

**LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES MEETING  
HELD AT 9.30AM ON 2 JUNE 2021 IN HASTINGS HOUSE AND VIA TEAMS**

*This document is available in Welsh*

**Present:** Mrs Debra Evans-Williams (Chair); Mr Ceri Stradling; Mr David Powell; Mrs Julie May and Mr Theodore Joloza.

**LDBCW Officers attending:** Mrs Shereen Williams (Chief Executive); Mr Tom Jenkins (Head of Policy and Programmes); Mr Dave Carr (Finance Manager); Mr Rhydian Fitter (Communications and Engagement Manager); Mrs Catherine Thomas (Business Support Officer); Miss Carys Vaughan (Team Support Officer).

**Time Started: 10:25**

**Time Finished: 12:49**

**Apologies:** No apologies were made.

**1. Declarations of Interest**

1.1. No Declarations of Interest were made.

**2. Chair's Briefing**

2.1. The Chair briefed the Commission regarding her recent meeting with Tracey Burke from Welsh Government (WG):

- The Chair raised the Commission's concerns regarding the delays in the progress of Orders and suggested that WG buy in additional legal expertise. Also, the Commission could assist with maps if needed.
- Tracey Burke highlighted that due to Covid work on the Orders had been delayed but noted the Commission's comments and thanked the Chair for bringing the delay to her attention. She would speak to the WG team about the delay.

2.2. The CE briefed the Commission regarding her recent meeting with Lisa James from the Commission's Sponsor Division in WG:

- A new Minister, Rebecca Evans, has been appointed as Minister for Finance and Local Government following the Senedd Elections in May. The Minister has received a briefing on the electoral reviews and the decision-making role she has as part of her role.
- The CE raised the matter of legislation relating to the Electoral Reviews and when Orders will be published by the WG. WG

confirmed that the legislation will be in place by the next Senedd election.

- All reviews listed in WG Order priority groups 1 and 2 will be with the Minister by 11 June 2021.
- The Minister met with the Local Authorities last week and will write to the Commission, MS's and Councils once a decision has been made on a review.
- The Monmouthshire draft Order is ready, and the Minister has been briefed on the process.
- The Commission and WG has received further correspondence in relation to the Ynysddu (Caerphilly) proposals. However, this had been received outside the consultation period and could not be considered.
- **Action:** The CE to draft a letter to the Chief Executives of the Local Authorities thanking them for their participation in the electoral review and informing them that the Commission has finished its work on time and the review is now with the WG. The WLGA and One Voice Wales are to be copied in. The letter is also to be sent to the First Minister and the Minister for Finance and Local Government.

### **3. Minutes of the Commission meeting held on 13 April 2021**

- 3.1. It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2021 as a correct record of the matters considered, subject to some minor amendments.

### **4. Issues Arising**

- 4.1. Consideration was given to the report dated 25 May 2021 by the CE.
- 4.2. It was **noted** that progress on the Issues Arising will be discussed under the agenda items in the meeting.

### **5. Reviews Progress Report**

- 5.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 18 May 2021 by the HPP.
- 5.2. It was **noted** that the CE and Dave Powell will meet with Monmouthshire's Chief Executive on Friday and the Monmouthshire Final Report will be published on Tuesday 8 June.
- 5.3. **Action:** the HPP is to look into why the Vale of Glamorgan is amber on the Electoral Reviews Risk Register.

## 6. Budget Report 2020- 21

- 6.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated May 2021 by the FM for the year end expenditure to 31 March 2021.
- 6.2. The Commission **noted** the final changes to the 2020- 21 budget categories. It was **noted** that the Commission's expenditure for 2020-21 was within budget in respect of both cash and resources, leaving only a modest underspend of £7,523 against the Welsh Government Grant in Aid allocation, which will be retained by the WG.
- 6.3. The Commission noted the variances against the original budget estimates and final expenditure together with the reasons for the variances given by the finance Manager.

