



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - 13TH JUNE 2013

**SUBJECT: LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES
REPORT 'ELECTORAL REVIEWS: COUNCIL SIZE POLICY
CONSULTATION PAPER'**

REPORT BY: ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report the proposals contained in the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales (LGBC) report 'Electoral Reviews: Council Size Policy Consultation Paper' (attached at appendix 1) and seek Members views to enable the Council to respond to the consultation exercise. The report proposes changes to the total number of councillors to be elected to each county and county borough councils at future elections.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The LGBC has a statutory duty to carry out periodic reviews of the electoral arrangements for each county and county borough council in Wales. The way the LGBC conducts an electoral review is defined by legislation and Directions issued by Welsh Ministers.
- 2.2 In May 2012 the LGBC published a consultation paper setting out how council size maybe determined. The report made proposals for sweeping changes by classifying councils into one of four different groups; Rural, Urban, Valley and Other. The Council was classified as a 'Valley' authority with 2,350 electors per councillor, giving a total of 55 councillors. This equated to a reduction of 18 from the current 73 councillors which make up the Council membership.
- 2.3 The 2012 proposals for establishing the size of Councils was widely criticised as being flawed due to the over reliance on socio-geographical characteristics. Subsequently, the LGBC have revisited this issue and worked closely with the WLGA and Data Unit in developing a revised methodology to address the concerns raised as a result of last year's proposals.
- 2.4 In undertaking their latest review the LGBC have adopted the principles that their methodology must be objective, transparent and underpinned by a robust methodology. The LGBC's latest proposals use a methodology similar to the one used in Scotland that considers:
- Population Distribution and Density (to determine relative urban and/or rural nature of areas in demographic terms) and,
 - Urbanisation (the percentage of population living outside settlements with a population over 10,000).

2.5 The LGBC have accepted the previous Ministerial Direction which set the minimum size of a council to 30 Members 'required for the proper management of the affairs of a county or a county borough council' and maximum of 75 'to minimise the risk of a county or county borough council becoming unwieldy and difficult to manage'. In addition, the LGBC decided to constrain the impact of any changes so that the number of councillors will not vary by more than 10% from their current levels.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

3.1 The electoral arrangements determined by the Welsh Government will directly affect the number of Members elected to the Council.

4. THE REPORT

4.1 The LGBC propose to place local authorities into one of four categories. The categories are defined by population density and distribution (to determine relative urban and/or rural nature of areas in demographic terms) and urbanisation (the percentage of population living outside settlements with a population over 10,000).

4.2 Category 1 is defined as having a population density of greater than or equal to 10 people per hectare and an urban nature of less than 50% of the population living outside settlements with a population over 10,000. Cardiff is the only local authority in this category.

4.3 Category 2 is defined as having a population density of greater than or equal to 4.5 people per hectare and an urban nature of less than 50% of the population living outside settlements with a population over 10,000. Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, **Caerphilly**, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea and Torfaen are included in this category.

4.4 Category 3 is defined as having a population density of less than 4.5 people per hectare and an urban nature of more than 50% of the population living outside settlements with a population over 10,000. Conwy, Flintshire, Neath Port Talbot, the Vale of Glamorgan and Wrexham are included in this category.

4.5 Category 4 is defined as having a population density of less than 2 people per hectare and an urban nature of more than 50% of the population living outside settlements with a population over 10,000. Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Denbighshire, Gwynedd, Isle of Anglesey, Monmouthshire, Pembrokeshire and Powys are included in this category.

4.6 The LGBC have applied a 'number of councillors to population' ratio to the four categories outlined above. In determining the number of councillors to population ratio the LGBC have had regard to urbanisation and population density, providing the highest ratio for category 1 councils and the lowest for category 4 councils.

4.7 The proposed councillor to population ratios are outlined below:

Category	Population Ratio (1:)
1	4,000
2	3,000
3	2,500
4	2,000

4.8 Caerphilly's population of 178,782 provides for a council made up of 60 councillors, however, the LGBC decided to constrain the impact of any changes so that the number of councillors will not vary by more than 10% from their current levels. Therefore, the LGBC are recommending a council size of 66 councillors for Caerphilly. By way of comparison, the LGBC methodology has resulted in proposals to reduce the size of 12 local authorities, increase the size of 7 local authorities while 3 remain the same.

4.9 The LGBC's report makes proposals which are subject to consultation until 19th June 2013. Following consideration of any consultation responses, the LGBC will make it's final proposals to the Welsh Government.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no equalities implications as a result of this report.

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

8. CONSULTATION

8.1 There are no consultation responses, which have not been incorporated into the report.

9. RECOMMENDATION

9.1 Members views are sought to enable the Council to respond to the LGBC's consultation. The LGBC welcome any comments on the report but have specifically requested responses to the questions contained in Appendix A to their report.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To provide Members with the opportunity to respond to the LGBC's consultation.

11. STATUTORY POWERS

11.1 Local Government Act 1972.

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Appendices:
Appendix 1 Electoral Review, Council Size Policy - Consultation Paper