

**AGENDA ITEM 4****RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL****CABINET****24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2015****REVIEW OF CORONER SERVICE****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES****Author: Mr.P.J.Lucas (Tel.No.01443-424105)****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members on the progress in pursuing the amalgamation of the Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys and Cardiff and The Vale of Glamorgan Coroner Areas, as agreed by Council on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Cabinet agree and recommend to Council 2.1 – 2.5 below:

- 2.1 That Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council confirms its decision to act as Relevant Authority for the merged Coroner Area on the terms set out in the Business Case attached as Appendix 2 to the report.
- 2.2 That a Collaboration Agreement be entered into with Merthyr, Bridgend, Powys, Cardiff and The Vale of Glamorgan Councils as set out in paragraph 14 of the Business Case.
- 2.3 That the Appointment panel for the post of Full-Time Senior Coroner for the newly merged Area comprise the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Portfolio Holder and the Leader of the largest opposition group.
- 2.4 That the Director of Legal & Democratic Services be authorised to appoint the Area Coroner and Assistant Coroners for the merged Coroner Area in consultation with the newly appointed Senior Coroner and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder.
- 2.5 That if the merger is not approved by the Lord Chancellor, the post of Full-Time Senior Coroner for the Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys Coroner Area be advertised as soon as possible.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 In my report to Council on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2013, I advised that the Senior Coroner for Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys (PBGV) had tendered her resignation. Interim arrangements were made whereby the existing Assistant Coroner assumed the role of Acting Senior Coroner to ensure the continuity of Service Delivery. It was also noted that there was a vacancy in the Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan (C&V) Coroner Area following the resignation of their Senior Coroner.
- 3.2 I was approached by C&V during May/June 2014 who advised me that their interim arrangements were at a critical state as their Acting Senior Coroner was unable to continue in this capacity. I subsequently agreed a provision whereby we would support the C&V Area with our Acting Senior Coroner with subsequent back filling by Assistant Coroners. This agreement required a facility for PBGV to recharge the C&V Area for the interim cover arrangements. (This has been in place since July 2014). I further advised that the Acting Senior Coroner was investigating the feasibility of the amalgamation of the two Coroner Areas in accordance with Schedule 2 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, where the Chief coroner promotes the move towards fewer and larger coroner areas.
- 3.3 In my report to Council on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014, I provided an update regarding merger discussions (Appendix 1). Council resolved Minute Item 117 as follows:
- (1) That the current Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys and Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Coroner Areas be merged into a single combined Coroner Area to cover the six local authority areas of Powys, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr, Bridgend, Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan.
  - (2) That the Part-Time Coroner posts which currently cover Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys and Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan Coroner Areas be made into a single Whole-Time Coroner position for the new Coroner Area following the merger.
  - (3) That Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is designated as the Relevant Authority to continue to accommodate the Coroner and continue to provide the existing administrative support functions to the Service.
  - (4) That costs be apportioned on a population ratio basis (already established within the Powys, Bridgend and The Glamorgan Valleys Coroner Area).
  - (5) That the Director, Legal & Democratic Services reports back to the Council at its next meeting on the position of Cardiff Council in this matter and that if agreement cannot be reached by all parties, the post

of Whole-Time Coroner for Powys, Bridgend and The Glamorgan Valleys be advertised following this meeting.

- 3.4 Cardiff Council advised that they wished to review all of the current arrangements in considering the feasibility of merging the two Coroner Areas. As a result, a draft advertisement was subsequently drawn up for the recruitment of a Full-Time Senior Coroner for Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys. This was sent to the Chief Coroner for his comments, whereby he requested that any recruitment be put on hold pending further discussions on the amalgamation of the Coroner Areas.
- 3.5 Approval of the merger proposal was finally granted by all six local authorities as listed below (chronologically):
- 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
- 3.6 A Business Case was submitted to the Ministry of Justice on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2015 (Appendix 2) detailing the proposals for the merger with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council proposed as the Relevant Authority driving the service forward.
- 3.7 The Ministry of Justice will commence a formal consultation from 21<sup>st</sup> September until 19<sup>th</sup> October 2015. This will involve sending the Business Case to a number of consultees including relevant Cabinet Members, AMs, MPs, Police Authorities, Local Health Boards, Coroners, Assistant Coroners, Coroner's Officers and administration staff.
- 3.8 In their report to Cabinet, Cardiff Council noted that agreement for amalgamation would be recommended on the provision that there would be a formal Collaboration Agreement between all participating local authorities. This will be drawn up by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council as the proposed relevant Authority and will lay out the terms for financial monitoring and reporting.
- 3.9 The reconfiguration of the administration structure could result in redundancies, the costs of which would fall to those Councils of the existing Coroner Areas.

