

CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

Report to: Council

Date of meeting: 2nd March 2023

Title: Review of Communities and Electoral Arrangements

Purpose of the report: To inform Council of the process for undertaking a Review of Communities and Electoral Arrangements; and to seek approval to establish a Community Review Cross-Party Group

For: Decision

**Cabinet Portfolio and
Cabinet Member:** N/A

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to advise members that the Council has a duty under Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 to keep its communities under review and report to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (the Commission) on how it keeps its communities under review. To achieve this the Council has appointed the Commission to carry out a review of communities and electoral arrangements in Ceredigion on its behalf.

There are two different elements of a community review that should be carried out by principal councils, which are subject to different sections of the Act:

- Section 25 Review - A review of community boundaries. Should ensure that communities continue to reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government. This review would allow the council to make minor amendments to boundaries that may have become outdated due to housing developments, shifts in population etc. This review will consider any consequential changes required to the electoral arrangements because of any boundary changes and is the element that will be undertaken by the Commission.
- Section 31 Review - A review of the electoral arrangements. To identify issues with electoral arrangements of community/town councils independent of any boundary issues.

Undertaking the Communities and Electoral Review

The aim of the review will be to ensure that community boundaries reflect the identities and interests of the communities across the Ceredigion County Council area and that they are both effective and convenient.

As part of the review, the Commission will have regard to:

- the creation, abolition or merging of communities and community wards

- the name of the community and, where warded, the name of community wards
- Where changes have been made to the boundaries of communities or community wards the number of councillors representing the community and, where warded, the number of councillors per ward.

The review would be based on the electorate as at the new register published on 1st December 2022 and a 5-year forecast of electorate figures.

The review must take four essential steps:

- Initial publicity;
- Initial investigation and consultation - to ask all interested parties to consider the current community boundaries and submit their views on any changes required to create communities that provide for effective and convenient local government;
- Draft proposals (and consultation on those proposals) - all submissions will then be considered, and the Commission will publish a Draft Proposals Report and will hold a consultation on those proposals.; and
- Final recommendations – these will be submitted to Welsh Government Ministers. Welsh Government Ministers will then if it thinks fit, to give effect to these recommendations either as submitted, or with modifications.

Timescales

With the next local government elections scheduled for May 2027 now is an ideal time to meet the Council’s statutory obligation. Any Community review would also be completed in time for the next County Council Electoral Review.

The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales will undertake the Review on behalf of the Council, which will take between 15 and 18 months from commencement to completion.

As and when the exact timescales are agreed, County Councillors as well as Town and Community Councillors will be informed.

Next steps

Meetings will be held shortly with representatives from the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales to agree a timeline for the Review.

The Council is required to set up a cross party group of councillors to support the Community Review to decide on Council Size Policy and to be main group for the local authority.

It is recommended that the Cross-Party Group has 7 Members. Discussions have taken place with the Group Leaders who have nominated the following Councillors to be members of the Communities and Electoral Review Cross-Party Group:

Plaid Cymru	3	Councillor Clive Davies Councillor Eryl Evans
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		Councillor Alun Williams
Independent	2	Councillor Gwyn Wigley Evans Councillor Rhodri Evans
Liberal Democrats	2	Councillor Elizabeth Evans Councillor Paul Hinge

A Council Size Policy will be presented to Council prior to commencing the first consultation meeting with Town and Community Councils.

Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why Not applicable – not a service change

Wellbeing of Future Generations:

Summary:

Long term: N/A
Collaboration: N/A
Involvement: N/A
Prevention: N/A
Integration: N/A

Recommendation(s):

That Council:

- a) **Notes that the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales has been commissioned to undertake the Community Review on behalf of the Council;**
- b) **Approves the number of Members on the Communities and Electoral Review Cross-Party Group be 7;**
- c) **Confirms the membership of the Communities and Electoral Review Cross-Party Group as follows:**
 - **Clive Davies**
 - **Elizabeth Evans**
 - **Eryl Evans**
 - **Gwyn Wigley Evans**
 - **Rhodri Evans**
 - **Paul Hinge**
 - **Alun Williams.**

Reasons for decision: **To enable the Review of Communities to be undertaken in accordance with Sections 25 and 31 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013.**

Overview and Scrutiny: N/A

Policy Framework:

- Sections 25 and 31 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013;

- Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales – Guidance for Principal Councils on the Review of Communities;
- Council’s Constitution.

Corporate Well-being Objectives: N/A

Finance and Procurement implications: All costs associated with the Community Review will be met from the existing Electoral Services budget. The Commission’s fee for conducting the review is £13,500.

Legal Implications: To ensure compliance with the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013

Staffing implications: Within service.

Property / asset implications: None

Risk(s): Significant risk to the Council of not undertaking the Review.

Statutory Powers: Sections 25 and 31 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013

Background Papers: [Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales – Guidance for Principal Councils on the Review of Communities](#)

Appendices: Appendix A – Sample Terms of Reference

Eifion Evans
Chief Executive (Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer)

Reporting Officer: Lowri Edwards
Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services (Deputy Electoral Registration Officer and Deputy Returning Officer)

Date: 17th February 2023