

**LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES MEETING
HELD 9.30AM ON 23 FEBRUARY 2021 VIA TEAMS**

This document is available in Welsh

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

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

Time Started: 09:30

Time Finished: 11:21

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 Lisa James from the Commission's Sponsor Division in Welsh Government (WG):

- There had been further correspondence between WG and Cardiff Council and scenarios would be put before the Minister for Local Government and Housing (the Minister) at a meeting on 25 February. WG would look to arrange a meeting between the legal teams, as suggested by the Commission.
- The Monmouthshire Community Order is still being prepared. Additional staff have been brought in by WG to complete the outstanding work.
- WG welcomed the offer of help by the CE in relation to the 2021/22 Remit Letter.
- The Commission has submitted a budget request to WG for £598,000 for the upcoming financial year.
- It had been suggested by WG that the Commission discuss with One Voice Wales (OVW) and the Electoral Commission (EC) its ideas to develop resources as part of its communications work for 2021/22.

- 2.2. A letter had been sent to former Deputy CEO, Matt Redmond, thanking him for his work and service to the Commission as well as wishing him well in his new post.
- 2.3. **Action:** CE and CEM to arrange to meet with OVW and EC.

3. Minutes of the Commission meeting held on 26 January 2021

- 3.1. It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting as a correct record of the matters considered.

4. Issues Arising

- 4.1. Consideration was given to the report dated 15 February 2021 on Issues Arising by the CE.
- 4.2. It was **Resolved** to accept the Report as a whole and updated progress was noted on the following issues:
 - **(Issue 1) Change Programme**
Three online workshops for staff have been arranged in March. As previously noted, the Away Days will take place following the completion of the Monmouthshire Review. Insights Discovery will now move to the next financial year due to the potential budget constraints that may arise if the Commission is required to undertake additional work in relation to the reviews. The Staff Survey will be carried out in March, with the results back in April, and questions regarding Covid-19 and the Commission's response will be included.
 - **(Issue 2) Framework Agreement**
The Commission is awaiting comments on the draft from WG.
 - **(Issue 3) Electoral Reviews – Cardiff, Caerphilly and Flintshire**
The Minister has thanked the Commission for the information regarding Cardiff which she is considering along with the other reviews. The electoral reviews that was submitted earlier in the programme was discussed and it was **agreed** that the CE will contact WG to discuss the option of WG progressing the earlier reviews to the decision-making stage.
 - **(Issue 4) FOI requests**
The Commission received one FOI request from 01 December 2020 - 10 February 2021 in relation to IT Strategy and Budgets.

- 4.3. **Action:** The CE to contact WG in relation to progressing the earlier electoral reviews.

5. Reviews Progress Report

- 5.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 16 February 2021 by the HPP.

- 5.2. The following points were **noted**:

- The Vale of Glamorgan Final Report was published online on 05 February with hard copies of reports following in the post.
- The Monmouthshire consultation closes on 10 March and eight representations have been received so far. Options will be put to the 30 March meeting and the draft Final report will go to the 13 April meeting with publication likely in June.
- The Council Size Aim Analysis Table has been updated since the last meeting.
- The Post Review Surveys have started beginning with Newport, Neath Port Talbot, Anglesey, Blaenau Gwent, Carmarthenshire and Rhondda Cynon Taf.

- 5.3. Regarding the Reviews Risk Register, following a discussion in relation to the Commission's approach to risk, it was **agreed** that, as an independent public body, the Commission will make its own reasonable assumptions about risks.

6. Budget Monitoring

- 6.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 16 February 2021 by the FM.

- 6.2. It was **noted** that, at the last Liaison Meeting, Welsh Government had requested that the Commission give consideration to surrendering any estimated surplus funds. Following this, Members had agreed that the Commission would surrender £20,000 of estimated surplus Grant-in-Aid back to Welsh Government. It was noted that the surrender of funds would leave the Commission with an estimated year-end underspend of £5,000 - £9,000.

- 6.3. Members noted the proposed changes to the budget categories made as a result of the surrender of funds. However, it was also noted that the Commission may have to request the surrendered funds back from Welsh Government if they ask the Commission to undertake additional further

review work during March 2021. The position would be clearer following a meeting between Welsh Government officials and the Minister on 25 February.

