



COUNCIL – 4TH JUNE 2019

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO CAERPHILLY ELECTORAL REVIEW 2019

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To agree the Council response to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission (“the Commission”) for Wales who are conducting a review of electoral arrangements of Caerphilly County Borough Council.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Members will recall receiving a presentation from the Commission at the meeting of Council on 5th March 2019. The Council agreed to form a working group to review the electoral arrangements in the county borough and formulate a response to the Commission. The working group has met on several occasions and the draft response of the Council is attached to this report at Appendix 1. Council is being asked to approve the response for submission to the Commission on 5th June 2019, when the consultation period on the review of the electoral arrangements ends.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the submission found at Appendix 1 of the report is sent to the Commission as the official response of the Council to the consultation exercise on the review of the electoral arrangements within the county borough.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 So that the Council responds to the review of electoral arrangements by the Commission.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Members will remember the presentation given by the Commission to the meeting of Council on 5th March. The Commission informed Council that the latest ONS estimate has the population of Caerphilly at 180,795, with a population density of less than 10 persons per hectare and under 25% of the population living in settlements smaller than 10,000 people. These factors placed Caerphilly in Category 2. The Commission has established 4 categories of principal council in Wales. The Commission has determined that for Category 2, councils should have a councillor to population ratio of 1:3,000. The Commission determined that the overall Council Size Aim is therefore 60 members. However for this review there is a 10% cap on the reduction in members so the Council Size Aim for this review will be 66 which will result in a ratio of one councillor to 1971 electors.

- 5.2 In carrying out its review the Commission will take into account the aim of establishing one councillor per 1971 electors, community ties, natural and manmade boundaries. The Commission highlighted 7 wards within the county borough of particular concern as they were over or under represented by 25% or more. These wards were Pontlottyn, Bargoed, Aberbargoed, Pengam, Cefn Fforest, Crosskeys and St James.
- 5.3 The Commission advised the meeting of Council in March that it was keen to hear the views of the Council, hence the establishment of the working group by the Council. The working group comprised of the 3 political group leaders, Cllrs Cuss, Jones, Pritchard and Whittle.
- 5.4 The working group has met on 5 occasions and the agreed proposals of the working group are attached at appendix 1 of the report for the approval of the Council. The approved response will then be sent to the Commission on 5th June, which will be the conclusion of stage 1 of the review process.
- 5.5 At stage 2 the Commission will consider and develop any proposals submitted to them and publish draft proposals in late 2019/early 2020. It is anticipated that the Commission will meet the group leaders and a further 12 week statutory consultation period will begin.
- 5.6 At stage 3 the draft proposals will represent the Commission's initial views on Caerphilly's electoral arrangements and it will welcome any representations. These will be considered before the Commission formulates its final proposals and submit them to the Welsh Government.
- 5.7 At stage 4 the Welsh Government will consider the Commission's proposals and may allow some very minor changes, probably around the autumn of 2020. If accepted, the Welsh Government will make the appropriate legislation so that the 2022 local government elections will reflect the changes in the electoral arrangements.
- 5.8 The review of electoral arrangements process is being carried out by the Commission in all the 22 principal councils in Wales, and a further review will begin in 2022.

5.9 **Conclusion**

By making representations to the Commission, the Council is at least trying to influence the thinking of the Commission. If no submission is made by the Council then it is likely that the Commission will reduce the number of councillors in the county borough down to 66 without having the benefit of the local knowledge of the Council, which may result in the electors beings deprived of adequate and proper representation.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 The proposals being presented to the Commission are made on the basis that there is a population within the county borough of 180,795; there is an electorate of 130,104, with a population eligible to vote of 142,461. Further it is accepted that there are just over 4000 16/17 year olds within the county borough.

7. **LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES**

- 7.1 The Commission's statutory role to review electoral arrangements across the 22 principal council areas in Wales is independent of the Council's policies.

8. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

8.1 Whilst the work of the Commission is independent of the Council, the report contributes to the following Well-being Goals:-

- A resilient Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The work of the Commission should not result in any negative equality issues.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no financial implications in the report.

11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no personnel implications within the report.

12. CONSULTATIONS

12.1 The views of the consultees listed below have already been incorporated into the report.

13. STATUTORY POWER

13.1 The Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013

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Consultees: Members of the Working Group, the interim Chief Executive, Electoral Services
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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Draft Council Response to the Commission

Background Papers:

Report to Council of 5th March – Electoral Review of Caerphilly

Presentation of the Commission to Council on 5th March 2019