#### **4. RECENT PROGRESS**

The Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys Coroner Area has experienced a number of significant changes following the reform of the Coroner's and Justice Act 2009. Furthermore the current Acting Senior Coroner has worked with Rhondda Cynon Taf on the following initiatives:

- 4.1 Introduction of a Service Level Agreement with Cwm Taf Local Health Board for the provision of an autopsy service – this will allow more efficient payment of invoices and effective budget monitoring. Furthermore, it will also enable the Coroner to closely monitor the number of Post Mortems performed with a view to reducing the numbers actually required and thus decrease future costs.
- 4.2 Introduction of a Service Level Agreement with Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board for the provision of an autopsy service – again this will see the same benefits as above. The Coroner has also initiated a pilot scheme with a Consultant Pathologist with a view to reducing the number of invasive Post Mortems required, which will see considerable savings in the future.
- 4.3 The Coroner is working closely with GPs to secure Causes of Death in order to avoid the requirement for unnecessary Post Mortems. In April 2014, a total of ten Post Mortems were avoided which resulted in a saving of £4,000, thus potential savings of £48,000 per annum.
- 4.4 The Coroner is working on a pilot with an Assistant Coroner who as well as being legally qualified, has a medical background. The purpose of this pilot scheme is to utilise the Assistant Coroner's skills and experience to further reduce the number of required Post Mortems by determining the Cause of Death through the medical records. This initiative will further compliment the point above in making future savings.
- 4.5. The Coroner is devising a training programme to deliver to hospitals and GPs to reduce the need for Post Mortems to further compliment points 3 and 4.
- 4.6 In collaboration with Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC ICT department, the link to the Coroner's website has been developed to improve access by residents of Powys, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf. All Inquests are listed on a Coroner's Website detailing times and venues for families and interested parties. Future initiatives will allow GPs and hospitals to download forms from the website in order to report deaths to the Coroner.
- 4.7 The Coroner has introduced a new system for opening Inquests which has resulted in an increase in Inquests being concluded on the same

day and thus a reduction in costs due to the non-necessity to call witnesses and experts back for a second time.

4.8 The Coroner has reviewed the provision of toxicology services which pending discussions with the Pathologists, could lead to a 10% reduction in future toxicology cases.

4.9 The Coroner is exploring the feasibility of utilising Digital Autopsy Services which will eliminate the need to perform invasive examinations when a Post Mortem is required. This system is currently being used by the Birmingham & Solihull Coroner.

4.10 Interim arrangements with Cardiff & The Vale of Glamorgan Coroner Area:

The Acting Senior Coroner has already identified areas where future savings may be possible in relation to Local Health Board and Pathology fees. Furthermore, the Acting Senior Coroner has identified unnecessary payments made to GPs and Consultants for reports which they should not be receiving payments for.

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Coroners working in jurisdictions within Wales are deemed All Wales Coroners. However, should a decision be taken to amalgamate the two Coroner Areas of Powys, Bridgend & The Glamorgan Valleys and Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan, this would require an Order from the Ministry of Justice to bring this into effect.

## **6. AMALGAMATION PROCEDURE**

6.1 At the conclusion of the consultation period referred to in paragraph 3.7 above, providing the proposal does not meet strong objection, the Ministry of Justice will submit advice and the Draft Order to the Minister by 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2015. The Minister will make the Order to be laid in House by 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015 with the Order coming into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016.

## **7. APPOINTMENT OF FULL-TIME SENIOR CORONER, AREA CORONER AND ASSISTANT CORONERS FOR THE MERGED CORONER AREA**

7.1 The Coroners and Justice Act 2009 has introduced changes to the effect that appointment of Coroners - Senior Coroners, Area Coroners and Assistant Coroners - must now be made by the Council. Previously, under the Coroners Act 1988, the Coroner appointed Deputy and Assistant Deputy Coroners. Any appointments will need to follow the Chief Coroner's Guidance Note No. 6 "*The Appointment of Coroners*" issued under the 2009 Act.

- 7.2 If the merger is approved by the Lord Chancellor, it is proposed that the Panel to appoint the full-time Senior Coroner be comprised of the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Portfolio Holder, and the Leader of the largest Opposition Group (or substitutes) as was the case with previous Coroner appointments.
- 7.3 Paragraphs 38-49 of the Guidance Note deals with the appointment of Area and Assistant Coroners. The term Area Coroner refers to a Deputy who is a salaried Coroner.
- 7.4 There is no longer a statutory requirement for the Mayor of the Council to approve the appointments set out in paragraph 7.3 above. It is for each Council (as relevant authority) to determine who should sign off such appointments for their Area.
- 7.5 Paragraph 40 of the Guidance states that “Elected Members may well choose to delegate this function to officers”.
- 7.6 It is proposed that I be authorised to appoint Area and Assistant Coroners in consultation with the Senior Coroner and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 Since the resignation of the Senior Coroner for Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys in October 2013, the feasibility of a merger with the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Coroner Area has been considered with relevant stakeholders as outlined in the report.
- 8.2 If no objections to the formal consultation are received then the Order will be made by the Minister with the merged Area coming into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016. The Senior Coroner can then be appointed and subsequently the Area and Assistant Coroners.
- 8.3 In the event that the Order is not made, then the current situation of an Acting Part-Time Senior Coroner cannot continue indefinitely. It will be necessary to proceed to recruit a Full-Time Senior Coroner for the Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys Area.
- 8.4 It is important to stress that the merged proposal will ensure:
- Continuity of service delivery across the merged area.
  - Potential future savings resulting from inter alia economies of scale, rationalisation of back office support and SLAs with local Health Boards and new procurement for the services of Funeral Directors.

