

**DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION CYMRU MEETING  
HELD AT 10:00 AM ON 26 MARCH 2025 AT CP2 and via Teams**

**Present:** Michael Imperato (Deputy Chair), Dianne Bevan, Frank Cuthbert, Ginger Wiegand, Bethan Williams Price, Karen Jones.

**DBCC Officers attending:** Chief Executive; Head of Reviews; Head of Democratic Health; Finance Manager; Senior Democratic Health Policy Manager; Communications and Engagement Manager; Democratic Health Policy Officer

**Guests:** Frances Duffy (IRP)

**Apologies:** Bev Smith (Chair)

**Time Started: 10:02**

**Time Finished: 11:45**

**1. Declarations of Interest**

1.1. No Declarations of Interest were made.

**2. Chair's Briefing**

2.1. The Chair's briefing was provided by the CE. The Chair congratulated the

Commission on the early publication of the Senedd boundaries and **noted** the letter received from the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government personally thanking the Commission for delivering the review ahead of schedule. It was **noted** that this has assisted colleagues in the Senedd Reform team on their preparations as the Cabinet Secretary will need to lay an Order within 14 weeks.

2.2. The CE briefed that the Commission has received 2 negative emails regarding Welsh only place names since the publication of the Senedd Final Determinations Report on 11<sup>th</sup> March.

2.3. The CE briefed that two Commissioners and two members of the secretariat attended the inter-commission meeting in London last month. It was **noted** that next year's inter-commission meeting will be hosted by the DBCC.

2.4. Karen Jones provided an update on her recent attendance at the Public Chairs Forum and **noted** that there were two main substantive discussion points at the Forum. These points of discussion were around fairness and encouragement

for the diversity, equality and inclusion agenda. The first point of discussion was the remuneration of chairs and board members, the second point of discussion was around the anti-racism plan.

### **3. Minutes of the Commission meeting held on 26 February**

- 3.1.** It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2025 as a correct record of the matters considered.
- 3.2.** It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2025 subject to the amendments made. It was also **Resolved** to approve the corresponding Decision Making Standards for the 2026 Senedd Review Decisions, as discussed and **agreed** in the meeting held on 28 February 2025.

### **4. Issues Arising**

- 4.1.** It was **Resolved** to accept the Report noting any issues for later discussion in the meeting, and updated progress was noted on the following issues:
- 4.2. (Issue 1)** It was **noted** that the Commission received 1 FOI request between 20 February 2025 and 19 March 2025.
- 4.3. (Issue 2)** It was **noted** that following interviews that were held on the 17 March 2025, Andrew Blackmore was appointed as Chair of GAC. This has resulted in a vacancy for an Independent Member on GAC. This vacancy will be advertised with a closing date of 21 April 2025.
- 4.4. (Issue 3)** Consideration was given to Issue 3. It was **noted** that the Committee has made 11 recommendations to the Welsh Government including one which specifically names the Commission. It was **noted** that this recommendation has already been actioned with Welsh Government and the Commission has asked for it to be included in the 25-26 remit letter.
- 4.5. (Issue 4)** It was **noted** that the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government has sent a letter to the Commission thanking the Commissioners and staff for their successful completion of the Senedd Review and delivering it ahead of the deadline. The Chair and CE will be meeting the Cab Sec on the 2 April 2025

### **5. EMB**

- 5.1.** The update on item 5 was given verbally.
- 5.2.** It was **noted** that all invited members have accepted their invitation to the Electoral Management Board (EMB), excepting one, who Karen Jones and the HoDH will be meeting with tomorrow. It was **noted** and **agreed** that, should this

invitee decline their place, a replacement appointee should be identified from the same region, to ensure equal representation across Wales.

- 5.3. It was **noted** that members of the secretariat recently met with Jorren Knibbe, the Commission's external legal advisor. It was **noted** that Jorren advised against using 'terms of reference' for the newly formed EMB and instead advised the employment of two separate documents; namely a 'Guide to the role of the Board' and a 'Rules of procedure' document.
- 5.4. It was **noted** that the next working group for the Welsh Elections Information Platform (WEIP) will be next week. It was **noted** that the CE will be taking over as the Chair.
- 5.5. It was **noted** that the secretariat has been looking for external advice on the procurement of the WEIP and is looking to employ the assistance of a public procurement expert. A relevant agency has been identified, and the CE is expecting to receive the CVs of 3 prospective candidates. Discussion was held on the cost of the procurement expert, and it was **noted** that this has been confirmed at a similar cost per day as Sarah Ling who is already consulting on the WEIP. It was **noted** that enough budget has been allocated to employ the procurement expert for a total of 20 days up until October. It was **noted** that there will be more discussion on this at next month's meeting, which has been planned as a strategy day.
- 5.6. Discussion was held on the WEIP working group and the scope of turning this into a task and finish group. Further discussion was held on creating a Project Board with a Project Manager and Project Sponsor. It was **noted** that identifying a Project Manager would lead to more accountability. Discussion was held on identifying a Project Manager for the Project Board.

