

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2014-2015**

**COUNCIL  
28<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2015**

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

	<b>Agenda Item No.10</b>
<b>WELSH GOVERNMENT – CONSULTATION DOCUMENT – DRAFT DIRECTIONS TO THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES</b>	

Author: Ms.Karyl May, Head of Democratic Services  
Tel.No.01443-424045

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The Purpose of this report is to advise Members of the comments of both the Cabinet Working Group and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of the Welsh Government's Consultation Document – Draft Directors to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales, which needs to be responded to by the 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2015.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Take into consideration the comments of Members of the Cabinet Working Group and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that these, in addition to any further views (as appropriate) expressed at the meeting be submitted to the Welsh Government by the 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2015.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Members will recall that at the last Council Meeting held on the 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2015, it was agreed that Working Groups of both the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be established to consider and make comment on the Welsh Government's Document – Draft Directions to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales, which was published on the 17<sup>th</sup> August, 2015 and responses to be made by 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2015.
- 3.2 Members of the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> October and Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2015 respectively.
- 3.3 The report together with the information circulated at the Council meeting held on the 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2015 and also the Directions (Local Government

(Wales) Act, 2015) are attached at Appendix 1; the response of the Cabinet Working Group is attached at Appendix 2 and the response of Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be circulated to Members following its meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2015.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The Consultation Document has been considered in great detail by Members of the Cabinet Working Group and will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2015. It is therefore felt appropriate that the comments of the Cabinet Working Group and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (to be circulated following its meeting) together with any additional views expressed at the Council Meeting (as appropriate) be submitted to the Welsh Government by the deadline of the 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2015.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**  
**as amended by the**  
**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**  
**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**  
**COUNCIL**  
**28<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2015**  
**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, LEGAL &**  
**DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**  
**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

WELSH GOVERNMENT - CONSULTATION DOCUMENT – WHITE PAPER –  
DRAFT DIRECTIONS TO THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY  
COMMISSION FOR WALES

Freestanding Matter

Contact: Ms.Karyl May, Head of Democratic Services Tel.No.01443-424045



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015-2016**

**COUNCIL  
30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2015**

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

<b>Agenda Item No. 8</b>
<b>WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION – DRAFT DIRECTIONS TO THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES</b>

**Author: Ms.Karyl May, Head of Democratic Services**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To seek the views of Members to the Welsh Government's Draft Directions to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (the Commission) which are based on the Minister's merger map published in June of this year by the deadline of the 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2015.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The views of Members are sought in respect of the attached consultation document in order that the Council's response can be made by the deadline of the 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2015.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 Members views are sought on the attached consultation document which was launched on the 17<sup>th</sup> August, 2015 on the Welsh Government's Draft Directions to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (the Commission). The consultation closes at midnight on the 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2015.

3.2 Members may be aware the Minister for Public Services proposes to remove the cap on the maximum number of Councillors per authority in recognition of the larger populations and geographical areas which the proposed new Councils will cover. However, the Minister is not proposing to specify a minimum or maximum number of Councillors per local authority. Instead, the Draft Directions specify that the number of Councillors should be no smaller than the number produced by a Councillor to elector ratio of once Councillor to every 4,000 electors, which will mean that there will be at least 616 Councillors in Wales following the mergers (from the current 1248) and Councils ranging from 33 Councillors (in a merged Anglesey/Gwynedd) to 109 Councillors (in the new Gwent).

3.3 The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) has undertaken some research into the proposals and early feedback suggests that in addition to the issues of the potential size of some new wards and the number of Councillors in some Councils, there is a particular concern about the implication of the Direction stating that new wards should be based on a grouping of 2 or more existing wards. This presents a number of challenges:

- some existing wards may already have the appropriate 1:4,000 ratio, but the direction appears to preclude them from continuing in their current form;
- merging 2 or more existing wards will mean it will be difficult for the Commission to achieve its main statutory aim (as per the current Local Government Bill) of achieving consistency/parity of Councillor: elector ratios across a new principal council area; and
- merging 2 or more existing wards in an arbitrary approach may run counter to the main direction that the Commission should follow which is to take into account the 'particular characteristics of an area' when creating new wards.

