

**DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION CYMRU MEETING
HELD AT 10:00 AM ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2025 AT CP2 and via Teams**

Present: Michael Imperato; Dianne Bevan, Frank Cuthbert, Ginger Wiegand, Bethan Williams Price, Karen Jones

DBCC Officers attending: Shereen Williams (Chief Executive); Tom Jenkins (Head of Reviews); Mark Pascoe (Head of Democratic Health); Roger Ashton-Winter (Senior Democratic Health Policy Manager); Rhydian Fitter (Communications and Engagement Manager); Ellie Chapman (Democratic Health Policy Officer).

Apologies: Bev Smith (Chair); Frances Duffy; Andrew Blackmore

Time Started: 10:30

Time Finished: 11:50

1. Declarations of Interest

1.1. None

2. Chair's Briefing

2.1. The Deputy Chair thanked everyone for attending the HR training prior to the start of the meeting and that the actions from the meeting will be led on by the CE.

3. Minutes of the Commission meeting held on 27 August 2025

3.1. It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27th August 2025 as a correct record of the matters considered.

ACTION: to add dates to action log

4. Issues Arising

4.1. It was **Resolved** to accept the Report as a whole noting the issue for later discussion in the meeting, and updated progress was also noted on the following issues:

4.2. **(Issue 1)** The Commission received 1 FOI request between 19 August 2025 – 17 September 2025

- 4.3. **(Issue 2)** Work on the Strategic Equality Plan is ongoing with support from GW. A meeting with EHRC is due to take place before the October meeting and an updated paper will be brought to the brought to the October meeting.
- 4.4. **(Issue 3)** Amendments have been made to the research plan and the EMB element of the research plan is due to be considered at the next EMB meeting. A final plan will be brought to the October board meeting for final approval.
- 4.5. **(Issue 4)** Work on the Corporate Plan is on-going and the Chairs of Committees will receive sections relevant to their areas to provide feedback.
- 4.6. **(Issue 5)** Recruitment –
11 applications were received for the role of the Commission's Chair. The panel will be shortlisting in the coming week.

The Commission is about to undertake a Team Support recruitment and the role has been assessed as 'Welsh essential'.

The job analysis form for the Senior Governance and Finance Manager has been finalised and will now be considered by a JEGS panel. The role has been designed to at the SEO grade and once confirmation of the grading is received, the vacancy will be advertised. It is anticipated that the postholder will start between December and January.

The Commission has been successful in appointing a Senior Elections Manager who will be joining as direct employee on a FT appointment until the 31 May 2027.

5. EMB

- 5.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated September 2025 by the EMB Chair and it was **noted**.
- 5.2. It was **noted** that the next meeting will be on the 3rd October.
- 5.3. It was **noted** that the first assurance report from MIAA has been shared with GAC. A documented response to the recommendations will prepared by the project manager.

- 5.4. The project highlight report was **noted**, acknowledging the risk is currently assessed as high for three reasons:
- There are 3 different Electoral Management Systems that need to be extracted to the platform and greater certainty is needed. It was **noted** that a draft direction is to go out requiring local authorities to provide this data set.
 - There is greater certainty needed over the extracts from Democracy Club.
 - An engagement strategy has been prepared and is awaiting approval.
- 5.5. It was **noted** that the final meeting with RO's and ERO's has taken place with no new issues being raised. All matters raised will be reported to the Board and actions taken will be included in the Forward Work Programme.
- 5.6. It was **noted** that consultation on a set of draft directions for the Senedd elections has concluded, with the final decision to be made at the EMB meeting in the October.
- 5.7. It was **noted** that the draft strategic risk register was presented to GAC and the EMB will formally consider this at the Oct meeting.

6. Remuneration

- 6.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 17th September 2025 by the SDHPM and it was **noted**.
- 6.2. It was **noted** that the Draft Annual Remuneration Report was published on the 23rd of September, with an advance copy being sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government.
- 6.3. It was **noted** that this begins the consultation on the proposed 6.4% increase to payments to elected members of principal councils, national park authorities, fire and rescue authorities, and joint overview and scrutiny committees.
- 6.4. It was **noted** that the consultation period closes on the 18th November, at which stage a report on the responses will be presented to the Remuneration Committee. Following this, the final determinations for the year 26-27 will be published by the end of this year.

