

**AGENDA ITEM 10****RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL****CABINET****15<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2015****REVIEW OF CORONER SERVICE****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES IN  
DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBERS FOR COUNCIL BUSINESS,  
CLLR WEBBER.****Author: Mr.P.J.Lucas (Tel.No.01443 424105)****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Members' response to the Ministry of Justices' invitation to respond to its current consultation on the proposed merger of the Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys and Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Valleys Coroner Areas.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Cabinet recommends to Council the following response to the consultation on the proposed merger of the Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys and Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Valleys Coroner Areas be submitted to the Ministry of Justice: -

- 2.1 The Council agrees the proposed merger of the Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys and Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Coroner Areas;
- 2.2 The Council agrees with the assessment made in the Business Case (attached as Appendix 1 to the report) of the impacts of the proposed merger; and
- 2.3 The Council agrees no negative impacts of the proposed merger have been identified.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Coroners Act 2009 gives the Lord Chancellor the power to alter the boundaries of coroner areas in England and Wales along the boundaries of one or more local authorities. The intention behind this power is to enable the creation of fewer, larger coroner areas which will give local authorities the potential to make savings through economies of scale and allow full-time coroners to focus

entirely on their coronial duties to develop their skills and experiences fully. Both the Ministry of Justice and the Chief Coroner are in favour of such mergers and actively encourage local authorities to consider the benefits these may bring to both the authority and service users. However the Lord Chancellor is required to consult before a proposed merger takes place.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

4.1 As a result of approval by Members at the Council Meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014 to the proposed merger of the Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys and Cardiff and The Vale of Glamorgan Coroner Areas, the Ministry of Justice are now consulting on the proposed merger with relevant stakeholders affected by the proposals. The Consultation runs until 18<sup>th</sup> December 2015. If the proposed merger is approved this Council will act as the Relevant Authority for the new coroner area.

4.2 The proposal is for this merger to come into effect by the end of March 2016. A Business Case, attached at Appendix 1 to this report, has been jointly prepared by the relevant Councils and sets out the details of the proposal.

4.3 The Consultation consists of three questions as follows: -

Q. Do you agree with the proposed merger of the Cardiff and The Vale of Glamorgan and Powys, Bridgend and The Glamorgan Valleys coroner areas?

Q. Do you agree with the assessment made in the Business Case of the impacts of this proposed merger?

Q. If you disagree, what other impacts have you identified? If these are negative, how might these be mitigated?

#### **5. RECOMMENDED RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION**

5.1 Members are invited to consider the Consultation questions and it is proposed Cabinet recommend to Council that: -

- (i) the Council agree to the proposed merger of the Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys and Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Coroner Areas;
- (ii) the Council agrees with the assessment made in the Business Case (as attached at Appendix 1 to the report) of the impacts of the proposed merger; and
- (iii) the Council agrees no negative impacts of the proposed merger have been identified.

**6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 An Equality and Diversity Impact Screening assessment has been carried out and this did not highlight potential impacts.

**7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 7.1 All participating local authorities will agree the provision of the service, accountability, responsibilities, monitoring arrangements and financial arrangements, which will be set out in a Collaboration Agreement between the local authorities. Any merger would not affect the budget management arrangements of the service. This Council, as the Relevant Authority, would continue to manage the coroner service budget and initially apportion costs to the participating local authorities in accordance with the existing agreements based on population. Immediate savings have been identified as a result of the proposed merger and these are outlined in the appended Business Case.

**8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The legal implications are set out in the body of this report.

**9. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP.**

- 9.1 The proposed merger promotes collaborative working and the Council's priority of making best use of its budget.