3.4 The timescale for the mergers and initial reviews remain challenging and, whilst the Commission remains confident that they can be achieved by the proposed deadlines, leave little room for delays. Below is a broad timetable (dates in italics are based on the latest available information):

- 9<sup>th</sup> November 2015 – Consultation closes on draft Directions to Boundary Commission regarding Initial Reviews
- *November 2015* – Local Government (Wales) Bill receives Royal Assent
- *November 2015* – Further brief consultation on final draft Directions to Boundary Commission regarding Initial Reviews
- *January/February 2016* – Directions to the Boundary Commission are formally 'made'
- *March/April 2016* (within 2 months of the Directions being made) – Boundary Commission publishes a timetable for the programme of initial reviews
- *Spring 2016* – Boundary Commission develops and consults on its 'Policy and Practice' (as per S19(2) of the Local Government (Wales) Bill 2015)
- *Early Summer 2016* – Boundary Commission publishes its final 'Policy and Practice' and begins initial reviews, probably on a phased approach (with North Wales likely to be later in the timetable until WG confirms whether there will be 2 or 3 councils in North Wales)
- By 31<sup>st</sup> July 2018 – Boundary Commission submits reports to Ministers on initial reviews

3.5 It is the intention of the Minister for Public Services to issue the Directions to the Commission as soon as possible following Royal Assent of the Local Government (Wales) Bill 2015, subject to the National Assembly. This will

allow the Commission as much time as possible to complete its reviews and for electoral arrangements to be made for the elections to Shadow Authorities in 2019.







Welsh Government

## Consultation Document

# Draft Directions to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales

Date of issue: **17 August 2015**

Action required: Responses by **9 November 2015**

## Overview

We are seeking your views on the Draft Directions to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission Wales.

As part of its programme of local government reform, the Welsh Government will require the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission Wales to conduct reviews of electoral arrangements for proposed new local authority areas.

This consultation seeks your views on the detail of the Draft Directions, including thoughts on council size and the ratio of electors for each elected member.

## How to respond

Please respond using the form at the end of the document and either send in hard copy to the address below or by email to: [RLGProgramme@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:RLGProgramme@wales.gsi.gov.uk).

If you are sending your response by email, please mark the subject of your e-mail: Directions to the LDBCW Consultation

## Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

## Contact details

For further information:

Reforming Local Government Programme  
Welsh Government  
Crown Buildings  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

email: [RLGProgramme@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:RLGProgramme@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

telephone: 029 2082 6202

## Data protection

### How the views and information you give us will be used

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations.

The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document.

We may also publish responses in full.

Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government.

This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this consultation is to seek views on the Draft Directions to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (“the Commission”).

The Local Government (Wales) Bill 2015 is currently being considered by the National Assembly for Wales. The provisions of the Bill allow for preparatory work to enable a programme of local government mergers and reform. This includes giving the Welsh Ministers powers to direct the Commission to conduct initial reviews of the electoral arrangements for the proposed new local authority areas.

The map of proposed new local authority areas, including the two options for North Wales, was published by the Minister for Public Services on 17 June and it forms the basis of the Draft Directions to the Commission. We are not, in this consultation, seeking views about the map. That opportunity will arise during a consultation on a Draft Local Government Bill planned for the autumn.

## **Directions to the Commission**

Following this period of consultation and the enactment of the Bill, the Minister for Public Services will issue a further draft of the Directions for a short formal consultation. Once final Directions are issued, the Commission will be able to start work to identify the most appropriate electoral arrangements for the proposed new local authorities in Wales.

As outlined in section 18 of the Bill, the Commission “must seek to ensure effective and convenient local government in Wales”. It must propose wards that are coherent and strike a balance between building an effective and capable body of elected members while maintaining a close connection between local communities and those who represent them.

