with the Electoral Reviews timetable.

- 6.2 It was reported that the initial stage of the first tranche of reviews would start at the end of February and beginning of March and that the initial meetings with the Chief Executives had been arranged to coincide with these dates.
- 6.3 The Commission expressed concern at the possible delays that would have a knock on effect for the reviews timetable. These included:
- Community Reviews currently being carried out by Principal Authorities where the final proposals report had not yet been submitted to the Commission;
 - the possibility of completed Electoral Reviews being returned to the Commission by the Minister for further review; and
 - the timeliness of WAG in reaching a decision on the Commissions proposals and issuing the Orders.
- 6.4 **It was agreed** that a letter would be drafted to the Minister drawing his attention to the fact that the timetable was restricted and only workable if:
- Community Reviews currently being carried out by Principal Authorities were submitted to the Commission soon;
 - Electoral Reviews final proposals are not returned to the Commission for further review; and
 - Decision and Orders concerning the Commission final proposal report were timely.
- 6.5 The Commissioners considered the implications of over running the timetable for completing the reviews stated in the Directions. It may be possible to seek a further direction for the Minister to extend the current deadline. **It was agreed** that legal advice would be sought on this matter.
- 6.6 The Commission considered that the aim of the review should be to look at achieving parity in the number of electors to councillors as a first priority and then to consider trying to get as close as possible to the ratio of 1:1750. **It was agreed** that an update on the review timetable situation would be placed on the agenda until the Electoral Reviews have been completed.

7. DRAFT OPERATIONAL PLAN

- 7.1 The Secretary advised that the Operational Plan was different to previous years as it took into account the Wales Audit Office's recommendation that the Commission's Operational Plan should focus on future requirements rather than work undertaken in previous years. It was noted that the planning cycle could not be finalised until the Commission received the remit letter from the Sponsor Division. The Commission should receive the remit letter in January; therefore it would be helpful if an outline of the remit letter could be received by the Commission in the autumn prior to its issue. **It was agreed** that the Secretary would contact the Sponsor Division to discuss the matter.
- 7.2 It was noted that some changes and amendments were required to the Operational plan. The Operational Plan **was agreed** subject to members suggested amendments.

8. WALES AUDIT REPORT IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

- 8.1 Members noted the progress that had been made in the Wales Audit Office report on the Commission.

9. COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE: CALL FOR EVIDENCE ON LOCAL LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC TRUST

- 9.1 The Commission noted the report and considered that they had no evidence to submit which would be relevant to the remit of the report.

10. STRATEGIC PLAN

- 10.1 The Commission considered that, as there was no in-house capacity to draw up a Strategy Plan, it would be necessary to engage a consultant. **It was agreed** that a suitable consultant would be found to draft a Strategic Plan at a cost to the Commission of not more than £2,500.

11. FINANCE REPORT 2008/09.

- 11.1 The Commission noted the current situation and the estimated under-spend. It was reported that the costs for IT transformation were still unknown and therefore an estimate had been used. These costs were likely to be substantial and it would be necessary to ascertain what they were before the end of the financial year. It was considered that it may be possible for the Commission to make payment to the Welsh Assembly on account and this would be investigated. **It was agreed** that the issue of transformation costs would be raised with the Sponsor Division.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Public Sector Sustainable Procurement Assessment Framework

- 12.1 The Commission was advised on the progress that had been made on the Public Sector Sustainable Procurement Assessment Framework. The Commission noted that in some areas the Commission had progressed, but in other areas the levels had been adjusted down due to misunderstanding the process in accessing our levels. The Commission also noted that the action plan would be sent to Value Wales by the end of February 2009.

Governance review of AGSBs

- 12.2 The Commission noted the paper tabled on this review.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13.1 The dates of the next meeting were set at:

18th March 2009

12th May 2009

17th June 2009

15th July 2009

17th September 2009