

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES MEETING HELD ON
12th MAY 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. A Prescott-Bird
Mrs. L Brough
Mr. C Sanghera
Mr. R Handscomb

Members welcomed Mr Sanghera who had recently joined the Commission as Review Officer on secondment from the Welsh Assembly.

1. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

1.1 There were no new interests declared.

2. MINUTES OF THE COMMISSION MEETING HELD ON 18th MARCH 2009

2.1 These were agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

Management Statement and Financial Memorandum (MSFM)

3.1 It was reported that the MSFM had now been finished and was close to being signed by the Commission and the Welsh Assembly.

Bridgend Community Review

3.2 It was reported that the Final Report and Proposals for the Bridgend Community review had been published.

Conferences

3.3 The Secretary reported that he had made enquiries with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) about reduced costs for the Commission to have a stand at their forthcoming annual conference. This had been agreed with their Chief Executive but formal confirmation had not been received yet. Progress had been made in getting promotional items for future conferences and events were noted.

Video Conferencing (VC)

3.4 The Secretary reported that he would be talking with the National Museum Wales about the possibility of sharing their video conferencing facilities. It was noted that

the Arts Council for Wales had recently re-located their offices to Cardiff Bay which would be too far for the Commission to set up shared video conferencing facilities with them.

4. CAERPHILLY COMMUNITY REVIEW – FINAL PROPOSALS REPORT

4.1 It was reported that the draft Final Proposals report had been sent to the Commission's legal advisor for comment and a copy of the comments received was tabled. The comments also raised a query about the numbering of the appendices to the report. **It was agreed** that these comments would be incorporated into the report and that the appendices would be checked.

4.2 It was reported that a reply had recently been received in response to the letter the Commission had sent to the five residents of Meadowgate in the Community of Maesycwmmmer seeking their views on the proposal to move their properties into the Community of Pontllanfraith. The reply from one of the residents had expressed support for the Commission's proposal. **It was agreed** that the reply should be included in the Final Proposals report which could then be translated and published.

5. SWANSEA COMMUNITY REVIEW – FURTHER DRAFT PROPOSALS REPORT

5.1 It was reported that one of the representations received putting forward a proposal not previously discussed had been misinterpreted by the Secretariat and on further inspection it had been necessary to look again at the suggestion made in the representation. This involved the transfer of an area containing two properties from the Community of Pennard into the Community of Bishopston. It had been earlier thought that access to these properties was through Pennard, however, it was later discovered that access was in fact only through Bishopston. A site visit to the area had confirmed this to be the case and therefore a proposal that the area be transferred from the Community of Pennard into the Community of Bishopston had been included in the Further Draft Proposals report. Members noted this extra proposal in the report. **It was agreed** that the Further Draft Proposals report should be translated and published.

6. DEVELOPING MODELS FOR CATEGORISING REPRESENTATION FOR RURAL AREAS

6.1 Members considered that whilst the modelling system used by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland (LGBCS) was useful there were significant differences between Scotland and Wales. Local government electoral arrangements for Scotland favoured multi-member divisions with a minimum of 3 councillors and were not required to adhere to building blocks such as community or community ward boundaries.

6.2 The Secretariat had looked at whether the system used by the LGBCS could be applied to Wales and it had been found that fewer categories were required as Wales did not have cities as large as those in Scotland or rural areas as sparsely populated. Moreover, the lowest band for Wales would need to have the 1:1,750

ratio given in the Directions. A model had been drawn up for Wales with modified criteria for the bands but it was considered that it would be necessary to justify the ratios that had been chosen for each band to interested parties.

6.3 The Commission considered that there were four possible choices which could be applied to the electoral reviews:

1. Conduct the reviews on an area by area basis;
2. Use the model drawn up for Wales and justify the ratios used for each band;
3. Apply the 1:1,750 ratio given in the Directions rigidly;
4. Use the 1:1,750 ratio but apply it as being variable to achieve parity of representation.

6.4 It was considered that option 4 was to be preferred as it would not be desirable to introduce a new system for conducting the reviews after the process had started. **It was agreed** that the Commission would use the ratio of 1:1,750 as a starting point and then look at the effect on this of the other rules and requirements such as equality in electoral divisions, complying with the underlying community building blocks and the issue of capping. Schemes for each local authority should then be drawn up showing the effect on the 1:1,750 ratio of applying the other rules and requirements and explaining any variance on the 1:1,750 ratio.

6.5 A letter from the Welsh Assembly Local Government Minister was tabled and noted by Members. **It was agreed** that comments on the content of the letter should be sought from the Commission's legal advisor. **It was agreed** that the letter should be included in future copies of the electoral reviews guidance booklet and presentations to the local authorities.

7. REVIEW OF PART OF THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN THE PRESERVED COUNTIES OF POWYS AND MID GLAMORGAN

7.1 It was reported that since the report had been drafted a late representation had been received from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council supporting the Commission's proposal. Also comments received from the Commission's legal advisor had been incorporated into the report. **It was agreed** that this report should now be translated and published.

8. STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PLAN

8.1 It was reported that the Strategic Plan had been drafted by the consultant employed by the Commission. The consultant had also suggested that the Strategic Plan should only be published on the Commission's website and that interested parties should be emailed a link to the document on the website. **It was agreed** that the Commission would only publish the strategic Plan on their website and email a link to interested parties. The Commission considered several changes to the Strategic Plan and **it was agreed** that the amended version would be emailed to the Deputy Chairman and Member for their comments before being sent to the Chairman.

- 8.2 The latest version of the Operational Plan was noted and approved. It was considered that the Health and Safety report that formed part of the Plan needed to be brought up to date. Once updated it can be sent to the Sponsor Division to talk about at the next liaison meeting.

9. ELECTORAL REVIEWS

- 9.1 The Commission noted the progress on the first tranche of electoral reviews. Of the second tranche of reviews Rhondda Cynon Taff and Anglesey had commenced. Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil had been put back to await Orders for the Cardiff Community review and Powys and Merthyr boundary review to be made by the Welsh Assembly. However, it was not considered that this minor slippage would have any impact on the overall timetable for the reviews. An Order had since been made by the Assembly for Merthyr and therefore this electoral review could now commence. **It was agreed** that the Merthyr Tydfil review would start as soon as possible pending a date being agreed for the presentation to Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.
- 9.2 In respect of the community reviews it was expected that the Caerphilly Final report would be published in June, the Swansea Further Draft report would be published by the end of May, the draft Blaenau Gwent Final report would be presented to the June meeting. The summary of representations for the Vale of Glamorgan would be presented to the June meeting, however, it was expected that there would be some difficulty in determining the level of public support for or against the division of the Community of St. Brides Major and that it would not be possible for the Commission to reach a firm decision based on the representations received. The Commission considered that it may be necessary to arrange a referendum on the issue. **It was agreed** that the summary of representations would be emailed to Members as soon as it was available in order for them to decide what action would be necessary if any.
- 9.3 It was expected that reports for community reviews conducted by Torfaen, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion would be received by June.

10. WALES AUDIT OFFICE REPORT – IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

- 10.1 Members noted the position on the implementation of the Wales Audit Office Report recommendations.

11. ANNUAL MEETING AND WORKSHOP

- 11.1 The Commission considered the suggested locations for the 2009 Annual Workshops. **It was agreed** that the preferred locations were Wrexham, Merthyr and Swansea as these had not previously been used for annual meetings. The choice of venues for Wrexham and Swansea were approved depending on availability and suggestions were made for a possible venue in Merthyr.

11.2 **It was agreed** that it would be desirable to have an external facilitator for the workshops. **It was agreed** that the workshops should be called 'Annual Report and Workshop'. Suggestions for topics for the workshops were:

- Electoral Reviews progress report and findings so far;
- Feedback from previous workshops;
- Pre-consultation engagement; and
- Strategic Plan – possible improvements.

11.3 **It was agreed** that attendance at the workshops should be limited to a maximum of 80 people and that if this was exceeded then dates would be set for extra workshops as necessary. **It was agreed** that Commission meetings for October, November and December would be set to coincide with the workshop dates.

12. REPORT OF 2009 INTER-COMMISSION MEETING

12.1 The Deputy Chair and Deputy Secretary reported that they had gone to the inter-commission meeting in London. They had found it interesting with some good presentations made. Both considered that it could have been better organised with more thought put into the agenda. The minutes of the inter-commission meeting were tabled to Members and noted.

13. INFORMATION LEAFLET FOR CONFERENCES

13.1 Members noted the Commission information leaflet which had been produced by the Secretariat. They considered that the Commission's logo should be removed from the front and that content needed some editing. **It was agreed** that the Member would edit the content of the leaflet. The Crystal Clear Mark would be obtained before publication if possible.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Committee on Standards in Public Life: Review of MP's Expenses

14.1 Members noted this document. **It was agreed** that it would not be necessary for the Commission to send evidence.

Have Your Say About Welsh Language Services

14.2 Members noted this document.

Electoral Arrangements: The Rhondda Cynon Taff (Llanharan, Llanharry, Llantrisant and Pontyclun Communities) Order 2008

14.3 It was reported that The Rhondda Cynon Taff (Llanharan, Llanharry, Llantrisant and Pontyclun Communities) Order 2008 had been made in respect of a community review completed by the Commission in February 2008. The changes to the community boundaries affected the boundary between the parliamentary constituencies of Pontypridd and Ogmore. **It was agreed** that the Commission

should tell the Boundary Commission for Wales of these changes in order for them to address the resulting anomalies in the parliamentary constituencies.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

15.1 The dates of the next meeting were set at:

Wednesday 17th June 2009

Wednesday 15th July 2009

Tuesday 11th August 2009

Thursday 17th September 2009

Wednesday 7th / 8th October 2009

Tuesday 24th November 2009

Wednesday 16th December 2009