## 7. Budget 2021- 22

- 7.1. Consideration was given to the report dated May 2021 by the FM and the budget for 2021- 22 was **noted**.
- 7.2. It was **noted** that the Commission has a total of £1,430,770 to meet the LDBCW and BCW expenditure expected for 2021-22. This includes £598,000 from WG Grant-in-Aid funding for 2021-22, £19,770 which is carried over from the Commissions 2020-21 budget and a BCW budget for 2021- 22 of £813,000.
- 7.3. The Commission considered that there should be a separate budget category for staff issues such as wellbeing and health & safety.
- 7.4. **Action:** the FM is to add a new budget heading for Staff Support.

## 8. Budget Report 2021- 22

- 8.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated May 2021 by the FM and the current budget position for 2021- 22 was **noted**.
- 8.2. It was **noted** that there has been a slight overspend in respect of BCW Members' fees due to underestimating costs claimed for attending MP and Political Party Briefings. Also, there has been a software overspend due to acquiring mapping software, though this category is expected to break even in the coming months.

- 8.3. The Commission considered that having separate budget managers may assist in producing more accurate budget profiles. It was **agreed** that suitable staff members would be allocated budgets categories to manage and profile on a trial basis.
- 8.4. **Action:** the FM is to identify staff members to be allocated budgets relevant to their positions.
- 8.5. It was reported that the Commission would need to give consideration to media and advertising requirements for both the Parliamentary review and Local Government Community Reviews.
- 8.6. **Action:** the CEM is to consider options for advertising the Community Reviews and bring Communications proposals to future meetings.
- 8.7. **Action:** the FM is to look into where there is room in the budget for the advertising.

## 9. Risk Management - Risk Register

- 9.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 6 May 2021 by the FM.
- 9.2. It was **noted** that all changes agreed at the previous meeting had been implemented.
- 9.3. It was agreed that risk CR3 should include the risk of review orders not being signed off by Welsh Government.
- 9.4. It was agreed that a new mitigating action be added to risk CR3 regarding the two different letters that the Commission will send to the Minister and First Minister, and the Local Authority Chief Executives.
- 9.5. It was **agreed** that the Control Measures on CR5 should be updated to reflect that Julie May has accepted an extension to her appointment as Commissioner until December 2021.
- 9.6. It was **agreed** that CR2 will be updated for the next meeting and then removed from the Risk Register in July. This is due to the Commission completing all reviews by 2021 and therefore the risk going forward now rests with risks CR1 and CR3.

9.7. **Action** – the FM is to update the Risk Register with the agreed amendments.

## **10. Annual Accounts 2020-21- Impact of Accounting Standards Not Yet Effective**

10.1. Consideration was given to the report dated May 2021 by the FM and its contents were **noted**.

10.2. The Commission considered that early adoption of standard IFRS16 would not provide any benefit to the annual accounts.

10.3. It was agreed that the Finance Manager would check the materiality level of the leases to be covered by IFRS 16.

10.4. The Commission **noted** and **approved** the proposed note for inclusion in the 2020-21 Notes to the Annual Accounts.

## **11. Audit Recommendations Update**

11.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 7 May 2021 by the FM and the progress made on the implementation of the outstanding audit recommendations was **noted**.

## **12. Board Effectiveness Evaluation Responses**

12.1. Consideration was given to the report dated May 2021 by the FM.

12.2. The Commission **noted** the outcome of the Board Evaluation Exercise and discussed questions where not all board members strongly agreed or where the response was split.

12.3. In relation to Question 2, it was **agreed** to add a new agenda item to Commission meetings every six months, for the board to analyse their performance and effectiveness against their objectives and to review the board effectiveness action plan.

12.4. In relation to Question 12, the Commission noted that there was no real mechanism by which they could assess their performance relative to other similar bodies but there were instances where this was done on an informal ad-hoc basis.

- 12.5. In relation to Question 29, it was **agreed** to include a Service Level Agreement within the review programme between the Commission and WG. This should also be added to the Away Day agenda.
- 12.6. **Action** – the FM is to update the Action Plan with the agreed changes.
- 12.7. **Action:** the CE is to add a Service Level Agreement to the review programme and to the Away Day agenda.