14.08.15

**Appendix A****List of consultees**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Email address</b>
<b>Chief Coroner</b>	c/o <a href="mailto:james.parker2@judiciary.gsi.gov.uk">james.parker2@judiciary.gsi.gov.uk</a>
<b>Acting Senior Coroner for Powys, Bridgend &amp; Glamorgan Valleys and Cardiff &amp; The Vale of Glamorgan</b> – Andrew Barkley	<a href="mailto:Andrew.R.Barkley@rctcbc.gov.uk">Andrew.R.Barkley@rctcbc.gov.uk</a>
<b>Assistant Coroners for Powys, Bridgend &amp; Glamorgan Valleys</b> – Graeme Hughes and Sarah-Jane Richards	<a href="mailto:Graeme.Hughes@rctcbc.gov.uk">Graeme.Hughes@rctcbc.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:Sarah-Jane.Richards@rctcbc.gov.uk">Sarah-Jane.Richards@rctcbc.gov.uk</a>
<b>Assistant Coroners for Cardiff &amp; The Vale of Glamorgan</b> – Tom Atherton and Christopher Woolley	<a href="mailto:foxath@hotmail.co.uk">foxath@hotmail.co.uk</a> <a href="mailto:cjwoolley@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk">cjwoolley@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk</a>
<b>Coroner Officers</b>	
Patrick Williams	<a href="mailto:Patrick.Williams@south-wales.pnn.police.uk">Patrick.Williams@south-wales.pnn.police.uk</a>
Claire Seymour	<a href="mailto:Claire.Seymour@south-wales.pnn.police.uk">Claire.Seymour@south-wales.pnn.police.uk</a>
Mark Adams	<a href="mailto:Mark.Adams@south-wales.pnn.police.uk">Mark.Adams@south-wales.pnn.police.uk</a>
Caroline Bishop	<a href="mailto:caroline.bishop@south-wales.pnn.police.uk">caroline.bishop@south-wales.pnn.police.uk</a>
Emma Mathias	<a href="mailto:emma.mathias@dyfed-powys.pnn.police.uk">emma.mathias@dyfed-powys.pnn.police.uk</a>
Michelle Morgan	<a href="mailto:michelle.morgan@south-wales.pnn.police.uk">michelle.morgan@south-wales.pnn.police.uk</a>
Jane Bowen	<a href="mailto:jane.bowen@south-wales.pnn.police.uk">jane.bowen@south-wales.pnn.police.uk</a>
Abbi Ryan	<a href="mailto:abbi.ryan@south-wales.pnn.police.uk">abbi.ryan@south-wales.pnn.police.uk</a>
<b><u>Administrative Staff</u></b>	
<b><u>Aberdare</u></b>	
Maria Evans	<a href="mailto:Maria.Evans@rctcbc.gov.uk">Maria.Evans@rctcbc.gov.uk</a>
Clare Everett	<a href="mailto:Clare.Everett@rctcbc.gov.uk">Clare.Everett@rctcbc.gov.uk</a>

14.08.15

Ann May	<a href="mailto:Ann.M.May@rctcbc.gov.uk">Ann.M.May@rctcbc.gov.uk</a>
<u>Cardiff</u>	
Katherine Haworth	<a href="mailto:kahaworth@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk">kahaworth@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk</a>
Lorraine Gittins	<a href="mailto:LGittins@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk">LGittins@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk</a>
<b><u>MPs:</u></b>	
Chris Bryant (Rhondda)	<a href="mailto:morganke@parliament.uk">morganke@parliament.uk</a>
Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley)	<a href="mailto:clwyda@parliament.uk">clwyda@parliament.uk</a>
Owen Smith (Pontypridd)	<a href="mailto:owen.smith.mp@parliament.uk">owen.smith.mp@parliament.uk</a>
Gerald Jones (Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney)	<a href="mailto:gerald.jones.mp@parliament.uk">gerald.jones.mp@parliament.uk</a>
Madeline Moon (Bridgend)	<a href="mailto:moonm@parliament.uk">moonm@parliament.uk</a>
Jo Stevens (Cardiff Central)	<a href="mailto:jo.stevens.mp@parliament.uk">jo.stevens.mp@parliament.uk</a>
Craig Williams (Cardiff North)	<a href="mailto:craig.williams.mp@parliament.uk">craig.williams.mp@parliament.uk</a>
Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South & Penarth)	<a href="mailto:stephen.doughty.mp@parliament.uk">stephen.doughty.mp@parliament.uk</a>
Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West)	<a href="mailto:brennank@parliament.uk">brennank@parliament.uk</a>
Alun Cairns (Vale of Glamorgan)	<a href="mailto:alun.cairns.mp@parliament.uk">alun.cairns.mp@parliament.uk</a>
Huw Irranca-Davies (Ogmore)	<a href="mailto:irrancadaviesh@parliament.uk">irrancadaviesh@parliament.uk</a>
Chris Davies (Brecon & Radnorshire)	<a href="mailto:chris.davies.mp@parliament.uk">chris.davies.mp@parliament.uk</a>
Glyn Davies (Montgomeryshire)	<a href="mailto:glyn.davies.mp@parliament.uk">glyn.davies.mp@parliament.uk</a>
<b><u>Welsh Assembly Members:</u></b>	
<b><u>Constituency:</u></b>	
Leighton Andrews (Rhondda)	<a href="mailto:Leighton.Andrews@assembly.wales">Leighton.Andrews@assembly.wales</a>
Christine Chapman (Cynon Valley)	<a href="mailto:Christine.Chapman@assembly.wales">Christine.Chapman@assembly.wales</a>
Mick Antoniw (Pontypridd)	<a href="mailto:Mick.Antoniw@assembly.wales">Mick.Antoniw@assembly.wales</a>
Huw Lewis (Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney)	<a href="mailto:Huw.Lewis@assembly.wales">Huw.Lewis@assembly.wales</a>
Carwyn Jones (Bridgend)	<a href="mailto:Carwyn.Jones@assembly.wales">Carwyn.Jones@assembly.wales</a>