The Welsh Government recognises the specialised nature of the Commission’s work and its expertise in conducting electoral reviews. The Commission will need to use its own judgement to take account of the particular characteristics of an area and the impact these may have on the elected member for each ward. There is also no intention to specify to the Commission the order in which it should conduct its reviews, although the deadline for making the last report will be 31 July 2018.

## **Powys**

Powys is not included in the programme of electoral reviews because the Welsh Government’s proposals do not envisage it merging with another local authority - it is proposed that it will remain as a “continuing authority”.

The electoral arrangements in Powys were most recently reviewed in 2011; however, the recommendations from that review have not yet been

implemented. The Welsh Government, therefore, intends to implement the recommended arrangements in time for the local elections in 2017.

These Draft Directions allow the Commission to recommend a lesser number of elected members for a new local authority area than there will be in Powys in 2017 following the recommendations of the Commission's review in 2011. Following the programme of local government reform, the Commission will recommence its routine of 10 year cycles of electoral reviews for local authorities and will begin this new round with Powys.

## **Directions**

We would welcome views from a wide range of our stakeholders on the Draft Directions and, in particular, on the following issues.

Note: The General Directions include provisions to which the Commission must have regard. They are not to be interpreted as rules and should be read in conjunction with sections 16 to 18 of the Local Government (Wales) Bill 2015.

### **Number of elected members per local authority area**

In recognising the increase in size of local authorities when merged together, the Minister for Public Services has announced that the cap of the maximum number of 75 elected members per local authority will be removed. The Directions do not specify a maximum or minimum number of elected members but they specify that the number of councillors for a local authority should be no smaller than the number produced by a councillor to elector ratio of one councillor to every 4,000 electors.

- **Question 1: Do you think the suggested ratio provides for effective and convenient local government?**
- **Question 2: Do you think there is a minimum number of councillors required to ensure the effective and democratic working of a local authority? If so, what is it and why?**
- **Question 3: Do you think a minimum number of elected members per local authority should be specified in the Draft Directions?**
- **Question 4: Do you think that there should be a cap on the maximum number of elected members per local authority? If so, what do you think the maximum number should be and why?**
- **Question 5: Do you agree that each ward within a local authority area should have roughly the same number of electors per elected member?**

### **Particular characteristics of a ward**

The Draft Directions specify that the Commission must consider the particular characteristics of a proposed local authority area when reviewing the warding arrangements. Particular characteristics may include density of population in an area, the mixture of Welsh and English speaking communities and the geography of an area or issues such as poverty.

- **Question 6: What effect should the particular characteristics of an area have on the number of councillors needed to represent the population?**

### **Naming of wards**

The Commission is tasked with proposing names for each ward. It is expected that commonly used and locally accepted Welsh language names will be used. Where there is no commonly used Welsh language name for a ward, the Commission must also propose an English language equivalent.

- **Question 7: Do you agree that commonly used Welsh language names for wards do not also need an English language equivalent? If not, do you think that each ward should have an English and Welsh name?**

**Consultation Response Form**Name: Email: Telephone: Address: Postcode: Organisation  
(if applicable) **Returning this form**

The closing date for replies is **9 November 2015**

Please send this completed form to us by email to:

**RLGProgramme@wales.gsi.gov.uk**

Or by post to:

Reforming Local Government Programme  
Welsh Government  
Crown Buildings  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

If you are sending your response by email, please mark the subject of your e-mail: **Directions to the LDBCW Consultation**

**Question 1. Do you think the suggested ratio provides for effective and convenient local government?**

Yes   
No

**If no, please explain:**

**Question 2. Do you think there is a minimum number of councillors required to ensure the effective and democratic working of a local authority?**

Yes   
No

**If yes, what is it and why?**

**Question 3. Do you think a minimum number of elected members per local authority should be specified in the Draft Directions?**

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Give reasons for your response:**

**Question 4. Do you think that there should be a cap on the maximum number of elected members per local authority?**

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

**If yes, what do you think the maximum number should be and why?**



**Question 5. Do you agree that each ward within a local authority area should have roughly the same number of electors per elected member?**

Yes   
No

**Give reasons for your response:**

**Question 6. What effect should the particular characteristics of an area have on the number of councillors needed to represent the population?**

