



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019-2020

COUNCIL

18 SEPTEMBER 2019

**REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS BY
THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES**

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

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To note the [Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales' \(the 'Commission'\) Draft Proposals](#) concerning its review of the Electoral Arrangements of the Council, the representations made in relation to those Draft Proposals by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the timetable for conducting the remainder of the Commission's review.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Council:

- 2.1 Notes the Commission's Draft Proposals in respect of the Council's future Electoral Arrangements, as outlined in the Commission's Draft Proposals Report;
- 2.2 Notes the representations made at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 22nd July 2019 in relation to the Commission's Draft Proposals, which will be submitted to the Commission; and
- 2.3 Notes the timetable, outlined in paragraphs 3.15 – 3.17 of the report, in respect of the process for conducting the remainder of the review by the Commission.

3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 Section 29 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 places a duty upon the Commission to review the electoral arrangements for each principal area at least once every ten years.
- 3.2 On 23rd June 2016 the then Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government published a Written Statement asking the Commission to recommence its 10 year programme of electoral reviews with an expectation that a review of all 22 electoral areas be completed in time for the new arrangements to be put into place for the 2022 local government elections.
- 3.3 The review of electoral arrangements for a principal area includes consideration of:-
- The number of Members for that principal area
 - The number, type and boundaries of Electoral Wards
 - The number of Members for any Electoral Ward in the principal area.
 - The name of any Electoral Ward.
- 3.4 The principles of the review are a consideration of:-
- Electoral parity
 - The number of Councillors remaining at 75
 - To discourage multi member wards beyond a maximum of 3
 - Natural boundaries to be used as far as possible
 - Community Ward boundaries should not be revised unless absolutely necessary
 - Each Ward should have one name which should be bilingual
- 3.5 At the Council Meeting held on Wednesday 27th June 2018, consideration was given to the urgent report in respect of the Review of Electoral Arrangements by the Commission.
- 3.6 At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Thursday 12th July 2018 Members agreed key terms of reference for the Working Group review, acknowledging that community boundaries should be used as the building blocks for the review. Members also resolved to instruct Officers to develop proposals and appropriate feedback mechanisms in accordance with the principles set out in the report to Council on the 27th June 2018. Members agreed the following key terms of reference for the review and for Officers in respect of developing proposals, namely:
- 3.6.1 To acknowledge the use of community boundary wards as the essential building blocks for the review;
 - 3.6.2 To keep change to a minimum;
 - 3.6.3 To acknowledge that some Electoral Wards will need to be amended in some formal way within the parameters outlined in the Commission guidance;
 - 3.6.4 To instruct Officers to develop options based on these principles; and
 - 3.6.5 To instruct Officers to develop appropriate feedback mechanisms.

- 3.7 The initial phase of the electoral review itself commenced on 1st August 2018 and ran until 23rd October 2018.
- 3.8 A special meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee was held on Monday 3rd September 2018 to consider proposals developed by Officers in respect of the review of the Council's electoral arrangements. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to recommend that Council agree those proposals be subject to a period of stakeholder engagement.
- 3.9 At the Council meeting held on 19th September 2018 Members considered the proposals the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had recommended be subject to a period of stakeholder engagement and agreed that those proposals be subject to a period of stakeholder engagement which ran from 21st September until 12th October 2018.
- 3.10 At the Council meeting held on 24th October 2018 the feedback from the stakeholder engagement initiated by Council was considered and the Council resolved to submit proposals to the Commission as part of its initial phase of consultation relating to the review. Where unanimous Member agreement was not achieved in respect of the proposals, areas of majority agreement were highlighted to the Commission to inform their future deliberations in addition to alternative options for some Electoral Wards.
- 3.11 The Commission has now developed its Draft Proposals in relation to its review and these are contained in its Draft Proposals Report.
- 3.12 The Draft Proposals Report can be accessed via the following links:
- <https://ldbc.gov.wales/reviews/06-19/rhondda-cynon-taf-draft-proposals>
- Cymraeg: <https://cffdl.llyw.cymru/adolygiadau/06-19/cynigion-drafft-rhondda-cynon-taf>
- Hardcopies of the Draft Proposals Report have previously been made available for Members.
- 3.13 The Commission commenced a 12 week period of statutory consultation on the Draft Proposals on Wednesday 26th June 2019 and invited representations based on evidence and facts relevant to the proposal in consideration. The consultation closes on Tuesday 17th September 2019. **Members should be mindful therefore that any individual representations they, or any organisation/body, wish to make in relation to the Draft Proposals will need to be submitted to the Commission on or before this date.**
- 3.14 In developing their Draft Proposals the Commission have considered local ties and those who wish to retain current boundaries. They have considered the representations received in the first stage of the review and have balanced these issues against other factors they must consider. Most importantly is the legal requirement placed on them to ensure electoral parity and democratic fairness for all electors.

