

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES



Comisiwn Ffiniau
Llywodraeth Leol
i Gymru



Local Government
Boundary Commission
for Wales

**REVIEW OF ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS
DRAFT PROPOSALS**

COUNTY BOROUGH OF MERTHYR TYDFIL

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES

REVIEW OF ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE COUNTY BOROUGH OF MERTHYR TYDFIL

DRAFT PROPOSALS

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**INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE**

FOREWORD

Those who have received this report containing our Draft Proposals will already be aware of this Review of Electoral Arrangements for all local authority areas in Wales.

An important principle for our work is to aim to achieve a better democratic balance within each council area so that each vote cast in an election is, so far as reasonably practicable, of the same weight as all others in the council area. The achievement of this aim, along with other measures, would be conducive to effective and convenient local government. At the beginning of this review process we have found some considerable differences between the numbers of voters to councillors not only between council areas in Wales, but also within council areas themselves.

The Commission is constrained by a number of things in the way we undertake our work:

- The basic “building blocks” for electoral divisions are the community areas into which Wales is divided. These community areas were set up over 30 years ago and despite the work already done by some local authorities and also ourselves, there are still many places where the community areas do not reflect the present pattern of community life.
- The accuracy of the information on the numbers of residents in each council area in 5 years time challenges all – the future is difficult to predict. The Commission has therefore adopted a cautious approach in using these projections.
- The legal rules by which we operate are also quite strict and again place limitations on what we can do for each electoral division.

This report provides our initial recommendations on what has to be done within this council area. We wish to provide a better democratic balance together with electoral arrangements which contribute to there being effective and convenient local government wherever you live in Wales.

Paul Wood
Chairman

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 We, the members of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales, have completed the first stage of the review of electoral arrangements for the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil and present our Draft Proposals for the future electoral arrangements. A glossary of terms used in this report can be found at Appendix 1. The County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil currently has an electorate of 41,310. At present it is divided into 11 divisions (none of which are single-member) returning 33 councillors. The overall ratio of members to electors for the County Borough is currently 1:1,252. The present electoral arrangements are set out in detail in Appendix 2.

2. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 2.1 Having taken into account the small number of communities, number of electors and the topography that all limit the available options for changes to the electoral arrangements for the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil, we propose a minor change to the arrangement in the Gurnos electoral division that will achieve an improvement in the level of electoral parity across the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil and results in a reduction in the council size from 33 to 32 elected members.

3. SCOPE AND OBJECT OF THE REVIEW

- 3.1 Section 57 of the Local Government Act 1972 (the 1972 Act) lays upon the Commission the duty, at intervals of not less than 10 and not more than fifteen years, to review the electoral arrangements for every principal area in Wales for the purpose of considering whether or not to make proposals to the Welsh Assembly Government for a change in those electoral arrangements.
- 3.2 The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government of the Welsh Assembly Government has directed the Commission to submit a report in respect of the review of electoral arrangements for the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil by 30 June 2011.

Electoral Arrangements

- 3.3 The “electoral arrangements” of a principal area are defined in section 78 of the 1972 Act as:
- i) the total number of councillors to be elected to the council;
 - ii) the number and boundaries of electoral divisions;
 - iii) the number of councillors to be elected for each electoral division; and
 - iv) the name of any electoral division.

Rules to Be Observed Considering Electoral Arrangements

3.4 We are required by section 78 to comply, so far as is reasonably practicable, with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act (as amended by the 1994 Act). These require the Commission to provide for there to be a single member for each electoral division. However, the Minister may direct the Commission to consider the desirability of providing for multi-member electoral divisions for the whole or part of a principal area.

3.5 The rules also require that:

Having regard to any change in the number or distribution of local government electors of the principal area likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following consideration of the electoral arrangements:

- i) subject to paragraph (ii), the number of local government electors shall be, as nearly as may be, the same in every electoral division in the principal area;
- ii) where there are one or more multi-member divisions, the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of councillors to be elected shall be, as nearly as may be, the same in every electoral division in the principal area (including any that are not multi-member divisions);
- iii) every ward of a community having a community council (whether separate or common) shall lie wholly within a single electoral division; and
- iv) every community which is not divided into community wards shall lie wholly within a single electoral division.