**APPENDIX 1****ALTERATION OF CORONER AREAS UNDER SCHEDULE 2 OF THE CORONERS AND JUSTICE ACT 2009<sup>1</sup>****NAMES OF CORONER AREAS THAT ARE PROPOSING TO MERGE**

- Powys, Bridgend & The Glamorgan Valleys
- Cardiff & The Vale of Glamorgan

**PROPOSED NAME OF NEW AREA**

- South Wales Central

**INFORMATION ON AREAS THAT PROPOSE TO MERGE**

- Please provide key details in the table as follows:

<b>Coroner area</b>	<b>Powys, Bridgend &amp; The Glamorgan Valleys</b>	<b>Cardiff &amp; The Vale of Glamorgan</b>	<b>South Wales Central</b>
Geographical area covered	Powys, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT)	Cardiff Vale of Glamorgan	Powys, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT), Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan
Local authority/ies that fund(s) coroner area and % (based on population)	Powys – 23.52% Bridgend – 24.62% Merthyr Tydfil – 10.40% RCTCBC – 41.46%	Cardiff – 73.26% Vale of Glamorgan – 26.74%	Powys – 12.81% Bridgend – 13.41% Merthyr Tydfil – 5.67% RCTCBC – 22.59% Cardiff – 33.35% Vale of Glamorgan – 12.17%
Relevant authority (formerly lead authority)	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC)	Vale of Glamorgan	RCTCBC
Police Force(s) in area	Dyfed Powys Police  South Wales Police	South Wales Police	Dyfed Powys Police  South Wales Police
Transport links	Large	Large	Large geographical

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/25/schedule/2>

<b>Coroner area</b>	<b>Powys, Bridgend &amp; The Glamorgan Valleys</b>	<b>Cardiff &amp; The Vale of Glamorgan</b>	<b>South Wales Central</b>
	geographical area M4  A470  Valleys Railway Stations  Heart of Wales Line Railway Stations	geographical area M4  Cardiff Airport  Cardiff Central Railway Station  Valleys Railways Stations	area M4  A470  Valleys Railway Stations  Cardiff Airport  Cardiff Central Railway Station  Heart of Wales Line Railway Stations
Major hospitals in area	Neville Hall  Royal Shrewsbury Hospital (N.B. This hospital lies in Shropshire but is used for Post Mortems in North Powys)  Princess of Wales Hospital  Prince Charles Hospital  Royal Glamorgan Hospital	University of Wales Hospital  Llandough Hospital	Neville Hall  Royal Shrewsbury Hospital (N.B. This hospital lies in Shropshire but is used for Post Mortems in North Powys)  Princess of Wales Hospital  Prince Charles Hospital  Royal Glamorgan Hospital  University of Wales Hospital  Llandough Hospital
Prisons in area	Parc Prison, Bridgend	Cardiff Prison	Parc Prison, Bridgend  Cardiff Prison
Other state detention facilities in area	N/A	N/A	N/A

<b>Coroner area</b>	<b>Powys, Bridgend &amp; The Glamorgan Valleys</b>	<b>Cardiff &amp; The Vale of Glamorgan</b>	<b>South Wales Central</b>
Courtrooms/ inquest venues	<p>Bespoke Coroner's Courtroom (housed within Coroner's Office, Aberdare)</p> <p>Brecon Law Court (No cost) (This court is subject to the current consultation on proposed court closures. An alternative venue would be Llandrindod Wells Law Court) N.B. The possible closure of Brecon Court is not linked to the proposed merger – this is a separate issue being investigated across the UK</p> <p>Welshpool Magistrates' Court (no cost)</p>	<p>Courtroom housed within Cathays Police Station, Cardiff</p>	<p>Bespoke Coroner's Courtroom (housed within Coroner's Office, Aberdare)</p> <p>Brecon Law Court (No cost)/ Llandrindod Wells Law Court</p> <p>Welshpool Magistrates Court (no cost)</p> <p>Courtroom housed within Cathays Police Station, Cardiff</p>
Office/staff accommodation – location and capacity	<p>1 x FTE Office Manager</p> <p>1 x FTE Inquest Assistant</p> <p>2 x PTE Coroner's Clerks</p>	<p>1 x FTE Coroner's Senior Administrative Assistant</p> <p>1 x PTE Word Processing Operator</p>	<p>To be reviewed following recruitment of new senior coroner</p>
Coroner's officers' employer	<p>1 x FTE – Dyfed Powys Police</p> <p>3 x FTE – South</p>	<p>3 x FTE – South Wales Police</p>	<p>1 x FTE – Dyfed Powys Police</p> <p>6 x FTE – South</p>