### 13. Welsh Language Annual Report

- 13.1. Consideration was given to the report dated 17 May 2021 by the CE.
- 13.2. The report was **agreed** for submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner subject to some minor amendments:
- Page 4 Para 13 - change manger to manager.
  - Page 5 - Para 4 - line 2 - 'change skills of post' to 'requirements of post'.
  - Page 5 - Para 7 - add 'the Commission review and make the Complaints Policy available'.
  - Page 5 - Record Keeping Standards - there is some duplication of information.

### 14. Updated Community Review Guidance

- 14.1. Consideration was given to the report dated 18 May 2021 by the HPP.
- 14.2. The report was **agreed** for submission to the Welsh Government (WG), subject to some minor amendments:
- Introduction - include that the aim of the Commission is to be transparent about the process.
  - Para 1.7 - change 'propose' to 'recommend'.
  - Para 2.3 - remove 'document' from the sentence.
  - Foreword and 2.5 - should include more detail on the duty of councils i.e. where the duty comes from.
  - Paras 3.2 and 3.3 – expand and email to Commissioners.
  - Para 3.3 - should explicitly state that the Commission will not consult on changes.
  - Appendix 1 - create a separate box for 'Initial Consultation'.
  - Appendix 1 - 'Publish Terms of Reference' should have a separate box.

- 14.3. It was **noted** that when publishing the Community Review Guidance, the Commission should also include comms on what the Community Review entails to help people understand the work around it.
- 14.4. **Action:** HPP to expand on 3.2 and 3.3 and send to Commissioners for approval before submission to WG.
- 14.5. **Action:** HPP to make the above changes to the Community Review Guidance.
- 14.6. **Action:** CEM to create a comms plan for Community Review Guidance.

## 15. Commissioners Advert and Information Pack

- 15.1. Consideration was given to the report dated 25 May 2021 by the CE.
- 15.2. The Commission considered the draft guidance and **agreed** to submit to the Welsh Government (WG) subject to some minor amendments:
- Page 2 - Review Programme - Bullet Point 1- split the bullet point into two to show that the Commissioner's role includes consultation and engagement with all stakeholders.
  - Page 5 – Remuneration - include the fee for a full day and half day in the Commissioner advert so there is consistency with the Chair advert.
  - Application process - shorten the first sentence.
  - Highlight where changes have been made when submitting to the WG.
- 15.3. **Action:** CE to make the above changes to the Commissioners Advert and Information Pack.

## 16. Current Business Continuity Arrangements (Verbal Update) & 2<sup>nd</sup> COVID Survey Report

- 16.1. Consideration was given to the results of the 2<sup>nd</sup> COVID Survey Report and the Commission's response.
- 16.2. It was **noted** that the overall results of the 2<sup>nd</sup> COVID Survey Report show that staff have a high level of satisfaction with the Commission's response.
- 16.3. Consideration was given to the verbal update by the CE.

- 16.4. It was **noted** that the office is still operating on a rota system, according to public health guidelines. The office is to work on this basis until there is an update in guidance from the WG. The Commission will continue to engage with staff to support their wellbeing.
- 16.5. An archiving project is taking place of maps and files in preparation for furniture to be removed from the office in July. This will allow more space in the office for a full distribution area.

## **17. Calendar of Events**

- 17.1. The Commission **noted** the Calendar.
- 17.2. It was **noted** that the Away Day on 7 July should be added to the Calendar.
- 17.3. **Action:** the CE is to add the Away Day on 7 July 2021 to the Calendar of Events.

## **18. Any Other Relevant Business**

- 18.1. Theodore Joloza reported that his last meeting with the Commission will be the next meeting on 29 June. He will also attend the Away Day scheduled for 7 July.
- 18.2. The Commission thanked Hannah Toor for her work and service to the Commission and wished her well in her new post.

## **19. Date of Next Meeting: 29 June 2021**