In considering the electoral arrangements, we must have regard to (a) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and (b) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular boundary.

Minister's Directions

3.6 The Minister has directed that the Commission shall consider the desirability of multi member electoral divisions in each county and county borough council in Wales.

3.7 The Minister has also given the following directions to the Commission for their guidance in conducting the review:

- (a) it is considered that a minimum number of 30 councillors is required for the proper management of the affairs of a county or county borough council;
- (b) it is considered that, in order to minimise the risk of a county council or a county borough council becoming unwieldy and difficult to manage, a maximum number of 75 councillors is ordinarily required for the proper management of the affairs of a county or a county borough council;

- (c) it is considered that the aim should be to achieve electoral divisions with a councillor to electorate ratio no lower than 1:1,750;
- (d) it is considered that decisions to alter the existing pattern of multi and single member electoral divisions should only be taken where such proposals for alteration are broadly supported by the electorate in so far as their views can be obtained in fulfilment of the consultation requirement contained in Section 60 of the Act; and
- (e) It is considered that the Commission shall, when conducting reviews under Part 4 of the Act, comply with paragraph 1A of Schedule 11 to the Act that is, the Rules.

The full text of the Directions is at Appendix 5. The Directions were further explained in a letter from the Minister on 12 May 2009. A copy of this letter follows the Directions at Appendix 4.

Local Government Changes

- 3.8 Since the last review of electoral arrangements there has been one change to local government boundaries in Merthyr Tydfil: the Merthyr Tydfil and Powys (Areas) Order 2009 made a minor change to the Vaynor electoral division.

Procedure

- 3.9 Section 60 of the 1972 Act lays down procedural guidelines which are to be followed in carrying out a review. In compliance with Section 60 of the 1972 Act we wrote on 16 September 2009 to Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, all the community councils in the area, the Member of Parliament for the local constituency, the Assembly Members for the area and other interested parties to inform them of our intention to conduct the review and to request their preliminary views. We invited the County Borough Council to submit a suggested scheme or schemes for new electoral arrangements. We also publicised our intention to conduct the review in local newspapers circulating in the County Borough and asked Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council to display a number of public notices in their area. We also made available copies of our electoral reviews guidance booklet. In addition we made a presentation to both City and Community councillors explaining the review process.

4. REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED PRIOR TO DRAFT PROPOSALS

- 4.1 We received representations from Mr Michael German AM, Councillor Adam Brown (Gurnos electoral division), Councillor Brendan Toomey (Park electoral division) and Merthyr Tydfil Liberal Democrats. We considered all of these representations carefully before we formulated our proposals. A summary of these representations can be found at Appendix 5.

5. ASSESSMENT

Request for a Community Boundary Change

- 5.1 Before considering the electoral arrangements for the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil, we would like to respond to the representations that asked us to make changes to electoral division boundaries that are community or community ward boundaries. For such changes to take place it would first be necessary to undertake a review of community or community ward boundaries. It is evident from these requests that some uncertainty exists about the appropriate machinery for effecting such reviews. We wish to set out the statutory position.
- 5.2 Section 55(2) of the 1972 Act (as amended by the 1994 Act) requires each principal council in Wales to keep the whole of their area under review for the purpose of considering whether to make recommendations to the Commission for the constitution of new communities, the abolition of communities or the alteration of communities in their area. The Commission then consider the principal council's proposals and report to the Welsh Assembly Government which may, if it thinks fit, by order give effect to any of the proposals.
- 5.3 Under Section 57(4) of the 1972 Act (as amended by the 1994 Act), the principal councils also have a duty to keep under review the electoral arrangements (which include the community ward boundaries) for the communities within their areas, for the purpose of considering whether to make substantive changes. The principal councils must also consider requests for changes made by a community council or by not less than thirty local government electors of a community and, if they think fit, make an order giving effect to those changes.
- 5.4 Changes to the boundaries of communities and community wards are therefore a matter for the principal council to consider in the first instance and may not be considered by us as part of this review. We must use the community and community wards as they exist at the start of this review as the building blocks for the proposed electoral divisions.