Coroner area	Powys, Bridgend & The Glamorgan Valleys	Cardiff & The Vale of Glamorgan	South Wales Central
	Wales Police		Wales Police
Name of senior coroner	Andrew Barkley (Acting)	Andrew Barkley (Acting – providing interim cover)	Recruitment process for a full time senior coroner to follow merger
Number of area coroners	0	0	1 x area coroner (3 working days per week)
Number of assistant coroners	2 (Graeme Hughes and Sarah-Jane Richards)	3 (Tom Atherton, Christopher Woolley, Geraint Williams)	Number will be determined by senior coroner and recruited following his/ her appointment. However, it is anticipated that the existing assistant coroners will be transferred over to the new area (therefore a minimum of 5 assistant coroners)
Number of deaths reported in the previous calendar year	2730	1621	Circa 4,300
Inquests held in the previous calendar year	346	236	Circa 550
Post mortem rate as % of reported deaths in 2014	39%	43%	N/A

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/mapcoroner>

This map shows the merged area with hospitals, the main rail station, main roads and office/ inquest venues. These details would remain the same on separate maps for the two coroner areas so it is not necessary to present 3 different maps.

### **Map Legend**

The different local authority areas are represented by the following colourings:



Powys  
 Merthyr Tydfil  
 Rhondda Cynon Taf  
 Bridgend  
 Cardiff  
 Vale of Glamorgan

N.B. It might take several minutes for this map to open depending on internet connection.

### **SENIOR CORONER APPOINTMENT**

- Why are you seeking a merger now (i.e. which area's senior coroner is stepping down, when and why)?
  1. The part-time senior coroner for Powys, Bridgend & The Glamorgan Valleys (PBGV) resigned in October 2013.
  2. The part-time senior coroner for Cardiff & The Vale of Glamorgan (CVG) resigned in July 2013.
  3. There are therefore vacancies in both coroner areas. Andrew Barkley stepped in as acting part-time senior coroner for Powys, Bridgend & The Glamorgan Valleys in November 2013 and has also been acting senior coroner for Cardiff & The Vale of Glamorgan (July 2014 to date).
- How do you propose to appoint the senior coroner for the new merged area – (i.e. does the relevant authority propose to appoint one of the senior coroners from the affected areas or to hold an open competition)?
  4. Due to there being vacancies within both coroner areas, it will be necessary to undertake a recruitment process which will be held as an open competition.
- Are all affected senior coroners aware of and content with this approach?
  5. Andrew Barkley is the current acting part-time senior coroner for Powys, Bridgend & The Glamorgan Valleys and is also providing interim cover for Cardiff & The Vale of Glamorgan. Andrew is fully aware that upon the MoJ making the order to merge the two coroner areas, the position for full time senior coroner will be advertised.

### **IMPACT OF PROPOSED MERGER ON SERVICE DELIVERY**

- What will be the impact of the proposed merger on service delivery?
  6. With the provision of robust working arrangements in place, the impact on the public will be positive. In fact there will be greater flexibility for families in terms of inquest venues (see below). Stakeholders in the Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan area (police, undertakers, hospital trusts, etc) will benefit from more resilience and greater levels of efficiency – the relevant authority will work closely with the senior coroner to streamline processes and procedures and develop service delivery provisions with the local Health Boards etc. (As

already demonstrated in the current Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys coroner area).