## 6. IRPW Legacy Report

- 6.1. Consideration was given to the IRPW Legacy Report dated 19 March 2025 by the SDHPM.
- 6.2. It was **noted** that the transfer of Remuneration functions from the IRPW to the DBCC will happen on 1 April 2025.
- 6.3. The introduction of parachute payments for councillors not re-elected was **noted**.
- 6.4. The report was **noted**, with further consideration to be undertaken by the Remuneration sub-committee (RSC) at its inaugural meeting on 15 April 2025.

## 7. Budget Monitoring Report 2024-25

- 7.1. Consideration was given to the Budget Monitoring Report dated 26 March 2025 by the FM.
- 7.2. The transfer of funds between to budget allocations to meet estimated under and overspends were **noted**. It was **noted** that such budget changes are not unusual at the end of the financial year.
- 7.3. The main areas of underspend and overspends, and the explanations for them were **noted**.
- 7.4. It was **noted** that there is a current expected underspend of £24,000 but that this is expected to decrease to below £20,000 in the next few days which would mean that it will fall within the £20k threshold to be carried over to the next financial year.
- 7.5. Discussion was held on the increase in legal budget allocation. It was **noted** that the budget category for legal costs also includes consultancy costs for work on the WEIP.

## 8. Risk Management

- 8.1. Consideration was given to the DBCC Risk Management Report dated 26 March 2025.
- 8.2. It was **noted** that at the Commission's 26 February meeting, members agreed that no further changes to the Corporate Risk Register were currently required.
- 8.3. The current Corporate Risk Register was **agreed**.
- 8.4. It was **noted** that there are expected changes to the Corporate Risk Register at next month's meeting.

## 9. Risk Management Policy

- 9.1. It was **noted** that item. 9 Risk Management Policy has been moved to the meeting agenda for the May meeting.

## 10. Report on Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting held on 4 March 2025.

- 10.1. Consideration was given to the Report on Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting held on 4 March 2025, dated 26 March 2025.
- 10.2. It was **noted** that the handover from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) to the Governance and Audit Committee (GAC) could not happen at the last ARAC meeting due to the timing of the appointment of the new GAC Chair.

**10.3.** It was **noted** that the internal audit year end reports and annual reports were very good, with substantial audit ratings in the year end audit reports.

**10.4.** The Report was **noted**.

## **11. DBCC Governance Statement 2024-25**

**11.1.** Consideration was given to the DBCC Governance Statement dated 26 March 2025.

**11.2.** It was **noted** that ARAC had first sight of this in March and recommended it be put to the Board.

**11.3.** Discussion was held on the language of section 4. Risk Management. It was **agreed** to make some amendments to the wording of this section of the Statement.

**11.4. Action:** FM to make amendments to Section 4 of the DBCC Governance Statement 2024-25.

## **12. Reviews Progress Report**

**12.1.** Consideration was given to the Reviews Progress Report dated 18 March 2025 by the HoR.

**12.2.** It was **noted** that the Carmarthenshire review has been completed by Carmarthenshire County Council and that the recommendations have been agreed by the Commission. It was **noted** that the legal paper regarding this review has been drafted by the Commission's legal advisor and has been circulated to the board. It was **noted** that the legal advisor is working on drafting the Order which the Commission will publish.

**12.3.** It was **noted** that the Bridgend review is currently being carried out by the council, Draft Proposals were published in January with the consultation now open until April. The Commission expects to receive the final recommendations in the Autumn/Winter of 2025.

**12.4.** It was **noted** that the Rhondda Cynon Taff Community Review is currently being carried out by the council, the Commission expects to receive the final recommendations in Spring/Summer 2025.

**12.5.** It was **noted** that the Torfaen Community Review is currently being carried out by the council, the Commission expects to receive the final recommendations in Spring/Summer 2025.