Councillor to electorate ratio

- 5.5 The Minister's directions include the following at 3.7 (a): "It is considered that the aim should be to achieve electoral divisions with a councillor to electorate ratio no lower than 1:1,750." The Minister has indicated to the Commission that this means that the number of electors per councillor should not normally fall below 1,750, and this is how the Commission has interpreted and applied the Direction. We bear very much in mind that the directions are provided as guidance and should not be applied without regard to the special circumstances of the particular area: there may well be circumstances, having to do with topography or population etc of the area where it will be considered that an electoral division of fewer than 1,750 electors to be represented by each councillor is appropriate. This was explained in the letter from the Minister (Appendix 4) which stated: "This means that the ratio

remains as the aim to be worked towards and not as a goal to be achieved in each case. In doing so attention should be paid to local communities having their own identifiable representation even where the indicative figure of 1,750 electors/councillor is not always achievable". In the absence of special circumstances we will aim to propose electoral arrangements in which the level of representation does not fall below 1,750 electors per councillor. We are not constrained in the same way by this direction from proposing electoral arrangement in which the number of electors to be represented by each councillor is, in appropriate cases, higher than 1,750. Throughout this review we will keep the ratio of 1:1,750 very much in mind, and will not normally think it necessary to refer to it expressly in every case.

Council size

- 5.6 At present the size of the council at 33 members is within the numerical limits advised in the Minister's direction (Appendix 5). The current overall member to electorate ratio for the council is 1:1,252 which is 28% below the ratio of 1,750 electors per councillor (see Councillor to electorate ratio above). There are currently 11 multi-member divisions. We also noted that, in respect of the number of electors per councillor in each electoral division there is a wide variation from the current county average of 1,252 electors per councillor ranging from 37% below (Gurnos) to 27% above (Cyfarthfa).
- 5.7 We reviewed the electoral arrangements for the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil in the light of the Minister's directions for our guidance and took account of the representations which had been made to us. In our deliberations we considered the ratio of local government electors to the number of councillors to be elected, with a view to proposing changes to ensure that the number of local government electors shall be, as nearly as may be, the same in every division in the principal area. We considered the size and character of the authority and a wide range of other factors including population density, the local topography, road communications and local ties.
- 5.8 For the reasons given below we believe that in the interests of effective and convenient local government a council size of 32 would be appropriate to represent the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil. This determination of the council size results in an average of 1,291 electors being represented by each councillor.

Number of Electors

- 5.9 The numbers shown as the electorate for 2009 and the estimates for the electorate in the year 2014 are those submitted to us by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. The forecast figures supplied by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council show a forecasted rise in the electorate of 198 from 41,310 to 41,508.

Suggested Electoral Arrangements

- 5.10 We have considered the changes to the electoral arrangements suggested by Councillor Brown whereby the Dowlais, Gurnos and Town electoral divisions each see a reduction by one to three in the number of councillors representing them. We have noted that this suggested arrangement moves towards the aim to propose

electoral arrangements in which the level of representation does not fall below 1,750 electors per councillor and provides a more effective level of representation for the Gurnos electoral division. We consider however that the suggestion to decrease the number of councillors for the Dowlais and Town electoral divisions would have a detrimental effect on electoral parity as Dowlais would be 15% above the county average compared to 5% below under the current arrangements and Town would be 31% above the county average compared to 8% above under the current arrangements. We therefore do not propose these suggested changes.

- 5.11 We considered the changes to the current electoral arrangements suggested by Michael German AM and the Merthyr Tydfil Liberal Democrats and have noted that the suggestion to decrease, by one, the number of councillors representing the Gurnos electoral division and to increase, by one, the number of councillors representing the Cyfartha and Treharris electoral divisions provides an improvement, in terms of electoral parity, over the existing electoral arrangements. We have also noted however that these suggested changes has the net effect of increasing the number of councillors by one which in turn has the effect of changing the county average to 1,215 electors per councillor. This moves the ratio further away from the aim to propose electoral arrangements in which the level of representation does not fall below 1,750 electors per councillor. We have therefore considered alternative arrangements to those suggested.