**Question 7. Do you agree that commonly used Welsh language names for wards do not also need an English language equivalent?**

Yes   
No

**If no, do you think that each ward should have an English and Welsh name?**

Yes   
No

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Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here:

## Draft Directions to Boundary Commission for Initial Reviews

No maximum or minimum council size, but councils cannot have a councillor/elector ratio of lower than 1:4,000

### Option 1 - 3 Local Authorities in North Wales

Merging Authorities	Total electors (2015 local government electorate figures)	Total Electors for Proposed new Council	Minimum Number of Councillors for Proposed new Council (based on ration of 1:4,000)	Current Councillor Numbers
Gwynedd	81,672			
Isle of Anglesey	50,352	132,024	33	105
Conwy	93,051			
Denbighshire	76,087	169,138	42	106
Flintshire	118,439			
Wrexham	103,408	221,847	55	122
Ceredigion	54,773			
Carmarthenshire	141,025			
Pembrokeshire	92,189	287,987	72	176
Blaenau Gwent	51,987			
Caerphilly	132,157			
Torfaen	70,073			
Newport	107,135			
Monmouthshire	73,180	434,532	109	250
Swansea	181,167			
Neath Port Talbot	106,621	287,788	72	132
Bridgend	104,300			
Merthyr Tydfil	43,968			
Rhondda, Cynon, Taf	175,682	323,950	81	162
Cardiff	253,607			
The Vale of Glamorgan	96,756	350,363	88	122
<b>Powys*</b>	<b>103,822</b>	<b>103,822</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Wales</b>	<b>2,254,219</b>		<b>616</b>	<b>1248</b>
<b>Average Size Council</b>			<b>68</b>	

### Option 2- 2 Local Authorities in North Wales

Merging Authorities	Total electors (2015 local government electorate figures)	Total Electors for Proposed new Council	Minimum Number of Councillors for Proposed new Council (based on ration of 1:4,000)	Current Councillor Numbers
Gwynedd	81,672			
Isle of Anglesey	50,352			
Conwy	93,051	225,075	56	164
Denbighshire	76,087			
Flintshire	118,439			
Wrexham	103,408	297,934	74	169
Ceredigion	54,773			
Carmarthenshire	141,025			
Pembrokeshire	92,189	287,987	72	176
Blaenau Gwent	51,987			
Caerphilly	132,157			
Torfaen	70,073			
Newport	107,135			
Monmouthshire	73,180	434,532	109	250
Swansea	181,167			
Neath Port Talbot	106,621	287,788	72	132
Bridgend	104,300			
Merthyr Tydfil	43,968			
Rhondda, Cynon, Taf	175,682	323,950	81	162
Cardiff	253,607			
The Vale of Glamorgan	96,756	350,363	88	122
<b>Powys*</b>	<b>103,822</b>	<b>103,822</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Wales</b>	<b>2,311,451</b>		<b>616</b>	<b>1248</b>
<b>Average Size Council</b>			<b>77</b>	

*\*Powys, as a 'continuing authority' is not included in the Direction for 'Initial Reviews' and the consultation paper states that the 2011 Electoral Review will be implemented ahead of the 2017 elections, providing Powys with 64 members. Powys will however be the first council to be reviewed under the Commission's 10 year cycle following mergers; the criteria for this review may be subject to a further Ministerial Direction, however, if the same 1:4000 ratio was applied, Powys would have 26 councillors.*



## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) ACT 2015**

### **Directions to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales 2016**

In exercise of the powers conferred on them by sections 16 to 18 of the Local Government (Wales) Act 2015<sup>(1)</sup>, and having consulted the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales and any association appearing to them to be representative of local authorities, the Welsh Ministers give the following Directions to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales.

#### **Title and commencement**

**1.**—(1) The title of these Directions is the Directions to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales 2016.

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

#### **Interpretation**

**2.** In these Directions—

“the Commission” (“*y Comisiwn*”) means the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales;

“initial reviews” (“*adolygiadau cychwynnol*”) means the reviews to which paragraph 3 refers; and

“particular characteristics of an area” (“*nodweddion penodol ardal*”) include the density of its population, the mixture of Welsh and English speaking communities, within it, its geography and the levels of poverty within it.

