



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE – 23RD JULY 2018

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF COMMUNITY COUNCIL BOUNDARIES AND ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

REPORT BY: ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider if the Council should undertake a formal review of its communities in accordance with Section 22 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 and to make recommendations to Council.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council has a duty to monitor community boundaries and community council electoral arrangements and if it feels it is necessary to carry out a formal review.
- 2.2 This report discusses the processes and considerations that would be required to carry out a review and the result of monitoring community areas to date. It also considers the external factors that have been taken into account when reaching a conclusion.
- 2.3 The Local Government (Democracy)(Wales) Act 2013 requires the Council to report on these issues and copy this to the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales.
- 2.4 After looking into the issues concerning communities in the county borough and seeking advice from the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales the report seeks members' consideration to recommend to Council that the authority defers carrying out a formal review at this time.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 This matter deals with a statutory requirement regarding the requirement to keep communities under review but supports the Wellbeing Goal 'A Wales of cohesive communities within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The report of the last review of communities in the county borough was published in July 2009. The Local Government (Democracy)(Wales) Act 2013 requires the Council to report every 10 years so this is an appropriate time to consider this issue.
- 4.2 The Council has not received any comments or requests from Community Councils to change/amend their boundaries or electoral arrangements. However, it is apparent that some Community councils fail to consistently achieve sufficient nominations at elections.

Table 1 – Vacant seats following nominations 2012 & 2017

Council	No of vacancies following nominations 2012	No of vacancies following nominations 2017
Nelson	1	1
Draethen, Waterloo & Rudry	1	3
Van	1	2
Argoed	1	4
Maesycwmmmer	0	1
New Tredegar	0	1
Rhymney	2	3
Risca East	n/a	1
Risca West	n/a	1

Draethen, Waterloo & Rudry, Argoed and Rhymney Community Councils show particularly high levels of vacancies following ordinary elections (Community Councils can of course co-opt additional Councillors and many did so following the ordinary elections) and this may be an indicator that electoral arrangements need to be reviewed.

- 4.3 In order to ensure effective and convenient local government the boundaries of community areas are kept under review. A main part of convenient local government is to try to ensure that community ties are preserved within community areas. However, occasionally new housing developments will 'grow' over existing boundary lines. This has occurred in the Ystrad Mynach / Cefn Hengoed ward of Gelligaer Community Council where the vast majority of the Cwm Calon development falls in Ystrad Mynach and a small number of properties in Cefn Hengoed. Other new developments such as the Hawtin Meadows development will fall entirely in one community area (Maesycwmmmer) but have closer links and ties with another (Pontllanfraith). However, any changes to these would require consequential changes to county borough divisions for which the Council has no power.
- 4.4 Section 22 of the Local Government (Democracy)(Wales) Act 2013 states that the Council must have consideration for the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales' timetable for conducting reviews. The Commission are currently reviewing principal areas in Wales, with the Caerphilly review scheduled for 2019. A Community review would take approximately 2 years to carry out so would overlap the principal area review and potentially cause confusion.
- 4.5 A Commission is looking into the town and community council sector as a whole. They will be reporting to Welsh Government this summer, making recommendations in the autumn. Depending on which recommendations Welsh Government takes forward may materially affect a community review. It may be prudent to wait until after then to start a review.
- 4.6 The views of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales have been sought and it is their preference that any review takes place after their review of the Council's divisions and electoral arrangements.
- 4.7 Although a need to carry out a full community review to address boundary and electoral issues has been identified, Members are asked to consider the report and recommend to Council that a full community review of this Council's arrangements be carried out following the conclusion of the Commission's review of Community Councils. This would likely be following the next local elections scheduled in 2022

5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 5.1 This report contributes to the well-being goals as set out in links to strategy above. It supports the Wellbeing Goal 'A Wales of cohesive communities within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no equalities implications associated with this report. This report links to equality objective 5 (Inclusive engagement and participation) of the Council's EqIA process. To delay the full review as recommended has no detrimental effect.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no financial implications of this report.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no personnel implications contained in this report.

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 The consultees listed below have been consulted on this report and their views have been incorporated accordingly.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To consider the content of the report and recommend to Council that a full community review of this Council's arrangements be carried out following the conclusion of the Commission's review of Community Councils which would likely be following the next local elections scheduled in 2022.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

It is proposed to delay carrying out a community review at this time because of the forthcoming review of county borough electoral arrangements and the review of Community Councils that a Commission is currently carrying out. This is in line with advice from the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales' advice.

12. STATUTORY POWER

- 12.1 Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013.

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Consultees: Christina Harray - Interim Chief Executive / Electoral Registration Officer / Returning Officer

Cllr Barbara Jones - Cabinet Member Finance, Performance and Governance

Mathew Redmond - Deputy Chief Executive, Local Government and Boundary Commission for Wales

Lisa Lane Interim Monitoring Officer