



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 12 October 2021 at 5.00 pm.

### **County Borough Councillors - Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-**

Councillor M Adams (Chair)

Councillor J Bonetto	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor G Caple	Councillor A Cox
Councillor M Griffiths	Councillor G Hughes
Councillor P Jarman	Councillor D Owen-Jones
Councillor W Jones	Councillor S Rees
Councillor E Stephens	

### **Officers in attendance:-**

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services

### **County Borough Councillors in attendance:-**

County Borough Councillor S Evans

#### **11 Welcome & Introductions**

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee welcomed Members and non-committee members to this Committee's first hybrid meeting, allowing Members greater flexibility of attending the meeting, either through physical attendance at the Council Chamber or accessing the meeting through the zoom platform.

With regards to the agenda items, the Chair advised that the Service Director Democratic Services and Director of Legal Services were in attendance to respond to any queries raised.

#### **12 Apologies**

An apology for absence was received from County Borough Councillor W Lewis, J James and from Mr J Fish, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

#### **13 Declaration of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, County Borough Councillor G Hughes declared the following personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 2 - **2003 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN WALES -LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES**

"I work for a Member of Parliament for the Rhondda"

**N.B** A declaration of interest, which was both a personal and prejudicial interest, was made later in the meeting by County Borough Councillor J Bonetto to which Minute No. 15 refers.

#### **14 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies in Wales -Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales**

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications introduced his report and outlined the purpose of the meeting, to propose to Council for adoption the formal response of the local authority following consultation of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the proposed new parliamentary constituency arrangements.

The Director of Legal Services advised Committee that this proposed approach represented the initial phase with two more separate consultations before final proposals are presented with the final changes due to take effect at the next general election. The Director provided some key information such as the number of constituencies in Wales which are reducing from 40 to 32 and under new Westminster rules each constituency proposed by the Boundary Commission for Wales must contain between 69,724 and 77,062 registered voters. Members were encouraged to provide their general views at this initial stage for the Commission to consider.

Members acknowledged the complexities of the task undertaken by the Boundary Commission and understood that there would be little room for manoeuvre in respect of the initial proposals regarding the County Borough. With this in mind, Members as previously advised by the Director of Legal Services, restricted their comments to broader principles which would be considered by the Boundary Commission.

Members raised concern that these new proposals may cause confusion for the residents of the County Borough distinguishing between local representation at a Senedd and Council level. Members also expressed concern that neighbouring constituencies such as Cardiff North and Cardiff West appeared to be retained within the proposals, albeit with the addition of individual wards from Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Members put forward their points in respect of the electoral wards of Pontyclun and Taffs Well & Nantgarw, expressed concerns on the proposed new Cardiff West and Cardiff North constituencies respectively, feeling that there is limited local connection between them. Members spoke generally of the 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.

Members relayed similar concerns regarding the communities of Llanharan and Brynna becoming part of a future 'Rhondda' parliamentary constituency, which they felt were detached culturally and historically and requested that if any opportunity was available for these to join with the new Bridgend and Vale of Glamorgan parliamentary constituencies or as part of the newly proposed Pontypridd Constituency. Members were keen for the Rhondda name to be retained within any future constituency arrangements because of its historical significance in the history of modern Wales and wider County Borough.

Members queried why Evanstown, will form part of the new Rhondda constituency despite being located in the Ogmore constituency and connecting with Gilfach Goch.

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 and they wished for this point to also be made.

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 conclusion, Members **RESOLVED** that the comments and feedback form part of the Council's consideration at its meeting on the 20th October 2021 for adoption as the formal response of the local authority to consult upon the proposed new parliamentary constituency arrangements.

## 15 **A Review of the Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme 2021-22**

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communications presented his report which provided Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to review and where required, update its forward work programme for the 2021/22 Municipal Year following consideration of the Cabinet forward plan.

Where appropriate, Members were informed of reports to other Scrutiny Committees such as the 21st Century School Modernisation Programme - Band B Update which would be considered by the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee.

The Service Director advised of a change to the dates of the Overview & Scrutiny for Members to agree subject to any comments as follows:

Crime & Disorder Committee – 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021 with an additional presentation from South Wales Police in respect of anti-corruption

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021 to receive the Section 19 Statutory Flood Reports subject to publication

Overview & Scrutiny Working group (re-scheduled) – 16<sup>th</sup> November 2021

In response to a query as to why a delegated decision had not been considered by Cabinet as an item of business, the Service Director commented that Hawthorn Swimming Pool had been a process of transferring ownership back to the council at the end of a 5-year Community Asset Transfer agreement.

**(Note:** At this juncture County Borough Councillor J Bonetto declared a prejudicial interest and left the meeting stating that "I am Governor at Hawthorn High School and have participated in earlier discussions in respect of the matter"

Following review of the Overview & Scrutiny work programme, it was **RESOLVED** to agree the Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme for the remainder of the 2021/22 Municipal Year subject to the inclusion of the amended dates as directed by the Service Director Democratic Services & Communications.

**16 Chair's Review and Close**

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee summarised the key points from the meeting to include the revised dates for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee which had been agreed by Members and confirmed that the comments and feedback from the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission for Wales would be reported to the Council meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked Officers and Members for their attendance and contributions.

**This meeting closed at 5.45 pm**

**CLLR M. ADAMS  
CHAIR.**