14.08.15

Jenny Rathbone (Cardiff Central)	<a href="mailto:Jenny.Rathbone@assembly.wales">Jenny.Rathbone@assembly.wales</a>
Julie Morgan (Cardiff North)	<a href="mailto:Julie.Morgan@assembly.wales">Julie.Morgan@assembly.wales</a>
Vaughan Gething (Cardiff South and Penarth)	<a href="mailto:Vaughan.Gething@assembly.wales">Vaughan.Gething@assembly.wales</a>
Mark Drakeford (Cardiff West)	<a href="mailto:Mark.Drakeford@assembly.wales">Mark.Drakeford@assembly.wales</a>
Jane Hutt (Vale of Glamorgan)	<a href="mailto:Jane.Hutt@assembly.wales">Jane.Hutt@assembly.wales</a>
Janice Gregory (Ogmore)	<a href="mailto:Janice.Gregory@assembly.wales">Janice.Gregory@assembly.wales</a>
Kirsty Williams (Brecon & Radnorshire)	<a href="mailto:Kirsty.Williams@assembly.wales">Kirsty.Williams@assembly.wales</a>
Russell George (Montgomeryshire)	<a href="mailto:Russell.George@assembly.wales">Russell.George@assembly.wales</a>
<b><u>Regional Assembly Members:</u></b>	
<u>South Wales Central:</u>	
Leanne Wood	<a href="mailto:Leanne.Wood@assembly.wales">Leanne.Wood@assembly.wales</a>
David Melding	<a href="mailto:David.Melding@assembly.wales">David.Melding@assembly.wales</a>
Andrew RT Davies	<a href="mailto:AndrewRT.Davies@assembly.wales">AndrewRT.Davies@assembly.wales</a>
Eluned Parrott	<a href="mailto:Eluned.Parrott@assembly.wales">Eluned.Parrott@assembly.wales</a>
<u>South Wales East:</u>	
Mohammad Asghar	<a href="mailto:Mohammad.Asghar@assembly.wales">Mohammad.Asghar@assembly.wales</a>
Jocelyn Davies	<a href="mailto:Jocelyn.Davies@assembly.wales">Jocelyn.Davies@assembly.wales</a>
William Graham	<a href="mailto:William.Graham@assembly.wales">William.Graham@assembly.wales</a>
Lindsay Whittle	<a href="mailto:Lindsay.Whittle@assembly.wales">Lindsay.Whittle@assembly.wales</a>
<u>South Wales West:</u>	
Peter Black	<a href="mailto:Peter.Black@assembly.wales">Peter.Black@assembly.wales</a>
Suzy Davies	<a href="mailto:Suzy.Davies@assembly.wales">Suzy.Davies@assembly.wales</a>
Altaf Hussain	<a href="mailto:Altaf.Hussain@assembly.wales">Altaf.Hussain@assembly.wales</a>
Bethan Jenkins	<a href="mailto:Bethan.Jenkins@assembly.wales">Bethan.Jenkins@assembly.wales</a>
<u>Mid and West Wales:</u>	

14.08.15

Rebecca M Evans	<a href="mailto:Rebecca.Evans@assembly.wales">Rebecca.Evans@assembly.wales</a>
William Powell	<a href="mailto:William.Powell@assembly.wales">William.Powell@assembly.wales</a>
Simon Thomas	<a href="mailto:Simon.Thomas@assembly.wales">Simon.Thomas@assembly.wales</a>
Joyce Watson	<a href="mailto:Joyce.Watson@assembly.wales">Joyce.Watson@assembly.wales</a>
<b><u>Local Authority Lead Member</u></b>	
Councillor Maureen Webber (Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council)	<a href="mailto:Maureen.Webber@rctcbc.gov.uk">Maureen.Webber@rctcbc.gov.uk</a>
Councillor Phil Williams (Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council)	<a href="mailto:phil.williams@merthyr.gov.uk">phil.williams@merthyr.gov.uk</a>
Councillor M E J Nott OBE (Bridgend County Borough Council)	<a href="mailto:Cllr.MEJ.Nott@bridgend.gov.uk">Cllr.MEJ.Nott@bridgend.gov.uk</a>
Councillor Bronwen Brooks (Vale of Glamorgan Council)	<a href="mailto:bbrooks@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk">bbrooks@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk</a>
Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cardiff County Council)	<a href="mailto:Graham.Hinchey@cardiff.gov.uk">Graham.Hinchey@cardiff.gov.uk</a>
Councillor Stephen M Hayes (Powys County Council)	<a href="mailto:cllr.stephen.hayes@powys.gov.uk">cllr.stephen.hayes@powys.gov.uk</a>
<b><u>Local Health Boards</u></b>	
<b><u>Cwm Taf</u></b>	
Allison Williams	<a href="mailto:Allison.williams4@wales.nhs.uk">Allison.williams4@wales.nhs.uk</a>
<b><u>Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board</u></b>	
Hamish Laing	<a href="mailto:Hazel.Loyd@wales.nhs.uk">Hazel.Loyd@wales.nhs.uk</a> (Secretary)
<b><u>Powys Teaching Health Board</u></b>	
Carol Shillabeer	<a href="mailto:anne.evans4@wales.nhs.uk">anne.evans4@wales.nhs.uk</a> (Secretary)
<b><u>Cardiff &amp; Vale University Health Board</u></b>	
Adam Cairns	<a href="mailto:jane.bennett2@wales.nhs.uk">jane.bennett2@wales.nhs.uk</a> (Secretary)
<b><u>Prisons</u></b>	
<b><u>Parc Prison, Bridgend</u></b> Janet Wallsgrave (Governor)	<a href="mailto:Jodie.Fowler@uk.g4s.com">Jodie.Fowler@uk.g4s.com</a> (Secretary)
<b><u>Cardiff Prison</u></b> Steve Cross	<a href="mailto:lisa.duignan@hmps.gsi.gov.uk">lisa.duignan@hmps.gsi.gov.uk</a> (Secretary)

