

**LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES MEETING
HELD AT 9.30AM ON TUESDAY 26 JANUARY 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: 09:37

Time Finished: 10:30

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 provided an update from the recent meeting with Lisa James from the Commission's Sponsor Division in Welsh Government (WG). It was reported that legal work was still constrained by COVID 19 and that forthcoming elections could be delayed by the lockdown. WG have also recently received correspondence that they were treating as an FOI in relation to the Cardiff Electoral Review.

3. Minutes of the Commission meeting held on 15 December 2020

3.1. It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting 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 19 January 2021 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**

The CE gave an update on staff training and the new 'Insights Discovery' programme. The Away Days planned for February will be postponed until later in the year due to the current restrictions.

- **(Issue 2) Framework Agreement**

The December liaison meeting had been cancelled by the Sponsor division and a new meeting will take place in February.

- **(Issue 3) Electoral Reviews – Cardiff, Caerphilly and Flintshire**

Additional briefing notes have been provided to WG in relation to the proposals for Cardiff, Caerphilly and Flintshire where WG had received direct representations following the publication of the Final Recommendations. In addition, the Commission has also written to the Minister for Housing and Local Government in relation to the Cardiff Electoral Review.

- **(Issue 4) FOI requests**

No new FOI requests had been received since 1 December 2020.

- **(Issue 5) Staffing Update**

The Chair welcomed Mr Rhydian Fitter, the Commission's new Communications and Engagement Manager to his first Commission Meeting. The CE reported that a Review Officer that was on secondment to the Commission and an agency BSO had reached the end of their contracts on 31 December 2020. The Deputy Chief Executive has also commenced his employment with Cabinet Office and officially left the Commission on the 10 January 2021. The Commission has recently recruited two Team Support Officers who will be starting on the 1 March 2020.

It was **agreed** that the Chair would send a formal letter to the former Deputy CE thanking him for his service and contribution to the Commission.

4.3. **Action:** CE to email details of the Deputy CE's employment to the Chair.

4.4. **Action:** CE to extend 'Insights Discovery' training to Commissioners.

5. **Reviews Progress Report**

5.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 12 January 2021 by the HPP.

5.2. It was **noted** that there were only two electoral reviews left to complete. The Draft stage of the Monmouthshire review had started with a deadline

of 10 March for the consultation and four representations had been received so far. The Vale of Glamorgan Final report was being printed and would be published electronically on 4 February, with hard copies distributed after that.

- 5.3. The Cardiff Electoral Review, and the objections to it, was discussed.
- 5.4. The Council Size Aim Analysis Table was discussed.
- 5.5. **Action:** HPP to update the Council Size Aim Analysis Table for the next meeting.
- 5.6. The Reviews Risk Register was discussed and whether the rating for completed Electoral Reviews needed to be reconsidered.
- 5.7. **Action:** HPP to explore options relating to the risk rating for the completed Electoral Reviews for the Risk Register.

6. Budget Report

- 6.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 11 January 2021 by the FM.
- 6.2. It was **noted** that the underspend at the end of December was £11,500 and it had been expected that the estimated year-end expenditure would be approximately the same. However, recent savings of £6,000 on the review portal and the postponement of the staff Away Day meant that the year-end expenditure could be considerably less leaving a larger underspend than previously estimated. The FM reported that there was an issue with Microsoft database user charges, which could increase to £1,000 per member of staff, but this had been budgeted for so there was no risk of an overspend.
- 6.3. The issue of ongoing legal costs was discussed and the FM provided assurance that the Commission would be able to meet these additional costs within the current budget allocation.

7. Risk Management – Risk Register

- 7.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 11 January 2021 by the FM.
- 7.2. It was **noted** that the actions from the last meeting had been incorporated into the Register.

- 7.3. It was **agreed** that some mitigation should be added to CR2 as the Commission could be asked by Welsh Government to do some additional work on some of the electoral reviews.

8. Internal Audit – Operational Effectiveness Matters

- 8.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 19 January 2021 by the FM.
- 8.2. The Commission **noted** the six Operational Effectiveness Matters (OEMs) suggested by the Auditor.
- 8.3. **Action:** FM to provide an update on the implementation of the six OEMs in March.

9. Current Business Continuity Arrangements (Verbal Update)

- 9.1. Consideration was given to the verbal update by the CE.
- 9.2. It was **noted** that staff continued to operate by working from home, with only essential visits to the office being made and all was going well. The current arrangements would remain in place until the WG lifted restrictions.

10. Calendar of Events

- 10.1. The Commission **noted** the contents of the Calendar.
- 10.2. It was **noted** that an online meeting with the Electoral Commission, for board members and staff, would take place following today's meeting.
- 10.3. **Action:** CE to change the LDBCW meeting of 15 April to 13 April.

11. Any Other Relevant Business

- 11.1. The matter of the Commissioners' evaluations feeding into the annual Staff Survey was discussed.
- 11.2. **Action:** FM to provide a report at the next meeting on this matter.
- 11.3. Following the closure of this meeting, all Commissioners and Secretariat attended the Electoral Commission Masterclass.

12. Date of Next Meeting: 23 February 2021