- 3.15 The Commission will consider all representations received following the end of the consultation period and it is anticipated they will publish and submit to Welsh Government a Final Proposals Report in Late 2019/Early 2020.
- 3.16 Once Final Proposals are published there is a further opportunity for representations to be made to Welsh Government in respect of the same.
- 3.17 After a period of six weeks after receipt of the Commission's Final Proposals Welsh Government may make an Order in respect of the future electoral arrangements, with or without modification.

4. SUMMARY OF DRAFT PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The draft scheme represents the Commission's preliminary views on the electoral arrangements for the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Commission proposes a change to the arrangement of electoral wards that they consider will achieve a significant improvement in the level of electoral parity across the County Borough.
- 4.2 The Commission proposes a council of 75 members, unchanged from the current membership of 75. This results in a proposed county average of 2,302 electors per member.
- 4.3 The Commission proposes 45 electoral wards, a reduction from 52 existing wards.
- 4.4 The largest under-representation (in terms of electoral variance) within the proposals is to be in Taffs Well and Treorchy (both 23% above the proposed county average). At present the greatest under-representation is in Tonyrefail West (108% above the proposed county average).
- 4.5 The largest over-representation (in terms of electoral variance) within the proposals is to be in Ynysybwl (25% below the proposed county average). At present the greatest over-representation is in Rhigos (39% below the proposed county average).
- 4.6 The Commission is proposing 26 multi-member wards; consisting of 22 two-member electoral wards and four three-member electoral wards.
- 4.7 The Commission has proposed no changes to 18 electoral wards.
- 4.8 The Commission proposes to have one electoral ward within the county borough which combines a part of a warded community, along with its neighbouring community.
- 4.9 The Draft Proposals Report (pages 3 & 4) contains two thematic maps illustrating the current and proposed arrangements and their variances from the proposed county average of 2,302 electors per member. Those areas in green are within +/-10% of the county average; yellow and hatched yellow between +/-

10% and +/-25% of the county average; orange and hatched orange between +/-25% and +/-50% of the county average; and, those in red and hatched red are over +/-50% of the county average.

- 4.10 The Commission consider that these maps demonstrate the proposed arrangements provide for a significant improvement in electoral parity across the county.
- 4.11 The proposed electoral wards have been given working names which are intended to represent an area. The Commission recognises that there may be names that are more appropriate and it would welcome alternative suggestions. The Commission requests that these suggested names should not merely consist of listed communities and villages but, instead, should reflect the character of the areas involved as well as being effective in either English or Welsh.

5. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CONSIDERATION

- 5.1 Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 22nd July 2019 considered the Draft Proposals Report. A summary of the representations made at that meeting is set out below and relevant extract from the minutes is attached as Appendix 1 to the report. These representations shall be submitted to the Commission as part of its consultation on the Draft Proposals.

5.2 Brynna & Llanharan

Several Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee felt that the LDP forecast figures for 2023 electorate should be given greater weight and consideration, particularly in relation to the proposal for Brynna and Llanharan (The Council's majority proposal submitted in respect of the first stage of the review conducted last year was to create three single member wards from the existing two wards due to the forecasted growth in the Llaniliad area by 2023).

Graig and Treforest Wards

A Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee acknowledged whilst certain parts of Treforest could transfer to the Graig Ward to ensure electoral parity they should remain separate wards as opposed to the Commission's proposal to combine the two Wards.

Maerdy, Ferndale, Tylorstown and Ynyshir

In respect of the Wards within the Rhondda Fach Area Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that the level of representation should remain as it currently stands. Members felt by lowering the numbers from six Members to four Members would be to the detriment of the residents who live in the area particularly as there was no Community Council and the size of the proposed Electoral Ward areas. Members felt that the number of

schools within the proposed areas would also suffer, as some schools could end up with no Councillor representation on their governing bodies.

Mountain Ash East and West

A Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee raised concerns about under representation and felt that it was a number crunching exercise and residents within the communities wished to retain the existing arrangements.

Treorchy

A Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented that Treorchy is a thriving area and the 'capital of Rhondda' and to reduce the ward to a two Member ward shows lack of knowledge.

Rhigos & Hirwaun

The Local Member for Rhigos submitted written representations at the meeting in relation to these wards as appended at Appendix 1(i) to the report.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Electoral Review is being conducted by the Commission under the provisions of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Commission is conducting a 12 week period of statutory consultation which runs from 26th June 2019 until 17th September 2019.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 A full equality and diversity assessment is not required at this time. This position will be re-evaluated on an ongoing basis as related actions are delivered.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 Members are asked to note the Commission's Draft Proposals concerning its review of the Electoral Arrangements of the Council as detailed in their report and the timetable for conducting the remainder of the Commission's review.