7. The administration support will be based in two offices – one in Rock Grounds, Aberdare and the other in Cathay's Park, Cardiff providing the same level of support to families as present. The coroner's office in Aberdare houses a bespoke courtroom which will enable greater flexibility for families not wishing to travel to Cardiff for inquests where they are currently having to do so. Geographically, it is essential that these two offices are retained as the merged area will cover six local authority areas which encompasses approximately 2,500 square miles. Cardiff Council made it a condition of the agreed merger that an office would be retained in Cardiff to facilitate the families.
  8. The proposed appointment of an area coroner and the use/ appointment of existing assistant coroners (the newly appointed senior coroner may determine to appoint additional assistants) under the merged service provide greater resilience and support to the senior coroner.
  9. The proposed merger comes against the background of two neighbouring coroner areas being vacant and which are currently being managed by the same acting senior coroner. Whilst the interim arrangements have proved very effective, it is recognised that they are not sustainable in the long term. The proposal to merge is underpinned by additional resources being provided, specifically the appointment of a permanent area coroner. This will strengthen and improve service delivery across the new combined area. The additional resources are necessary as the current interim arrangements involve the acting coroner having to divide his time between two distinct jurisdictions and provide cover remotely and cover court commitments by reliance on a team of assistant coroners.
  10. The merger proposes that inquests continue to be held in the courtroom in Aberdare, Brecon Law Court (Llandrindod Wells Law Court), Welshpool Magistrates' Court and the courtroom housed within the police station in Cathays Park, Cardiff.
- What will be the impact of the merger on associated services – such as post-mortem examinations, and mortuary provision?
11. There will be no change to the location of the post mortem examinations, arrangements for police identification and family viewings, and where the deceased are taken/ stored will be no different to current arrangements and would be unaffected by any merger. If anything, there would be greater resilience as the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital has indicated that they could assist in a greater number of post mortems, which in turn will have a positive effect on the timeliness of Inquests.
- How will the relevant local authority administer the new coroner area?
12. The services and staff management arrangements will be managed by RCTCBC, as the nominated relevant authority. The coroner service sits within the Legal & Democratic Services area and will remain the responsibility of the Director for this service area.

13. The support staff will be employed by RCTCBC but all participating local authorities must agree to service outputs, service level and delivery, particularly where there are (or potential) costs implications arising or material changes being proposed. It will be necessary to transfer the administrative support staff currently employed by The Vale of Glamorgan Council over to RCTCBC - this will involve discussions and agreement by relevant Trade Unions. The Vale of Glamorgan have confirmed that informal discussions have been held with administrative staff.
- How will administrative governance be achieved between the relevant local authority and other funding local authorities?
14. All participating local authorities will agree the provision of the service, accountability, responsibilities, monitoring arrangements and financial arrangements, which will be set out in a Collaboration Agreement between the local authorities.
- How will the affected local authorities manage budgets?
15. Any merger would not affect the budget management arrangements of the service. The relevant authority would continue to manage the coroner service budget and apportion costs to the participating local authorities in accordance with the existing agreements based on population.

#### **IMPACT OF MERGER ON THOSE WORKING IN / WITH THE SERVICE**

- What will be the impact of the merger on:
  - Coroners
 

16. The senior coroner for the new merged area will have a considerably larger geographic area and increased caseload as s/he will be required to absorb any cases that would have been referred to a Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan coroner. However, the interim arrangements (acting senior coroner for Powys, Bridgend & Glamorgan Valleys also covering vacancy in Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan coroner area) have demonstrated that the workload is manageable and a merged service is viable and sustainable subject to the additional resources being provided.

The proposed structure increases resilience in the form of an area coroner. It is anticipated that the existing assistant coroners will be transferred to the new area. Upon appointment of the new senior coroner, s/he will determine the necessity to recruit additional assistants.

**N.B.** The Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys coroner area and the Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan coroner area are both in the unique situation of having senior coroner vacancies. Upon finalising any merger, it will be necessary to commence the recruitment process to fill the vacancy of senior coroner for the newly amalgamated coroner area.
  - Coroners' officers

17. Coroner's officers are currently employed by the police – six are employed by South Wales Police and one is employed by Dyfed Powys Police. The coroner's officers covering the Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys coroner area have historically been housed in various police stations across the area, away from the administrative office in Aberdare. The coroner's officers covering the Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan coroner area are housed in one police station, in Cardiff, along with the administrative support staff. The proposed merger would see the continuation of two separate administrative offices (geographically, it is essential that these two offices are retained as the merged area will cover six local authority areas). The acting senior coroner has recently confirmed that Dyfed Powys Police have agreed that their coroner's officer will be housed in Aberdare Police Station – this development has also been welcomed by South Wales Police as a positive move towards effective working practices.
- Other staff in the coroner's offices
    - 18. As mentioned above, the two administrative offices will continue to operate separately albeit there will be a review of the service in terms of ensuring that both offices are adequately manned at all times. This will provide resilience where staff will be able to cover either office when necessary. Furthermore, the relevant authority would continue to work closely with stakeholders to enhance the provision of the merged coroner service as savings would be achieved through exploration of Service Level Agreements with local Health Boards, pathologists and the opportunity to undergo the tender process for the funeral director service.
  - Pathologists
    - 19. There will be no impact on pathologists as post mortem examinations will take place in the existing locations. However, it is apparent that there are increased pressures due to the limited availability of pathologists (a national issue facing all coroners) and alternative arrangements are being investigated in order to provide further resilience in this service area.
  - Others
    - 20. Funeral directors: funeral directors will continue to experience the same level of service that is currently provided within both coroner areas i.e. collecting paperwork from the two offices.