**12.6.** It was **noted** that Wrexham and Denbighshire are looking to complete their own community reviews.

- 12.7.** It was **noted** that the consultation period on the policy and practice for the 2025 Electoral Review Programme (ERP) closed on Monday 24 March, with the Commission receiving a total of 10 responses. It was **noted** that the updated policy will be circulated by the HoR next week.
- 12.8.** It was **noted** that the decisions for community reviews have been delayed and that the Commission expects to receive these in early April. It was **noted** that the Commission cannot officially commence the ERP before a decision has been made by the Cabinet Secretary. It was **noted** that while the Commission awaits these Orders, the review team is preparing the base data for the ERP, having already received the electorate and projected electorate figures from the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 12.9.** It was **noted** that the Commission will be completing 6 ERPs due to Carmarthenshire having been added.
- 12.10.** Discussion was held on commissioner allocation for the ERPs. It was **noted** that it would be of benefit to allocate the commissioners who completed community reviews to the ERP equivalent. It was **noted** that a commissioner would need to be allocated to the Carmarthenshire ERP, as the Commission did not complete the community review for this area.

### **13. Calendar of Events**

- 13.1.** Consideration was given to the Calendar of Events and it was **agreed**.

### **14. Any Other Relevant Business – Comms and social media**

- 14.1** Consideration was given to item number 14 (a) – Communications monthly plan.
- 14.1.** It was **noted** that the Communications strategy will be introduced in September to allow for the transition of the RSC and EMB.
- 14.2.** It was **noted** that the Commission will receive the animated video on the new RSC functions next month and the video promoting the EMB in May. It was **agreed** that these videos will be circulated to commissioners once ready.
- 14.3.** It was **noted** that there is some ongoing work on the website which should be ready at some point in April. This should make navigating the website easier. It was also **noted** that work is currently being carried out to review the accessibility of the website, which could lead to further changes if needed.
- 14.4.** It was **noted** that advertising work for the ERP will begin soon.

- 14.5.** The CEM briefed on the Communications group that he sits on alongside communications staff from the Senedd, Welsh Government (WG) and the Electoral Commission (EC), with the focus being on the Senedd election in 2026. The CEM briefed that his role in these meetings is to keep colleagues up to date with the Commission's relevant work. It was **noted** that meeting frequency will be changing from quarterly to bimonthly and that a SharePoint will be set up so that all the sponsored bodies will be up to date with each other's work and to ensure that there are no duplications or contradictions within work.
- 14.6.** It was **noted** that the communications subgroup will be re-established under the EMB. It was also **noted** that the CE and Karen Jones (KJ) recently attended a meeting of the Senedd Electoral Reform Delivery Board, which is a WG shared board that's been overseeing the delivery of the legislation.
- 14.7.** It was **noted** that KJ has organised a meeting with WG after the EMB meeting to discuss and clarify the roles of WG, the EC and the EMB moving forward.
- 14.8.** Discussion was held on how the EMB plans to reach different audiences that may have different communication needs which includes website accessibility and disseminating crucial information. The need to consider accessibility needs from the offset and ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty for the Welsh Elections Information Platform (WEIP) was **noted**.
- 14.2** Consideration was given to item number 14 (b) – Social media
- 14.2.1.** Discussion was held regarding the paper. It was **noted** that X is the DBCC's most successful social media account. It was **noted** that the information regarding geographical spread of engagement with the DBCC's content on X is not available.
- 14.2.2.** It was **noted** that discussion on this matter has been held at the public bodies communications group meeting.
- 14.2.3.** Discussion was held on the DBCC's reach on X. It was **noted** that Commission seems to be reaching the right people but that these people are generally very engaged in politics. It was **noted** that it is unlikely that people are learning about the Commission for the first time on X.
- 14.2.4.** Discussion was held on the possibility of staying on X and trying to build a following elsewhere and to come back to this discussion in 6 to 12 months, only posting on X when essential.

**14.2.5.** Discussion was held on reliability of information and the need to monitor how the Commission's information is engaged with i.e. how people respond to the information when reposting.

**14.2.6.** It was **noted** that LinkedIn is another useful platform for disseminating information and engaging with the public.

**14.2.7.** Discussion was held on the scope for disinformation to disrupt the Senedd election and it was **noted** that there is scope for discussion of this in EMB meetings.

**14.2.8.** Discussion was held on the possibility of engaging with X in new ways, and how leaving X at this time might be against the long-term view of the Commission.

**14.2.9.** It was **noted** that WG are having discussions on this topic but are holding back from leaving X due to emergency response responsibilities.

**14.2.10** It was **agreed** that the Commission will remain on X as it is a good way of disseminating technical information but that this platform should not be its main form of engagement with the public. It was **agreed** that the Commission will try to build engagement on Threads and Bluesky.

**14.2.11.** It was **noted** that the CEM and DHPO will work on social media presence on other sites in the coming weeks.

**Date of Next Meeting:** 30 April 2025