- 6.4. It was **agreed** to approve the virements between budget categories and that the surrender of £20,000 funds to Welsh Government should be made with the proviso that the surrendered funds would be made available to the Commission should it be required to undertake additional work.

7. Risk Management – Risk Register

- 7.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 11 February 2021 by the FM.
- 7.2. It was **noted** that the change to CR2 had been actioned since the last meeting.
- 7.3. There was a discussion about the possibility of additional review work, the resources needed and the risks involved. It was **agreed** that the CE should contact WG urgently following the meeting with the Minister on 25 February.
- 7.4. **Action:** The CE is to contact WG on 26 February to find out if the Commission will be asked to undertake additional review work.

8. Board Effectiveness Review

- 8.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 16 February 2021 by the FM.
- 8.2. The following points were **agreed**:
 - The Board Annual Effectiveness Evaluation Questionnaire will be sent out to board members early March at the same time as the Staff Survey.
 - The five suggested questions from the Board Evaluation questionnaire should be included in the Staff Survey.
 - An additional question should be added to 'The Boardroom' section to reflect the Board's response to Covid-19.
 - The CE will add a sentence to the Board questions section in the Staff Survey stating that staff do not have to answer questions if they are unable to as not all staff have regular contact with the Board.

- 8.3. **Action:** The FM is to add an additional question to 'The Boardroom' section of the questionnaire relating to Business Continuity and how the Board reacted to exceptional circumstances.
- 8.4. **Action:** The CE is to add an additional sentence to the Staff Survey stating that staff do not have to answer questions if they are unable to.

9. LDBCW Terms of Reference and Annual Work Plan

- 9.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 23 February 2021 by the FM.
- 9.2. The Terms of Reference were **agreed** subject to the following amendments:
- A sentence is to be added to 3.1 to reflect additional work requested by the Minister.
 - A new 3.2 is to be added to reflect the impact of expanding the electoral franchise i.e. 'Work to support statutory responsibilities.
 - It should be added to paragraph 6.2 that the Commission has the facility to work remotely.
 - A new bullet point 'review of the Business Continuity Plan' is to be added to 6.4.
 - The Operational Plan dates in paragraph 6.6 are to be changed from February/March to April/May.
 - Declaration of Interest forms are to be completed by Board Members.
- 9.3. The Annual Work Plan was **noted** subject to the following amendments:
- The CEM will take over the Calendar of Events from the HPP.
 - The ARAC Chair's Report is to be moved to a later month due to a timing issue.
 - 'Climate change' and 'Diversity and Inclusion' should be added once the Staff Survey results are in.
- 9.4. **Action:** The CE will look at the legislation to find an addition to the Terms of Reference 3.1 that reflects additional work required by the Minister.
- 9.5. **Action:** The FM will update the Terms of Reference and the Work Plan with the agreed amendments.
- 9.6. **Action:** The FM will add 'Climate Change' and 'Diversity and Inclusion' to the Terms of Reference once the Staff Survey results are in.

10. Current Business Continuity Arrangements (Verbal Update)

- 10.1. Consideration was given to the verbal report by the CE.
- 10.2. It was **noted** that the CE intended to reopen the office on 1 March for staff to work on a rota system but this would be optional and staff could continue to work from home if they preferred. Two new Team Support Officers will start work on 1 March and board members can attend the 30 March meeting at the office if they wish to do so in line with public health guidance.
- 10.3. Lone working was discussed and it was **agreed** that staff should be reminded of the Lone Worker policy requirement to let the CE know when they leave the office.
- 10.4. **Action:** The CE is to remind staff to let the CE know when they leave the office if they are lone working.

11. Calendar of Events

- 11.1. The Commission **noted** the Calendar.

12. Any Other Relevant Business

- 12.1. It was **agreed** to make an addition to the January minutes regarding the meeting with the Electoral Commission.
- 12.2. The new CEM was invited to update the meeting on the Communications work he has been involved in since starting work at the Commission in January.
- 12.3. The CEM is to check whether there is intellectual property on the Commission's logo.

13. Date of Next Meeting: 30 March 2021