14.08.15

<p><b>Local Police Forces</b></p> <p>Detective Spt Paul Hurley (South Wales Police)</p> <p>Inspector Jon Cummings (Dyfed Powys Police)</p>	<p><a href="mailto:Paul.hurley@south-wales.pnn.police.uk">Paul.hurley@south-wales.pnn.police.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:Enfys.teakle@dyfed-powys.pnn.police.uk">Enfys.teakle@dyfed-powys.pnn.police.uk</a> (Secretary)</p>
<p><b>National ACPO contact</b></p> <p>Assistant Chief Constable Karen Manners</p>	<p>c/o <a href="mailto:anne.twigg@warwickshire.pnn.police.uk">anne.twigg@warwickshire.pnn.police.uk</a></p>
<p><b>National Association of Funeral Directors</b></p> <p><u>Secretary NAFD Wales Area Federation</u></p> <p>Lyndsay J Ellis</p>	<p><a href="mailto:Lyndsayellis1@gmail.com">Lyndsayellis1@gmail.com</a></p>
<p><b>Pathologists</b></p> <p>Dr Stephen Leadbeatter</p> <p>Dr Derrick James</p> <p>Dr Andrew Davison</p> <p>Dr Jason Shannon</p> <p>Dr Esther Youd</p> <p>Dr Selwyn Ng</p> <p>Dr Gareth Leopold</p> <p>Dr Nadine Burke</p> <p>Dr Maurizio Brotto</p> <p>Dr Andrew Bamber</p> <p>Dr Geraint Evans</p> <p>Dr Nicholas Green</p> <p>Dr Cerys Burrows</p> <p>Dr Mark Otter</p> <p>Dr Katherine Harrison</p> <p>Professor Archie Malcom</p> <p>Dr Huyam Abdelsalam</p>	<p><a href="mailto:leadbeatters@cardiff.ac.uk">leadbeatters@cardiff.ac.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:jamesd5@cardiff.ac.uk">jamesd5@cardiff.ac.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:davisonam@cardiff.ac.uk">davisonam@cardiff.ac.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:Jason.Shannon@wales.nhs.uk">Jason.Shannon@wales.nhs.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:Esther.Youd@wales.nhs.uk">Esther.Youd@wales.nhs.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:Selwyn.Ng@wales.nhs.uk">Selwyn.Ng@wales.nhs.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:Gareth.Leopold@wales.nhs.uk">Gareth.Leopold@wales.nhs.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:Nadine.Burke@wales.nhs.uk">Nadine.Burke@wales.nhs.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:Maurizio.Brotto@wales.nhs.uk">Maurizio.Brotto@wales.nhs.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:Andrew.Bamber@wales.nhs.uk">Andrew.Bamber@wales.nhs.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:Geraint.Evans2@wales.nhs.uk">Geraint.Evans2@wales.nhs.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:Nicholas.Green@sath.nhs.uk">Nicholas.Green@sath.nhs.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:cerys.burrows@sath.nhs.uk">cerys.burrows@sath.nhs.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:mark.otter@sath.nhs.uk">mark.otter@sath.nhs.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:katherine.harrison@sath.nhs.uk">katherine.harrison@sath.nhs.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:archie.malcolm@sath.nhs.uk">archie.malcolm@sath.nhs.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:huyam.abdelsalam@sath.nhs.uk">huyam.abdelsalam@sath.nhs.uk</a></p>

14.08.15

Dr Elen Cobby	<a href="mailto:elen.cobby@sath.nhs.uk">elen.cobby@sath.nhs.uk</a>
Local Authority contacts for Gwent – Gareth Price and Andrew Lewis	<a href="mailto:gareth.price@newport.gov.uk">gareth.price@newport.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:andrew.lewis@newport.gov.uk">andrew.lewis@newport.gov.uk</a>
Local Authority contact for Herefordshire – Fiona Nicholls	<a href="mailto:fnicholls@herefordshire.gov.uk">fnicholls@herefordshire.gov.uk</a>
Local Authority contact for Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin – Karen Burton	<a href="mailto:karen.burton@shropshire.gov.uk">karen.burton@shropshire.gov.uk</a>
Local Authority contacts for North Wales (East and Central) – Eleri Woolford and Gary Williams	<a href="mailto:eleri.woolford@denbighshire.gov.uk">eleri.woolford@denbighshire.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:gary.williams@denbighshire.gov.uk">gary.williams@denbighshire.gov.uk</a>
Local Authority contact for North West Wales – Sion Huws	<a href="mailto:sionh@gwynedd.gov.uk">sionh@gwynedd.gov.uk</a>
Local Authority contact for Ceredigion – Elin Prysor	<a href="mailto:Elin.Prysor@ceredigion.gov.uk">Elin.Prysor@ceredigion.gov.uk</a>
Local Authority contact for Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire – Audrey Williams	<a href="mailto:audwilliams@carmarthenshire.gov.uk">audwilliams@carmarthenshire.gov.uk</a>
Local Authority contact for Swansea and Neath Port Talbot – Tracey Meredith	<a href="mailto:tracey.meredith@swansea.gov.uk">tracey.meredith@swansea.gov.uk</a>