Proposed Electoral Arrangements

- 5.12 In considering the electoral arrangements for Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council we noted and considered that due the small number of communities, the number of electors and the topography that the options for change were limited. Details of the current electoral arrangements can be found at Appendix 2.

Gurnos

- 5.13 The Gurnos electoral division consists of the Community of Gurnos (3,169 electors, 3,187 projected) represented by four councillors (792 electors per councillor) which is 37% below the current county average of 1,252 electors per councillor and is 55% below 1,750 electors per councillor.
- 5.14 We noted that the Gurnos is an area of high social and economic deprivation. We also noted the representations that suggest that the Gurnos electoral division be represented by three councillors, rather than the four currently. We have taken these views into account and consider it desirable to change the electoral arrangements in order to achieve improvements in electoral parity.
- 5.15 Reducing the number of councillors within the Community of Gurnos from four to three would result in a level of representation of 1,056 electors (1,062 projected) per councillor which is 18% below the proposed county average of 1,291 (1,297 projected) electors per councillor improving electoral parity while continuing to give a level of representation still substantially more generous within the county. We put this forward as a proposal.

- 5.16 We have considered the electoral arrangements of the existing electoral divisions of Bedlinog, Cyfarthfa, Dowlais, Merthyr Vale, Park, Penydarren, Plymouth, Town, Treharris and Vaynor and the ratio of local government electors to the number of councillors to be elected and we propose that the existing arrangements should continue.

Summary of Proposed Arrangements

- 5.17 The proposed electoral arrangements (as shown at Appendix 3) provide a level of parity that ranges from 18% below to 23% above the proposed county average of 1,291 electors per councillor (based on the existing electoral figures) with 4 (36%) of the electoral divisions with levels of representation more than 10% above or below the proposed county average of 1,291 electors per councillor and the remaining 7 (64%) all less than 10% above or below the proposed county average of 1,291 electors per councillor. This compares with the existing electoral arrangements where the level of parity ranges from 37% below to 27% above the current county average of 1,252 electors per councillor with 3 electoral divisions (27%) having levels of representation more than 25% above or below the current county average of 1,252 electors per councillor, 1 (9%) electoral division having a level of representation more than 10% and less than 25% above or below the current county average of 1,252 electors per councillor and the remaining 7 (64%) electoral divisions having levels of representation less than 10% above or below the current county average of 1,252 electors per councillor.
- 5.18 We have noted that our proposed arrangements do not provide an improvement quite as significant, in terms of electoral parity, as the arrangements suggested in the representations. We considered however that the suggested scheme, by increasing the number of councillors, moves a step away from the ratio of no lower than 1,750 electors per councillor. We consider that our proposals result in an arrangement that provides an improvement over the existing arrangements both in terms of electoral parity and in moving towards a ratio of 1,750 electors per councillor.

6. PROPOSALS

- 6.1. We propose a council of 32 members and 11 electoral divisions as set out in Appendix 3. For purposes of comparison the present electoral arrangements for the County Borough are given at Appendix 2. The boundaries of the proposed electoral divisions are shown by continuous yellow lines on the map placed on deposit with this Report at the Offices of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and the Office of the Commission in Cardiff.
- 6.2. This draft scheme represents our preliminary views on the electoral arrangements for the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil. We shall welcome any representations in respect of these proposals. We will consider carefully all representations made to us in respect of them before formulating our final proposals and submitting them to the Welsh Assembly Government.

7. RESPONSES TO THIS REPORT

7.1. All observations on this draft scheme should be sent to:

The Secretary
Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales
Caradog House
1-6 St Andrews Place
Cardiff CF10 3BE

not later than 13 July 2010.