7. GAC

- 7.1. A verbal update was provided for this item.
- 7.2. It was noted that at the last GAC meeting, there was a deep dive on the risk register, including the EMB risks and issues where the CE was the risk owner.
- 7.3. It was noted that the outstanding information from WG relating to the cost of refurbishment have been received and submitted to Audit Wales.
- 7.4. It was noted that the next GAC meeting will be arranged between early-mid October as part of the process of signing off the Annual Accounts.

8. Risk Management

- 8.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 24th September 2025 by the Finance Manager.
- 8.2. It was **noted** that the Commission's Corporate Risk Register has been reviewed following updates by both the Commission and GAC over the past few months.
- 8.3. It was **noted** that the last review was undertaken by the GAC at their meeting held on 10th September, which included a deep dive on risk CR1 and CR3 owned by the Chief Executive.
- 8.4. It was **noted** that several changes were proposed, which included:
 - Risk CR1 being widened to include all stakeholders. Discussion held on who these stakeholders should be.
 - Risk CR3 should have an additional existing control covering legal advice received.
 - Risk CR3 should have an additional mitigating action in which there should be an internal audit undertaken of compliance with the Commission's statutory responsibilities as part of the Governance internal audit

- 8.5. A discussion was held on new employment legislation coming through, with some of it being implemented shortly and whether that needs to be added to risk register.
- 8.6. A discussion was held on combining risk CR7 and CR8 due to them relating to the similar IT issues.

9. Reviews Progress Report

- 9.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 17th September by the Head of Reviews.
- 9.2. It was **noted** that advice from WG has been received regarding making changes to electoral ward names.
- 9.3. The proposed name changes put forward by Rhondda Cynon Taf council were **approved**.
- 9.4. The Order for Rhondda Cynon Taf was **approved** and will be translated and published – coming into force into 2027 local elections.
- 9.5. It was **noted** that the committee is awaiting a decision from WG on Pembrokeshire and Swansea. It is **noted** that Pembrokeshire is now with the minister and Swansea will be up shortly.
- 9.6. It was **noted** that Carmarthenshire and Vale of Glamorgan electoral reviews will be published on the 2nd Oct with consultations going until the 12th Nov.
- 9.7. It was **noted** that the final recommendation report will come to Commission on 10th December.
- 9.8. It was **noted** that the Caerphilly review has been delayed due to the by-election. It will be published on 27th October and consultation period will run until 7th Dec, with the Review committee date on 6th Jan.
- 9.9. It was **noted** that the final recommendation report will go to the Commission in Jan.
- 9.10. It was **noted** that Blaneau Gwent are looking at doing their own community review.

10. Carmarthenshire Community Review

- 10.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 17th September 2025 by the Head of Reviews and it was **noted**.
- 10.2. The Community Review was **approved** by the Commission.

11. Draft Comms Strategy

- 11.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 19th May 2025 by the Review Officer.
- 11.2. It was **noted** that separate plans will be drawn up for more detailed projects, such as a plan for the election information platform which is being taken to the EMB next week.
- 11.3. A discussion was held on there being a short grid on every section for members of staff to pick up easily regarding what is needed for each review.
- 11.4. A discussion was held on the section for remuneration and the review taking place next year and whether there should be a specific section regarding public facing consultations. It is likely to have its own separate plan as looked at by the remuneration committee.
- 11.5. A discussion was had on referring to STAR guides on written communications.
- 11.6. A discussion was held on the channels used for paid advertising.
- 11.7. A discussion was held on referring to it as a policy instead of a strategy due to it being a framework that will be durable over time.
- 11.8. A discussion was held regarding governance and what needs to be signed off separately as a responsibility by the EMB instead of the DBCC.
- 11.9. A discussion was held on referencing the NOLAN principles with regards to impartiality.
- 11.10. A discussion was held on the ethical considerations and use of AI within comms.

11.11. A discussion was held on the language regarding targeting gaps around audience reached and whether this links to the draft equality objectives and the subsequent advertising campaigns.

11.12. It was noted that an updated version of the Comms Policy will be brought back to the Commission meeting.

12. Calendar of Events

12.1. The Commission **noted** the calendar.

13. Any Other Business

13.1. It was **noted** that the November meeting will be face to face.

Date of Next Meeting: 29 October 2025