**APPENDIX 1****RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL****MUNICIPAL YEAR 2013 - 2014****COUNCIL**

26th February 2014

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF  
LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

Agenda Item No. 10

**REVIEW OF CORONER SERVICE****Author: Mr.P.J.Lucas (Tel.No.01443-424105)****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the outcome of a review of the provision of the Coroner Service for the Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys (Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr and Bridgend) and Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Coroner Areas.
- 1.2 The report also outlines options relating to the provision of a Coroner Service and supporting administration for the Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys and Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Coroner Areas.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are asked to agree the recommendations as outlined in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.5 below and as recommended by the Cabinet at its meeting held on the 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2014:

- 2.1 That the current Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys and Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Coroner Areas be merged into a single combined Coroner Area to cover the six local authority areas of Powys, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr, Bridgend, Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan.
- 2.2 That the Part -Time Coroner posts which currently cover Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys and Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan Coroner Areas be made into a single Whole-Time Coroner position for the new Coroner Area following the merger.
- 2.3 That Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is designated as the Relevant Authority to continue to accommodate the Coroner and continue to provide the existing administrative support functions to the Service.
- 2.4 That costs be apportioned on a population ratio basis (already established within the Powys, Bridgend and The Glamorgan Valleys Coroner Area).

- 2.5 That if agreement cannot be reached by all parties, that the post of Whole Time Coroner for Powys, Bridgend and The Glamorgan Valleys be advertised as soon as possible.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Coroners are independent judicial officers appointed and paid for by the relevant local authorities. They are responsible for investigating violent, unnatural deaths and deaths in custody that are reported to them.

- 3.2 The Ministry of Justice is responsible for the law and policy governing Coroners and deals with the operation of the current Coroner system. The Chief Coroner, an office created by the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, is head of the Coroner system, assuming overall responsibility and providing national leadership for coroners in England and Wales. The appointment of the Chief Coroner is made by the Lord Chief Justice in consultation with the Lord Chancellor. Responsibilities include:

- Cross-government liaison on coroner matters
- Set national standards for all Coroners, including new inquest roles
- Queries and advice to ministers, Coroners, local authorities and the public
- Liaison with Coroners and bereavement groups
- Training for Coroners and their staff
- Supervision of the amalgamation of Coroner districts
- Keeping a register of coroner investigations lasting more than 12 months and taking steps to reduce unnecessary delays
- Providing an annual report on the coroner system to the Lord Chancellor, to be laid before Parliament
- Other statutory casework

- 3.3 Upon Local Government re-organisation in 1996, the Bridgend and The Glamorgan Valleys jurisdiction was created (i.e. Old Mid Glamorgan, excluding Rhymney Valley) with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council assuming the Lead role. Similarly, The Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan jurisdiction was created (i.e. Old South Glamorgan) with The Vale of Glamorgan as the Lead Authority.

### **4. CURRENT POSITION**

- 4.1 Following the retirement of Phillip Walters in 2008, a new Part-Time Coroner (Peter Maddox) was appointed to cover the Bridgend and The Glamorgan Valleys jurisdiction (co-incidentally, Powys had also recently appointed him as their Part-Time Coroner). In line with this appointment, it was agreed that suitable accommodation would be provided to the Coroner and his support staff. This resulted in the Coroner's Offices being established on the first floor at Rock Grounds, Aberdare and comprise a main administration office, a Coroner's office, an Inquest Courtroom, a waiting room, a family/ conference room, an advocate's room and storage rooms for case files. Whilst the Coroner remains an Outside Body and a Crown employee, the support staff became employees of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council. The

staff have provided administrative support to the Coroner for both the Powys and Bridgend and The Glamorgan Valleys workloads, with Powys providing financial remuneration towards the cost of the running of their service.

- 4.2 At the beginning of 2012, this Coroner resigned as Coroner for both Powys and Bridgend and The Glamorgan Valleys and Louise Hunt was appointed as his successor. Louise was subject to a joint appointment between Powys and Bridgend and The Glamorgan Valleys, albeit these remained as separate jurisdictions prior to their amalgamation in July 2013. Louise resigned from this post in November 2013 and Andrew Barkley assumed the role of Acting Senior Coroner. Similarly, following the resignation of the Coroner for Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan in July 2013, the post has been covered by two Part-time Assistant Coroners.
- 4.3 With the pace of modernisation increasing within the service, it is therefore timely to review the Coroner's service and look at the provision of the service within the two Areas. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Chief Coroner are keen to explore the potential for amalgamating the two Coroner Areas particularly as both are covered by part time provision and also advocates the post of a Whole Time Coroner as set down in the Coroners and Justice Act. This is supported by the Coroner's Society for England and Wales who appear to prefer this arrangement. This has been the case in a recent review with the appointment of a Whole Time Coroner for North East Wales and North Central Wales which have recently merged into one jurisdiction – this took effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013.
- 4.4 The introduction of medical examiners, currently expected to be introduced in June 2015, may also impact on the number of cases investigated and the number of inquests held in the future.

## 5. CASELOAD

- 5.1 Based on the latest figures provided by the Ministry of Justice, the number of deaths reported during the period 2010-2012 was as follows:

	Bridgend & Glamorgan Valleys	Powys	Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan
2010	2,575	350	1707
2011	2,381	283	1535
2012	2,346	309	1681
<b>Average</b>	<b>2,434</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>1641</b>

Thus a total average of 4,389 reported deaths.