MR P J WOOD (Chairman)

REV. HYWEL MEREDYDD DAVIES BD (Deputy Chairman)

Mr D J BADER (Member)

E H LEWIS BSc. DPM FRSA FCIPD (Secretary)

May 2010

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THIS REPORT

<i>Commission</i>	The Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales
<i>Council size</i>	The number of councillors elected to the council
<i>Directions</i>	Directions issued to the Commission by the Government under Section 59 of the 1972 Act
<i>Electoral arrangements</i>	How many Councillors there should be on the council of local government area, the parts into which the area should be divided for the purpose of electing councillors, the number of councillors for each electoral division, and the name of any electoral area
<i>Electoral divisions</i>	The divisions into which principal areas are divided for the purpose of electing councillors, sometimes referred to colloquially as wards
<i>Electoral review</i>	A review in which the Commission considers electoral arrangements for a local government area
<i>Electorate</i>	The number of persons entitled to vote in a local government area
<i>Electoral parity</i>	The principle that votes within a principal area should carry equal weight, measured by a comparison between an electoral division and the county average of the number of electors represented by a single councillor.
<i>Government</i>	The Welsh Assembly Government
<i>Interested person</i>	Person or body who has an interest in the outcome of an electoral review such as the principal council concerned, local MPs, AMs and political parties, community and town councils
<i>Multi member division</i>	Electoral division within a principal area represented by more than one councillor
<i>Order</i>	Order made by the Government, giving effect to the proposals of the Commission, either as submitted or with modifications
<i>Principal area</i>	The area governed by a principal council: in Wales, a County or County Borough

<i>Principal council</i>	In Wales, one of the unitary authorities: a County or County Borough council
<i>Projected electorate</i>	The five-year forecast of the number of electors provided by the Council for the area under review
<i>Respondent</i>	Body or individual person who responds to the Commission's consultation by making representations or suggesting alternative proposals
<i>Rules</i>	Rules to be observed by the Commission in considering electoral arrangements
<i>Single member division</i>	Electoral division of a principal authority represented by one councillor
<i>The 1972 Act</i>	The Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the 1994 Act
<i>The 1994 Act</i>	The Local Government (Wales) Act 1994
<i>Unitary authority</i>	A principal council - the single tier organ of local government, responsible for all or almost all local government functions within its area, which in Wales replaced the two tier system of county councils and district councils: a County Council, or a County Borough Council
<i>Wards</i>	The electoral areas of Community Councils (not all Community Council areas are warded). The term is also used to describe the principal council electoral divisions

 SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION

2009 NO. 2

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Directions to the Local Government Boundary Commission for
Wales 2009

<i>Made</i>	2009
<i>Coming into force</i>	2009

The Welsh Ministers, in exercise of the powers conferred on the Secretary of State by section 59 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972⁽¹⁾ and now vested in them (2) make the following Directions:

Title, commencement and application

1.—(1) The title of these Directions is the Directions to the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales 2009.

(2) These Directions come into force on the day after the day on which they are made.

(3) These Directions are given to the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales and apply in relation to Wales.

Interpretation

2. In these Directions—

“the Act” means the Local Government Act 1972; and

“the Commission” means the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales.

Multi Member Divisions

3.—(1) Pursuant to paragraph 1A(3) of Schedule 11 to the Act (3) the Welsh Ministers direct that the Commission shall consider the desirability of multi member electoral divisions in each county council and county borough council (4) in the principal areas in Wales mentioned in section 20, Schedule 4 of the Act.

(1) 1972 c.70.

(2) By virtue of the National Assembly for Wales (Transfer of Functions) Order 1999 (S.I. 1999/672) and paragraph 30(1) and 2 (a) of Schedule 11 to the Government of Wales Act 2006.

(3) as inserted by section 7(3) of the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994.

(4) as referred to in the Local Government Act 1972, section 20, Schedule 4, substituted by the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994, section 1 (2), Schedule 1, paragraph 2.