## **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS OF MERGER**

- What will be the impact of the merger on resources in terms of:
  - Costs of delivering the service
    - 21. Please find attached the financial schedule that details current and proposed cost implications – Appendices B and C.
    - 22. RCTCBC will be the relevant authority for the merged coroner area and the remaining five participating local authorities will reimburse RCTCBC accordingly.

23. The total cost of the service will be apportioned on a population basis (updated as per the census which occurs every 10 years) and will be reviewed annually to ensure that all local authorities contribute fairly and appropriately to maintain an effective service.
- Accommodation for staff
 

24. No changes in either Aberdare or Cardiff as the two offices would continue to run simultaneously, albeit staff will be required to operate peripatetically on occasions.
  - Inquest accommodation
 

25. Inquests will, as they are now, continue to be held locally in Aberdare, Cardiff and Powys, as and where appropriate, so there would be no travel implications or additional burdens for the public beyond what they currently experience. In fact there would be greater flexibility for families in the event that they would prefer to travel to an alternative venue to those currently available under the existing arrangements.
  - IT
 

26. ICT is currently provided by RCTCBC and The Vale of Glamorgan Council as the relevant authorities. The coroner service uses their ICT networks, desks, equipment and telephony. Upon merging, the only immediate issues will be for the ICT departments from the current relevant authorities to liaise to ensure that all systems work and are synchronized (Advanced Legal Solutions) and ownership is transferred to the relevant authority for the newly merged area.
  - Any other costs / savings?
 

27. Immediate savings have been identified as a result of the proposed merger. One area in which savings will be made is through the implementation of Service Level Agreements with local Health Boards for the provision of pathology services. Savings have already been achieved within the existing area of Powys, Bridgend and The Glamorgan Valleys in respect of one Health Board and work is currently being undertaken with another to bring about similar results (early considerations have been given to the viability of a dedicated coroner's mortuary facility which will realise substantial long term savings. However, this is very much in infancy at this stage.). The creation of a full time merged area and the appointment of a permanent senior coroner together with an area coroner to cover the proposed area will mean a saving in terms of long inquest payments. The increased role of IT across the area will create increased efficiencies and further improve service delivery.

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- Are you aware of any legal issues that need to be resolved before a merger can go ahead (in addition to the Lord Chancellor making an order under Schedule 2 of the 2009 Act)? If so please give details.
 

28. None.

## VIEWS OF THOSE AFFECTED BY MERGER

- Do all affected local authorities support the merger? Please provide details.
29. Approved by all participating local authorities as follows:
- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council – 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014  
 Vale of Glamorgan Council – 9<sup>th</sup> February 2015  
 Bridgend County Borough Council – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015  
 Powys County Council – 21<sup>st</sup> April 2015  
 Cardiff Council – 11<sup>th</sup> June 2015  
 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council – 15<sup>th</sup> July 2015
- Have the local authority councillors / cabinets approved the merger? Please provide details.
30. As above
- What is the view of affected coroners and their staff?
31. The acting senior coroner for Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys, who is also currently providing cover for the Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan coroner area, fully supports the merger, as do the existing assistant coroners.
32. The Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys and the Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan coroner areas are both currently covered by an acting senior coroner as a result of recruitment being put on hold pending the exploration of a merger. Further to a merger being secured, the recruitment process will begin to fill the post of senior coroner for the newly amalgamated coroner area.
- How will bereaved people be affected by the merger – e.g. travelling to inquests, being able to contact coroners' offices?
33. There will not be any negative impact on the public. In fact, there will be greater scope for families to attend inquests closer as there will be four available venues. Cardiff County Council have raised the issue of faith deaths and that upon agreeing the proposed merger the terms would stipulate the expectation that the level of service would continue in line with current arrangements. Of course this would be a matter for the newly appointed senior coroner to respond to.
- Have you sought the views of other affected stakeholders - such as police authority and constabulary, hospitals, prisons, GPs, faith groups and funeral directors? Please provide details.
34. No formal consultation is required on either local authorities part as this will be undertaken by the Ministry of Justice on behalf of the Lord Chancellor. Stakeholders detailed on the list of consultees are aware that the two current relevant authorities are in discussions over a proposed merger.
35. The statutory functions and the way in which the senior coroner and assistant coroners discharge their responsibilities will not change as a result

