



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22nd JULY 2019

**REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS BY
THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL SERVICES AND THE
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- (a) To consider the [Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales' \(the 'Commission'\) Draft Proposals](#) concerning its review of the Electoral Arrangements of the Council, following commencement of the consultation period relating to those proposals which runs from Wednesday 26th June – Tuesday 17th September 2019; and
- (b) To request the Committee provide its comments, observations and any recommendations in respect of the Draft Proposals prior to consideration by full Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Consider the Commission's Draft Proposals in respect of the Council's future Electoral Arrangements, as outlined in their Draft Proposals Report;
- 2.2 Provide any comments, observations and recommendations in respect of the Draft Proposals prior to consideration of those proposals by full Council at its meeting on 31st July 2019; and
- 2.3 Note the timetable, outlined in paragraphs 3.15 – 3.17 of the report, in respect of the process for conducting the remainder of the review by the Commission.

3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 Section 29 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 places a duty upon the Commission to review the electoral arrangements for each principal area at least once every ten years.
- 3.2 On 23rd June 2016 the then Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government published a Written Statement asking the Commission to recommence its 10 year programme of electoral reviews with an expectation that a review of all 22 electoral areas be completed in time for the new arrangements to be put into place for the 2022 local government elections.
- 3.3 The review of electoral arrangements for a principal area includes consideration of:-
- The number of Members for that principal area
 - The number, type and boundaries of Electoral Wards
 - The number of Members for any Electoral Ward in the principal area.
 - The name of any Electoral Ward.
- 3.4 The principles of the review are a consideration of:-
- Electoral parity
 - The number of Councillors remaining at 75
 - To discourage multi member wards beyond a maximum of 3
 - Natural boundaries to be used as far as possible
 - Community Ward boundaries should not be revised unless absolutely necessary
 - Each Ward should have one name which should be bilingual
- 3.5 At the Council Meeting held on Wednesday 27th June 2018, consideration was given to the urgent report in respect of the Review of Electoral Arrangements by the Commission.
- 3.6 At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Thursday 12th July 2018 Members agreed key terms of reference for the Working Group review, acknowledging that community boundaries should be used as the building blocks for the review. Members also resolved to instruct Officers to develop proposals and appropriate feedback mechanisms in accordance with the principles set out in the report to Council on the 27th June 2018. Members agreed the following key terms of reference for the review and for Officers in respect of developing proposals, namely:
- 3.6.1 To acknowledge the use of community boundary wards as the essential building blocks for the review;
 - 3.6.2 To keep change to a minimum;
 - 3.6.3 To acknowledge that some Electoral Wards will need to be amended in some formal way within the parameters outlined in the Commission guidance;
 - 3.6.4 To instruct Officers to develop options based on these principles; and
 - 3.6.5 To instruct Officers to develop appropriate feedback mechanisms.

- 3.7 The initial phase of the electoral review itself commenced on 1st August 2018 and ran until 23rd October 2018.
- 3.8 A special meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee was held on Monday 3rd September 2018 to consider proposals developed by Officers in respect of the review of the Council's electoral arrangements. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to recommend that Council agree those proposals be subject to a period of stakeholder engagement.
- 3.9 At the Council meeting held on 19th September 2018 Members considered the proposals the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had recommended be subject to a period of stakeholder engagement and agreed that those proposals be subject to a period of stakeholder engagement which ran from 21st September until 12th October 2018.
- 3.10 At the Council meeting held on 24th October 2018 the feedback from the stakeholder engagement initiated by Council was considered and the Council resolved to submit proposals to the Commission as part of its initial phase of consultation relating to the review. Where unanimous Member agreement was not achieved in respect of the proposals, areas of majority agreement were highlighted to the Commission to inform their future deliberations in addition to alternative options for some Electoral Wards.
- 3.11 The Commission has now developed its Draft Proposals in relation to its review and these are contained in its Draft Proposals Report.
- 3.12 The Draft Proposals Report can be accessed via the following links:
- <https://ldbc.gov.wales/reviews/06-19/rhondda-cynon-taff-draft-proposals>
- Cymraeg: <https://cffdl.llyw.cymru/adolygiadau/06-19/cynigion-drafft-rhondda-cynon-taf>
- Hardcopies of the Draft Proposals Report will be available for Members at the meeting or can be collected in advance from Democratic Services.
- 3.13 The Commission has now commenced a 12 week period of statutory consultation on the Draft Proposals which runs from Wednesday 26th June – Tuesday 17th September 2019 and invites representations which are based on evidence and facts relevant to the proposal in consideration.
- 3.14 In developing their Draft Proposals the Commission have considered local ties and those who wish to retain current boundaries. They have considered the representations received in the first stage of the review and have balanced these issues against other factors they must consider. Most importantly is the legal requirement placed on them to ensure electoral parity and democratic fairness for all electors.