Review of electoral arrangements

4.—(1) Pursuant to section 59 (1) of the Act the Welsh Ministers give the following directions to the Commission for their guidance in conducting the review of electoral arrangements which they are required to carry out under section 55 of the Act—

- (a) It is considered that a minimum number of 30 councillors is required for the proper management of the affairs of a county or a county borough council;
- (b) It is considered that, in order to minimise the risk of a county council or a county borough council becoming unwieldy and difficult to manage, a maximum number of 75 councillors is ordinarily required for the proper management of the affairs of a county or a county borough council;
- (c) It is considered that the aim should be to achieve electoral divisions with a councillor to electorate ratio no lower than 1:1750;
- (d) It is considered that a decision to alter the existing pattern of multi and single member divisions in the areas referred to in paragraph 3 of these Directions should only be taken where such proposals for alteration are broadly supported by the electorate so far as their views can be obtained in fulfilment of the consultation requirement contained in section 60 of the Act;
- (e) It is considered that the Commission shall, when conducting reviews under Part 4 of the Act, comply with paragraph 1A of Schedule 11 to the Act and these Directions.

Reports of the review of electoral arrangements

5.—(1) Pursuant to section 58(1) of the Act the Welsh Ministers direct that reports prepared by the Commission in respect of the review of electoral arrangements in relation to county and county borough councils in Wales shall be submitted to the Welsh Ministers by no later than 30 June 2011.



Signed by the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government

Date 13 / 1 / 2009

Brian Gibbons AC/AM
Y Gweinidog dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol a Llywodraeth
Leol
Minister for Social Justice and Local Government



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref MB/BG/291/09

Paul Wood
Chair
Local Government Boundary
Commission for Wales
Caradog House
1-6 St Andrews Place
Cardiff
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12th May 2009

Directions on Reviews of Electoral Arrangements

I am aware that you have now commenced preliminary work on the cycle of reviews of electoral arrangements in each of the principal councils. Representations I have received from local government suggest to me that you may have interpreted my directions as being more prescriptive than those issued by the Secretary of State for Wales in 1995 prior to the last review cycle. I want to make clear that this is not the case.

The directions are issued for your guidance and are not to be viewed as instructions. In a number of respects – notably, in relation to the areas appropriate for multi-member divisions and the timetable – the last directions were more prescriptive but in relation to the central issue of the councillor to elector ratio the wording is identical. This means that the ratio remains as the aim to be worked towards and not as a goal to be achieved in each case. In doing so attention should be paid to local communities having their own identifiable representation even where the indicative figure of 1750 electors/councillor is not always achievable.

I do, of course, recognise that since 1995 we have seen the introduction of executive or alternative arrangements in principal councils, which may have implications for the number of councillors required to make a council fully functional. The 1995 directions were also introduced at a time of reorganisation, in a different political atmosphere from now.

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Finally, I should also point out the stipulation in Schedule 11 of the Local Government Act 1972, that regard should be had to the need to fix boundaries which are easily identifiable and which recognise local community ties.

I wish you well in the review process.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Gibbons', written in a cursive style.

Brian Gibbons AM

SUMMARY OF INITIAL REPRESENTATIONS

Michael German AM noted that Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council are represented by 11 electoral divisions and 33 councillors with a (2008) electorate of 43,138 recording a ratio of councillor to elector of 1:1,307. Mr German also noted the statements regarding the minimum of 30 councillors and the aim to achieve electoral divisions with a councillor to electorate ratio no lower than 1:1,750 within the Minister's directions. He considers that, in the case of Merthyr Tydfil CBC, it is clear that the Commission will not be able to fulfil these two demands. To do so would result, on the directed ratio, a council membership of 24, far below the recommended minimum of 30 "for the proper management of affairs". Mr German recognises that a barrier to achieving the directions of the Minister is that the Commission will be unable to review changes to community boundaries as the rules require the Commission to ensure that "every community which is not divided into community wards shall lie wholly within a single electoral division".