of any merger and the impact on the service users and stakeholders will be minimal, if in fact there is any. The appointment of a permanent area coroner will increase resilience, provide more “presence” across the area and therefore drive up service delivery across the new area in a way that is just not possible having to run the two areas as distinct areas with assistants.

- What are the views of other stakeholders?

36. To be ascertained as part of the consultation.

- What impact will the merger have in terms of disability, gender and racial equality?

37. None. Coroners conduct all investigations of deaths referred to them taking into account disability, gender and racial equality as part of their statutory role.

## RISKS AND MITIGATING ACTIONS

- Please provide details of any risks identified and mitigating action (to be) taken.

RISK	MITIGATING ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Failure of operation, or systems and processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interim arrangements have been successful and any operational issues have been addressed.</li> <li>Review and ensure robust practices, procedures and processes are in place to effectively manage the expected workload of any newly created area.</li> <li>Appropriate planning and resources are required.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient capacity to deliver the merged service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide additional support through a part time area coroner, a pool of assistant coroners and restructure of the administrative service to ensure there is sufficient capacity to meet the demands upon the service and provide sufficient resilience.</li> </ul>

## ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S)

- Please describe other options considered, in addition to the proposed merger, and the advantages and disadvantages for each option.

### 38. Alternative Option

#### To retain the status quo – Part-time Coroner for Powys, Bridgend & The Glamorgan Valleys and Part-time Coroner for Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan

Advantages	Disadvantages
Retains the status quo	Increased bureaucracy
Familiar – established and works	Some duplication of work
Families have the opportunity to attend Inquests locally	Continuation of long inquests and therefore potential uncontrolled additional cost
	Perceived as not fit for future service requirements by the Chief Coroner and Ministry of Justice – external bodies may force change at a later date when resources are not in place to support this



39. The unique situation of two adjoining areas being vacant, together with the success of the interim arrangements of the same acting senior coroner managing both areas, have demonstrated that the proposed merger is attractive and that the savings and benefits which have already been realised, can be achieved for the benefit of the whole proposed area. The proposal or the merger is also in line with the Ministry of Justice and Chief Coroner's policy.

#### **CONTACT WITH THE CHIEF CORONER'S OFFICE / MINISTRY OF JUSTICE / CONSULTEES**

- Have you had previous discussions with the Chief Coroner on the proposed merger? (This is a requirement before Ministry of Justice can formally consult on the merger.) Please provide details of the discussion.

40. The interim arrangements have been discussed and agreed on the basis that it provides the opportunity for a merger to be considered. RCTCBC had considered the recruitment options for senior coroner for the Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys coroner area, but have been asked to delay these in order that the Chief Coroner can explore the possibility of amalgamating the two coroner areas. The Chief Coroner met with representatives from RCTCBC and Cardiff Council late July 2015 and reiterated that he is keen to see a merged coroner area.

- Have you had previous contact with MoJ on the proposed merger? Please provide details.

41 See above.

- Are you happy for this business case in its entirety to be sent to all consultees? If not please provide details.
- Please list consultees for the consultation on the proposed merger – the organisation's name and the most appropriate email address - at **Annex A**. MoJ will remove email addresses from **Annex A** before sending the business case to consultees.
- Further information on the merger process is available in the form of Chief Coroner guidance at: <http://www.judiciary.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/guidance-14-mergers-of-coroner-areas.pdf>.