Extract from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Minutes – 22.07.19**4. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS BY THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY & BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES**

The Chair informed Members that before the Director of Legal Services presented the report in respect of the 'Review of the Council's Electoral Arrangements by the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales', he had received written submissions from individual Members that being County Borough Councillors G. Thomas, R. Turner, M Griffiths and T Leyshon which would be taken into consideration as part of reporting to full Council.

The Director of Legal Services outlined the background of the report and it was explained that the Commission has now developed its Draft Proposals in relation to its review and these are contained in the Draft Proposal Report, which Members would have had the opportunity to consider before the meeting.

The Director of Legal Services continued to explain that the Commission has now commenced a 12-week period of statutory consultation on the Draft Proposals Report, which runs from 26th June 2019 to 17th September 2019 and invites representations, which are based on evidence and facts relevant to the specific proposal in consideration.

Members were asked to consider the summary of the draft proposal for each Electoral Ward and put their representations forward as part of the consultation feedback – either at the meeting or in advance of the Council meeting which would consider the Draft Proposals Report.

The Chair opened up the meeting to Members for their view and comments.

In respect of the Wards within the Rhondda Fach Area Members strongly agreed that the level of representation should remain as it currently stands. Members felt by lowering the numbers from six Members to four Members would be to the detriment of the residents who live in the area particularly as there was no Community Council and the size of the proposed Electoral Ward areas. Members felt that the number of schools within the proposed areas would also suffer, as some schools could end up with no Councillor representation on their governing bodies.

A Member requested clarification relating to the maps of the Church Village area. The Member observed that properties within the Dyffryn Y Coed area are not depicted on the map contained with the Draft Proposals Report and sought clarification as to whether the number of the dwellings and electors within that area had been taken into consideration when preparing the report. Officers confirmed that this would be checked but it was understood they had been even though the OS map which was being used which did not show the development.

A Member raised the proposals relating to combining the existing Treforest and Graig Wards and whilst acknowledging certain parts of Treforest could transfer to the Graig Ward they should remain separate wards.

In respect of the proposed arrangements for the Mountain Ash Electoral Ward, a Member raised concerns about under representation and felt that it was a number

Extract from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Minutes – 22.07.19

crunching exercise and residents within the communities need to retain the existing arrangements.

In respect of the Treorchy proposal, a Member commented that Treorchy is a thriving area and the 'capital of Rhondda' and to reduce the ward to a two Member ward shows lack of knowledge.

In relation to Aberaman North and South a Member queried whether consideration has been given to the LDP when considering the proposal. The Member felt that the LDP forecast figures for 2023 electorate should have been taken into account, they continued by asking if the Boundary Commission could clarify what level of consideration they have given to this aspect when reflecting on their recommendations as this would increase the numbers within the Ward.

After further discussion Member's **RESOLVED**:

- To acknowledge the Commissions Draft Proposals Report in respect of the Council's future Electoral Arrangements, as outlined in their draft proposal
- That Members comments , observations and recommendations in respect of the Draft proposals will be taken into consideration before being presented to Full Council at its meeting in September 2019

APPENDIX 1(i)

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 22.07.19

RE: Observations regarding the Boundary Review re Rhigos and Hirwaun proposals.

The current boundaries should be retained when you consider the land mass of the respective wards. The current measure only considers the electorate and is over simplified in this situation. While it is accepted that the electorate in Hirwaun Ward is over twice that in the Rhigos Ward the land area in Rhigos taking into the farming community; Hirwaun Industrial Estate and working areas such as Tower; amounts to eight or more times the size of Hirwaun. Taken together with the special qualities of the National Park there is a strong case for Rhigos Ward to remain at its' present boundary.

If it is a question simply of electorate then a natural boundary could be drawn to place a greater number of electors in the Rhigos boundary and fewer in the Hirwaun boundary although ,again, this should not be necessary given the substantive point above.

There is also an error in the map provided giving the name of the "Hirwaun" Community and electorate of 3,781. This is the Hirwaun & Penderyn Community and not the "Hirwaun Community" as it is represented by Hirwaun & Penderyn Community Council.

Should the proposed changes prevail then the name of the proposed new electoral division should include Penderyn e.g. Hirwaun & Rhigos/Penderyn. While I note there is a preference for a single name in the outlined principles the name that I propose is no more convoluted than, for example, the accepted/proposed LLantrisant Town and Talbot Green or Upper Rhydfelin and Glyntaff.

The name, Penderyn, should also be included in any proposed Welsh equivalent.

Regards,

Cllr Graham Thomas.

Rhigos/Penderyn Division.

RCTCBC