#### **Initial reviews**

**3.** The Welsh Ministers direct the Commission to conduct an initial review of the following proposed principal areas<sup>(2)</sup>, described by reference to the existing principal areas comprised within them, which

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(1) [The statute number will be inserted once the Bill receives Royal Assent].

(2) The proposals published by Welsh Ministers on 17 June 2015 include two options for the North Wales region, which result in either two or three proposed principal areas.

are proposals published by the Welsh Ministers on 17 June 2015<sup>(1)</sup>.

(1) —

- (a) The counties of Isle of Anglesey and Gwynedd, and the county borough of Conwy;
- (b) The counties of Denbighshire and Flintshire, and the county borough of Wrexham;

(2) —

- (a) The counties of Isle of Anglesey and Gwynedd;
- (b) The county borough of Conwy, and the county of Denbighshire;
- (c) The county of Flintshire, and the county borough of Wrexham;

(3) —

- (a) The counties of Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire;
- (b) The county of Swansea, and the county borough of Neath Port Talbot;
- (c) The county boroughs of Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil;
- (d) The county boroughs of Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan; and
- (e) The county of Monmouthshire and the county boroughs of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Torfaen and Newport.

#### **Date of report**

4. The Welsh Ministers direct the Commission to—

- (a) make and submit to the Welsh Ministers a report containing recommendations from the Commission in relation to each initial review to which these Directions relate, by 31 July 2018; and
- (b) publish a timetable for the programme of those reviews within the period of two months following the coming into force of these Directions.

#### **General Directions**

5. The Welsh Ministers direct the Commission to have regard to—

- (a) the particular characteristics of an area and the extent to which those characteristics should influence the size of the ward and the number of electors within it;

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<sup>(1)</sup>[gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2015/lgfuture/?lang=en](http://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2015/lgfuture/?lang=en).

- (b) the following principles—
- (i) existing electoral wards should be grouped together in groups of two or more to create proposed electoral wards;
  - (ii) a Welsh language name for each electoral ward should be recommended and, where there is not a generally accepted Welsh language name for an electoral ward, an English language equivalent should be recommended;
  - (iii) the number of councillors for a proposed principal area should be no smaller than the number produced by a councillor to elector ratio of 1:4000; and
  - (iv) the number of councillors for a particular proposed principal area should be no smaller than the number of councillors for another proposed principal area which has a smaller electorate.

*Leighton Andrews*

Minister for Public Services, one of the Welsh Ministers

Date





**OFFICIAL ATTENDANCE OF RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCILS CABINET COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP**

**LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES**

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Committee Working Group – “Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales” on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October, 2015 at 1.30pm at the Council Headquarters, Clydach Vale.

**County Borough Councillors in attendance:-**

(Mrs) M Webber – Chairman

R Bevan

G E Hopkins

J Rosser

E Hanagan

**Officers in Attendance**

Mr P Lucas – Director, Legal & Democratic Services

Mr C Jones – Service Director, Legal & Democratic Services

Ms K May – Head of Democratic Services

Mrs E Wilkins – Cabinet Business Officer

**1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST.**

In accordance with RCT Council’s Code of Conduct there were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

**2 APOLOGIES**

Apologies of absence was received from County Borough Councillors A Morgan, K Montague, M Forey & A Crimmings

**3 LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES.**

The Director, Legal & Democratic Services reminded Members of the decision taken by Council on the 30<sup>th</sup> September, to create both an Executive and Non Executive working group on the subject, with the comments from each being presented to Council at the end of the month to assist in forming the Councils response to the consultation document by the deadline of the 9<sup>th</sup> November. The Director advised that the purpose of the Consultation was to seek views on the most appropriate electoral arrangements for the proposed map of new local authority areas, and was not seeking views on the map itself.

