



XX October 2021

The Boundary Commission for Wales,
Hastings House,
Fitzalan Court,
Cardiff,
CF24 0BL.

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies

I am writing to present the formal response of Elected Members to your initial consultation in respect of the 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies in Wales. This response was adopted by Council Members at a recent full Council meeting, following in-depth consideration of your proposals, on a cross party basis, through the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The matter was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 12th October 2021, with an open invitation to all Elected Members. At this meeting Members acknowledged the complexities of the task you have been required to undertake, in line with the prescribed ratio for constituency electorate numbers, as defined by the UK Government. Members acknowledge that there will be limited scope for you as a Commission to move away from your initial proposals purely in response to the comments and concerns of elected members in Rhondda Cynon Taf, when the impact upon the four parliamentary constituencies which currently represent this County Borough at a UK level, are a small part of the current and proposed parliamentary map of Wales, of which you are required to review in-line with legislative requirements. On that basis Members identified the need to restrict their comments to broad principles and particular areas of concern, in anticipation that such comments would be able to be reflected as part of your considerations when formulating your next stage of proposals.

Where possible Members were keen to avoid any confusion that these new proposals would cause for the public when relating their local representation at a Senedd and Council level. On this point Members expressed concern that neighbouring constituencies in their current form, such as Cardiff North and Cardiff West appear to be retained within your proposals, albeit with the addition of individual wards from Rhondda Cynon Taf, to 'balance' the level of

representation within these two respective constituencies. The Members who represented the electoral wards of Pontyclun and Taffswell & Nantgarw, expressed concerns on the divorce of these two southern electoral divisions, to the proposed new Cardiff West and Cardiff North constituencies respectively, when there was limited local connection between those communities and very clearly no direct connection in terms of local authority administration boundaries. Furthermore, both communities are physically separated both in terms of transport and community connections by the M4 motorway. Members felt this proposal would limit the ability for future members of Parliament to represent these amended constituencies effectively and specifically the communities of Pontyclun and Taffs Well & Nantgarw. On this point all Members expressed a view that there could conceivably be a public perception that the four constituencies of Rhondda Cynon Taf, have been 'carved up', as an 'easier option' than instead of proposing fundamental redesign of the capital city's Parliamentary boundaries.

On a similar point of effective future representation, members expressed similar concerns in respect of proposals relating to the communities of Llanharan and Brynna becoming part of a future 'Rhondda' parliamentary constituency. Again, concern was expressed on the basis that there is no connection between such communities either historically or in terms of how residents live their daily lives, and more concerningly it is impossible to travel between the Rhondda Valleys and the communities which run along the m4 corridor at the south of the County Borough, which proposed to form part of the new Rhondda parliamentary constituency, in effect meaning that the areas listed would be physically divorced from the main urban part of the new Rhondda constituency as part of these proposals. Members acknowledged that if there is a requirement for these communities representation arrangements to be changed, as part of your proposals, that there was much greater affinity within these communities towards the new Bridgend and Vale of Glamorgan parliamentary constituencies or as part of your newly proposed Pontypridd Constituency. Members commended the retention for the Rhondda name within any future constituency arrangements as a result of its historical significance in the history of modern Wales and wider County Borough.

Members queried why your proposals do not address the anomaly of Evanstown being located in the Ogmore constituency, even though the community directly connects with Gilfach Goch, which is to form part of the new Rhondda constituency.

Members were unanimous in their opinion that splitting the Cynon Valley constituencies is more an 'exercise of convenience' and referred to the Commissions' comments that a 'constituency formed of these areas does not follow the geography of the valleys from north to south'. Members acknowledged that many Aberdare residents would have a greater connection with Merthyr Tydfil than Pontypridd for example but pointed out that this would similarly be the case for residents of Aberaman. Members pointed out that Aberaman North has a CF44 postcode, Mountain Ash has a CF45 postcode, and so forming part of the constituency of Pontypridd is not a natural alignment or constructive proposal for these reasons.

Importantly Members cited the importance of future proposals taking consideration of the future electoral arrangements for Rhondda Cynon Taf recently introduced by the Welsh Government, which come into effect from May 2022.

In addition to our formal reply, I am aware that individual members will make representations on behalf of their electoral wards and likewise the political parties represented on the Council.

Yours Sincerely,

County Borough Councillor Steve Powderhill

Presiding Officer on behalf of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council