- 5.2 The recommended number of cases which warrant consideration of a Whole Time Coroner appointment is 2,000.

## 6. BUDGET

- 6.1 The total annual budget for Coroners in the Coroner Area of Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys is £1,007,286 and in the Coroner Area of Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan is £722,000 giving a combined total budget of £1,729,286. Within both Coroner Areas, a budget is allocated for Local Authority administration. Consideration has been given to a restructure of the staff who are currently based in Rock Grounds, Aberdare (Powys, Bridgend & Glamorgan Valleys) and Cathays Police Station (Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan) with a view to consolidating the support provided for the Coroner's Service albeit there would still be a requirement to run the service across the aforementioned sites.
- 6.2 In recent years, Bridgend and The Glamorgan Valleys have made provision within the budget to cover the potential of 'Long Inquest Payments'. Where such events occur and a Part-Time Coroner is in post, he or she is entitled to an additional payment over and above their normal remuneration. Past experience has shown that this could be a significant expense. For example, the Parc Prison inquest which took place in March 2010 and lasted 6 weeks resulted in additional payments of £27,375.97 to the Coroner. This was in addition to the £21,882.33 fees incurred for juror and witness expenses for this inquest. Similarly, Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan have held a number of large Inquests relating to deaths in Cardiff Prison.
- 6.3 However the issue of 'Long Inquest Payments' would be eliminated if the option of appointing a Whole-Time Coroner is chosen.

## **7. FUTURE SERVICE OPTIONS**

- 7.1 Three main options have been identified in terms of future service delivery:
- I. To retain the status quo i.e. one Part-time Senior Coroner for Powys, Bridgend & Glamorgan Valleys and one Part-time Senior Coroner for Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan with separate Areas.
  - II. To retain the status quo i.e. one Part-time Senior Coroner for Powys, Bridgend & Glamorgan Valleys and one Part-time Senior Coroner for Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan with separate Areas but shared administration.
  - III. To amalgamate the two Coroner Areas, with one Whole-time Coroner and complete shared administration. There would then be a single Relevant Authority.

### **Option 1 – To retain the status quo**

- 7.2 Whilst the current arrangements have worked reasonably well, it is felt that there are significant disadvantages in continuing with this structure. In particular large expenditure would still be incurred as Part-time Coroners are entitled to additional payments for Long Inquests. Furthermore the Chief Coroner has expressed his intention to reduce the number of Coroner Areas in England and Wales from 96 to 75. However, it will be necessary to continue with the status quo if all Councils in the proposed merged Area fail to agree. If consent is not forthcoming, it will be necessary to advertise the



position of Whole Time Coroner for the Powys, Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys Area.

**Option 2 – Current structure managed by Two Relevant Lead Authorities with separate Areas but with shared administration**

- 7.3 This option has many advantages including the fact that there would be one central streamlined system with one Local Authority taking the Lead and facilitating “pay and rations”. However, it also has its disadvantages. Coroner pay scales limit a Part-time Coroner’s salary at 2,000 cases per year. Current combined average caseloads for the two jurisdictions amount to over 2,700. Furthermore the Coroner would still be entitlement to additional payments for Long Inquests, which are in high volume in both Coroner Areas.

**Option 3 – To amalgamate the two Coroner Areas with one Whole-time Coroner and complete shared administration**

- 7.4 This is the preferred option of both the Ministry of Justice and the Coroner’s Society. Whilst it would mean a slight increase in the Coroner’s salary, these costs would be negated by the cessation of Long Inquest payments. Furthermore, there would be the potential to raise the profile of the Coroner service with the contributing factor that caseload and service delivery will be consistent.
- 7.5 A summary of the advantages and disadvantages of each option is attached as Appendix 1.
- 7.6 The Officer recommendation from both current Relevant Authorities is option 3 i.e. the amalgamation of the two existing Coroner Areas and the recruitment of one Whole-time Coroner.
- 7.7 In the event that option 3 be adopted, it would only be necessary for a single Relevant Authority. A factor in deciding the designation of the Relevant Authority is one of managerial capacity. Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC have competent staff already managing a merged Coroner Area. Furthermore, Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC has been the Relevant Authority for Bridgend & The Glamorgan Valleys ever since its formation in 1996. The Coroner’s Office in Rock Grounds has its own bespoke courtroom which would enable the vast majority of Inquests to be held “in-house”. It is recommended however, that the current office based in Cardiff (Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan Coroner Area) would remain in order to allow consistency and continuity of service, in particular for the residents of this area.
- 7.8 It is further recommended that costs associated with the service be apportioned between the six Local Authorities on a population ratio basis.

**8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Coroners working in jurisdictions within Wales are deemed All Wales Coroners. However, should a decision be taken to amalgamate the two

Coroner Areas of Powys, Bridgend & The Glamorgan Valleys and Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan, this would require an Order from the Ministry of Justice to bring this into effect.