- 3.15 The Commission will consider all representations received following the end of the consultation period and it is anticipated they will publish and submit to Welsh Government a Final Proposals Report in Late 2019/Early 2020.
- 3.16 Once Final Proposals are published there is a further opportunity for representations to be made to Welsh Government in respect of the same.
- 3.17 After a period of six weeks after receipt of the Commission's Final Proposals Welsh Government may make an Order in respect of the future electoral arrangements, with or without modification.

4. SUMMARY OF DRAFT PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The draft scheme represents the Commission's preliminary views on the electoral arrangements for the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Commission proposes a change to the arrangement of electoral wards that they consider will achieve a significant improvement in the level of electoral parity across the County Borough.
- 4.2 The Commission proposes a council of 75 members, unchanged from the current membership of 75. This results in a proposed county average of 2,302 electors per member.
- 4.3 The Commission proposes 45 electoral wards, a reduction from 52 existing wards.
- 4.4 The largest under-representation (in terms of electoral variance) within the proposals is to be in Taffs Well and Treorchy (both 23% above the proposed county average). At present the greatest under-representation is in Tonyrefail West (108% above the proposed county average).
- 4.5 The largest over-representation (in terms of electoral variance) within the proposals is to be in Ynysybwl (25% below the proposed county average). At present the greatest over-representation is in Rhigos (39% below the proposed county average).
- 4.6 The Commission is proposing 26 multi-member wards; consisting of 22 two-member electoral wards and four three-member electoral wards.
- 4.7 The Commission has proposed no changes to 18 electoral wards.
- 4.8 The Commission proposes to have one electoral ward within the county borough which combines a part of a warded community, along with its neighbouring community.
- 4.9 The Draft Proposals Report (pages 3 & 4) contains two thematic maps illustrating the current and proposed arrangements and their variances from the proposed county average of 2,302 electors per member. Those areas in green are within +/-10% of the county average; yellow and hatched yellow between +/-10% and +/-25% of the county average; orange and hatched

orange between +/-25% and +/-50% of the county average; and, those in red and hatched red are over +/-50% of the county average.

4.10 The Commission consider that these maps demonstrate the proposed arrangements provide for a significant improvement in electoral parity across the county.

4.11 The proposed electoral wards have been given working names which are intended to represent an area. The Commission recognises that there may be names that are more appropriate and it would welcome alternative suggestions. The Commission requests that these suggested names should not merely consist of listed communities and villages but, instead, should reflect the character of the areas involved as well as being effective in either English or Welsh.

5. NEXT STEPS

5.1 Members are now asked to give consideration to the Draft Proposals for each Electoral Ward – it should be highlighted that the Commission have requested they receive representations in support of any draft proposals in addition to representations which may be made that are not in favour of them. This is obviously important when it comes to consideration of the consultation feedback as a whole.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Electoral Review is being conducted by the Commission under the provisions of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 The Commission is conducting a 12 week period of statutory consultation which runs from 26th June – 17th September 2019.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 A full equality and diversity assessment is not required at this time. This position will be re-evaluated on an ongoing basis as related actions are delivered.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Members should note that there will be some financial implications from 2022 because of the draft proposal to move the Tyla Garw Community (which currently forms part of Llanharry Community Council) from the Llanharry Electoral Ward into the Pont-y-clun Electoral Ward and consequently Pont-y-clun Community Council. This may mean a variance in council tax because of varying Community Council precept rates.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 Members are now asked to consider the Commission's Draft Proposals concerning its review of the Electoral Arrangements of the Council as detailed in their report and provide comments, observations and any recommendations in respect of the Draft Proposals prior to consideration by full Council.