Mr German noted that there is a great disparity between different current electoral divisions and their respective councillor/elector ratios e.g. Gurnos Electoral Division presently provides a ratio of 1:882, Cyfartha 1:1,566, or in other terms Gurnos is 33 per cent below the current average ratio of 1:1,307, whilst Cyfartha is above the average by 20 per cent. Therefore the focus of the review should be to re-allocate the number of councillors to create significantly reduced variance from the current average ratio of 1:1,307. Mr German considered that in attempting to achieve this, the Commission would need to take note that the most under-represented and over-represented electoral divisions are not neighbours, so any option to 'pair' electoral divisions to overcome the large disparity in ratios will not be possible. There is no neighbouring single member or double member electoral divisions that could be merged to achieve the desired minimal variance from the County Borough's average ratio. The Commission could merge present multi-member wards to achieve its desired aims, but this would result in very large electoral divisions which would not be a desirable outcome. The following was suggested for the Commission's consideration:

Electoral Division	Current Councillors	Current Ratio	Current Variance	Proposed Councillors	New Ratio	New Variance
Bedlinog	2	1:1,287	-1.5%	2 (=)	1:1,287	-1.5%
Cyfartha	3	1:1,566	+19.81%	4 (+1)	1:1,174	-10.17%
Dowlais	4	1:1,258	-3.75%	4 (=)	1:1,258	-3.75%
Gurnos	4	1:882	-32.52%	3 (-1)	1:1,176	-10.02%
Merthyr Vale	2	1:1,452	+11.09%	2 (=)	1:1,452	+11.09%
Park	3	1:1,120	-14.31%	3 (=)	1:1,120	-14.31%
Penydarren	3	1:1,265	-3.21%	3 (=)	1:1,265	-3.21%
Plymouth	3	1:1,323	+1.22%	3 (=)	1:1,323	+1.22%
Town	4	1:1,422	+8.80%	4 (=)	1:1,422	+8.80%
Treharris	3	1:1,633	+24.94%	4 (+1)	1:1,225	-6.27%
Vaynor	2	1:1,367	+4.59%	2 (=)	1:1,367	+4.59%

This would result in a council membership of 34, an increase of 1, and would result in a significant decrease in the current variance.

Mr German considers that the Commission faces a unique set of circumstances in Merthyr Tydfil and with the highlighted constraints; the overriding consideration should be to reduce the wide disparity in ratios whilst also allowing for the proper management and

operation of the Council. As regards the naming of electoral divisions, Mr German had no suggestions to make, leaving the matter for local representations from people in the County Borough.

Councillor Adam Brown (Gurnos electoral division) wrote to suggest changes to the existing Gurnos ward boundary so that the area of Lakeside is included within the Vaynor ward. In respect of the number of councillors within the authority, he considers this needs to be reviewed for two reasons:

- The population of the Borough has fallen and yet the number of councillors hasn't.
- No ward should have more than 3 councillors as above this leads to problems with the distribution of the workload.

He suggested that the Gurnos, Town and Dowlais wards are downsized to have three Councillors each instead of four. He feels that the public will only accept cuts in front line services if they have witnessed cuts within the Council Chamber.

Councillor Brendan Toomey (Park electoral division) wrote in support of the proposal from Councillor Brown to change the boundary so as to move the Lakeside Gardens area from the Gurnos electoral division to the Vaynor electoral division.

Merthyr Tydfil Liberal Democrats noted in their representation that the Merthyr Council area is divided into 11 electoral divisions and only 12 community divisions. They considered that as this review cannot change the community boundaries, there is little scope for any boundary changes. They were of the view that the only options open to the Commission are to change the number of councillors representing each electoral division or to create larger electoral divisions by combining communities. They however cautioned against a reduction in councillors. They noted the significant variation in electoral representation that currently exists.

They did not believe that any creation of new electoral divisions from the current communities could help to improve the consistency of councillor to elector ratios for two key reasons:

1. The most over and under-represented electoral divisions do not border one another.
2. There are no single councillor electoral divisions and no adjacent pairings of two councillor electoral divisions.

Given the limited ability of the review to change the boundaries they suggest three changes which will bring the electoral divisions closer to the average. Gurnos ward should have its representation reduced from four councillors to three. Cyfarthfa and Treharris wards should have their representation increased from three councillors to four. They noted that although this proposal would increase the number of councillors by one, it would move all electoral divisions to within 15% of the average, eight of the eleven to within 10% and five within 5%.