## **9. AMALGAMATION PROCEDURE**

- 9.1 Upon consent from all six Councils, The Ministry of Justice will consult the Welsh Assembly on the proposed amalgamations (in order to meet the formal Schedule 2 consultation requirements). South Wales Police and Dyfed Powys Police Authorities will also be consulted. It is then anticipated that it will take up to six months to make the Order.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 The preferred option of the Ministry of Justice is to amalgamate the two current Coroner Areas.
- 10.2 The Officer recommendation from both current Relevant Lead Authorities is to amalgamate both Coroner Areas and recruit one Whole-time Coroner.
- 10.3 The Chief Coroner has confirmed that amalgamation can only be possible with the consent of all six Councils – Rhondda Cynon Taf, Bridgend, Merthyr, Powys, Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan.
- 10.3 The current situation of an Acting Part-time Coroner cannot continue indefinitely as certainty is required for future service delivery.
- 10.4 In the event that all six Councils do not agree on an amalgamation, it will be necessary to proceed with advertising a vacancy for a Whole-time Coroner for Powys, Bridgend & The Glamorgan Valleys.

**Appendix 1****Evaluation of Options****Option 1****To retain the status quo – Part-time Coroner for Powys, Bridgend & The Glamorgan Valleys and Part-time Coroner for Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan**

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Retains the status quo	Increased bureaucracy
Familiar – established and works	Some duplication of work
Families have the opportunity to attend Inquests locally	Risk of 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

**\*\*Option 2****Current structure managed by Two Relevant Lead Authorities with separate Areas but with shared administration**

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Amalgamation of Coroner administration would reduce bureaucracy and duplication and could eventually lead to cost savings	Lack of budgetary control of the service
Reduces possibility of duplicate payments	Complex to manage
No issues about the current system from the public or coroner staff	Risk of long inquests and therefore potential uncontrolled additional costs
Saves host authority duplication of their general admin and management support	One part time coroner may be without admin support.
Enables better procurement opportunities from NHS.	Additional office accommodation may be required for the part time coroner.
	HR issues associated with relocation of administrative staff.

**\*Option 3****To amalgamate the two Coroner Areas with one Whole-time Coroner and complete shared administration**

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Raised profile of service	Caseload downtime
Potential to build service into a centre of best practice	Slight increase in cost, but no long inquest payments, so the local authorities would be able to budget with more certainty
Coroner manages the merged jurisdiction  Enables better procurement opportunities from NHS.	Potential for increased travel time for families to attend inquests if only one court location used for the four authority areas. However this could be overcome by requiring the coroner to travel to hold inquests in different locations
Improved links with all stakeholders	Reduced level of LA involvement at a local level
One central streamlined system	HR issues associated with relocation of administrative staff, although having two offices on different sites would eliminate this problem.
Saves host authority duplication of their general admin and management support	
One annual return	
Clear accountability and transparency	
Caseload and consistent service delivery	
No risk of 'long inquests' payments	
Amalgamation of LA administration would reduce bureaucracy and duplication and could eventually lead to savings	
One coroner office costs saving	
Acceptable to the Chief Coroner and MoJ	

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL**

**26 FEBRUARY 2014**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**REVIEW OF CORONER SERVICE**

Freestanding Matter

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**APPENDIX 2****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	Dyfed Powys	South Wales	Dyfed Powys

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

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**APPENDIX 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>
area	Police  South Wales Police	Police	Police  South Wales Police
Transport links	Large geographical area M4  A470  Valleys Railway Stations  Heart of Wales Line Railway Stations	Large geographical area M4  Cardiff Airport  Cardiff Central Railway Station  Valleys Railways Stations	Large geographical 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	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



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**APPENDIX 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>
	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
Courtrooms/inquest venues	Bespoke Coroner's Courtroom (housed within Coroner's Office, Aberdare)  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	Courtroom housed within Cathays Police Station, Cardiff	Bespoke Coroner's Courtroom (housed within Coroner's Office, Aberdare)  Brecon Law Court (No cost)/ Llandrindod Wells Law Court  Welshpool Magistrates Court (no cost)  Courtroom housed within Cathays Police Station, Cardiff

14.08.15

**APPENDIX 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>
	is a separate issue being investigated across the UK  Welshpool Magistrates Court (no cost)		
Office/staff accommodation – location and capacity	1 FTE x Office Manager  1 FTE x Inquest Assistant  2 PTE x Coroner's Clerks	1 x FTE Coroner's Senior Administrative Assistant  1 PTE x Word Processing Operator	To be reviewed following recruitment of new Senior Coroner
Coroner's officers' employer	1 FTE – Dyfed Powys Police  3 FTE – South Wales Police	3 FTE – South Wales Police	1 FTE – Dyfed Powys Police  6 FTE – South 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)	2 (Tom Atherton and Christopher Woolley)	Number will be determined by Senior Coroner and recruited following his/her appointment.

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**APPENDIX 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>
			However, it is anticipated that the existing Assistant Coroners will be transferred over to the new Area (therefore a minimum of 4 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

- It would be helpful if you would also attach maps of the area showing the current position and the position in the event of a merger. Both maps should show details of for instance inquest venues, hospitals, prisons and transport links.

<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.

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**APPENDIX 2****SENIOR CORONER APPOINTMENT**

- Why are you seeking a merger now (ie 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 providing interim cover 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 PBGV and is also providing interim cover for CVG. 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 would 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

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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 Assistant Coroner) 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?

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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 (PBGV) 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 Officer will be housed in Aberdare Police Station – this development has also been

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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.

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- 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 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 (IRIS) 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 jurisdiction 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 "I.T." 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



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**APPENDIX 2**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 – eg 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 4 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.

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- 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.

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**APPENDIX 2****RISKS AND MITIGATING ACTIONS**

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

<b>RISK</b>	<b>MITIGATING ACTION</b>
<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**

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
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

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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 MoJ 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 MoJ 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>.