Members were referred to the Welsh Government Consultation document included within the agenda’s and to the Directions for the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales 2016, which had been circulated around the table. The Director advised Members of the discrepancies between the two documents in respect of the drafting, highlighting inconsistencies in respect of the use of the term ‘population’ and within 5a of the Directions

the reference to 'electors'. Members of the working group noted the discrepancies and commented that the term 'population' should be taken forward throughout all documentation, as elected Members represent everyone within their ward, whether they are registered to vote or not.

Members also spoke about the characteristics listed within the consultation papers and queried why characteristics such as age and ethnic groups had not also been identified as a specific characteristic to be taken forward. Members continued to discuss the fact that characteristics would be unique to some areas, providing the example of 'student population' within some electoral wards of the County Borough due to the University of South Wales. Members agreed that the listing of characteristics would be best left to the specialist judgement of the Boundary Commission.

The Director, Legal & Democratic Services also referred the working group to the key principles listed within the Directions and commented that it was ambiguous as to whether the characteristics of the Directions or the Principles listed would take precedence.

Members agreed that the drafting of the Directions did not fulfil the fundamental aims of section 18 of the Local Government (Wales) Bill 2015 and that greater clarity was required to take this forward.

In respect of the Councillor to elector ratio of 1:4,000 Members commented on the different challenges for urban and rural communities which would need to be recognised by the Commission.

One member commented in general that as there was no set vision for Local Government for the next 10years it was difficult to comment adding that as the direction of travel seemed to be centralising services, it was difficult to see what role would be left for Local Government in the future.

Members felt that question 6 within the consultation document should be the first fundamental question to be broached, looking at the geographic, demographic, culture and poverty issues within each ward, highlighting again that areas are so diverse that it cannot be a one size fits all approach. It was also felt that Authorities Local Development Plans should also be considered when looking at the electoral wards, in respect of housing developments with the potential of some areas doubling in population from such developments over the next few years.

Members commented on the definition that a role of a Councillor was a 20hour a week commitment. Members commented that with some potential ward mergers a Councillor would be spending most of the time travelling to visit its local residence, wasting valuable time. In other respects, in areas of greater deprivation, Members are relied upon heavily by their residents to assist in issues of housing benefits, welfare benefits etc, commenting that some wards could be much harder works than others. Members commented that there was no reference in the IRP to reviewing the salary for Councillors in line with the proposals.

Members agreed that in some respects the merging of some wards was a common sense approach but commented on the lack of community engagement that would be lost with some of the mergers over larger areas (members commenting on their current methods of 'Walking their wards' to meet with local residents, which would not be achieved if councillors had to use their cars to move around their wards) and concerns in respect of the lack of local community knowledge also decreasing with such mergers. Members also commented on whether there should be a minimum number of Councillors for each ward and again reflected that this was dependant on the ward itself, with some areas in greater need of assistance from their local member than others. Members commented on the minimum number of Councillors proposed for each local authority and commented that the roles and functions of an authority needed to be taken forward by all Council's, irrelevant of size, adding that those with larger number of councillor representatives would have more options for fulfilling these duties, i.e avoiding the potential for members to have to sit on numerous committees, as may be the case with Councils with less numbers.

In respect of the naming of Wards, members discussed the rationale of using the Welsh or English wording and Members commented that where possible, it should remain as they are and in keeping with the status quo.

In conclusion:-

- Members agreed with the aims of the Bill although felt that the drafting of the Directions did not fulfil the fundamental aims of section 18 of the Local Government (Wales) Bill 2015 and that greater clarity was required to take this forward.
- The term 'population' should be used in all instances rather than the term 'electors'
- Clarification should be sought to determine whether the characteristics or principles should take precedence
- A prescriptive definition of characteristics should not be included and should be left to the expertise of the Boundary Commission to determine.
- The naming of wards should remain with the status quo.
- In addition to the above comments, Members also thought it may be beneficial if case studies of the role of an elected member was included within the consultation document so that the Boundary Commission had a better understanding of Local Government working when looking at the electoral arrangements for the proposed new map.

**This meeting closed at 2.20pm**

**Cllr M Webber**

**Chairman**

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