

**DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION CYMRU MEETING  
HELD AT 10:00 AM ON 27 AUGUST 2025 AT CP2 and via Teams**

**Present:** Bev Smith (Chair); Michael Imperato (Deputy Chair), Dianne Bevan, Frank Cuthbert, Ginger Wiegand, Bethan Williams Price, Karen Jones, Frances Duffy, Andrew Blackmore (Chair, Governance and Audit Committee)

**DBCC Officers attending:** Shereen Williams (Chief Executive); Tom Jenkins (Head of Reviews); Dave Carr (Finance Manager); Huw Blacker (Review Manager); Cher Cooke (Review Manager); Mark Pascoe (Head of Democratic Health); Roger Ashton-Winter (Senior Democratic Health Policy Manager); Ellie Chapman (Team Support)

**Time Started:** 10:28

**Time Finished:** 13:17

**1. Declarations of Interest**

**1.1.** It was **noted** that the Chair of GAC is a lay member of the Governance and Audit Committee for 2 Principal Councils which are impacted by the determinations in the Draft Annual Remuneration Report. As the Chair is attending the meeting as an observer and not involved in the decision-making process, it was **agreed** that this was not a conflict of interest.

**2. Chair's Briefing**

**2.1.** There was a limited briefing provided as there was no meeting with MK prior to the Commission meeting.

**2.2.** The recruitment for the Chair's role is ongoing and the Chair thanked Commissioners for sharing the vacancy across their networks. The closing date for applications is the 1<sup>st</sup> of September and interviews will be held on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16 of October. The Commission has also paid for advertising across a number of platforms.

**3. Minutes of the Commission meeting held on 26 March**

**3.1.** It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2025 as a correct record of the matters considered, subject to minor corrections.

**4. Issues Arising**

- 4.1. **(Issue 1)** The Commission received 3 FOI requests between 24 July 2025 – 18 August 2025.
- 4.2. **(Issue 2)** The Commission has received clarification from Sponsor Division on how the interpretation of the remit letter item relating to senior salaries.
- 4.3. It was **noted** that a response to the remit letter has been sent to the Cabinet Secretary and that the Operational plan 25/26 would be drafted and brought to the September meeting.
- 4.4. **(Issue 3)** The Commission is asked to consider and approve the Welsh Language Annual Report for 2024/25.
- 4.5. A discussion was held on the complaint received last year in relation to the Senedd constituency names and the positive outcome that arose from that complaint. It was **agreed** that the positive outcome of the complaint should be expanded upon in the report.
- 4.6. **Action:** To include additional narrative relating to the complaint and the impact it has on changing the Commission's approach to its naming policy.
- 4.7. **Action:** To add the Welsh name of DBCC to the Report.
- 4.8. A discussion was held on whether the Welsh language skills of Commissioners should be included alongside the data relating to the Welsh language skills of staff. Whilst the standards are specific to staff, it was **agreed** that report should include that the Commission has a Welsh speaking Commission.
- 4.9. The report was approved subject to minor changes.
- 4.10. **(Issue 4)** A paper on the Commission's initial approach to developing its Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) was discussed following a letter from the EHRC regarding compliance to the Public Sector Equality Duty. A response was provided by the CE explaining the error that has led to this oversight. GW has also **agreed** to support the CE with this work. Some initial feedback has already been received from members via email and this will be incorporated into the plan.
- 4.11. During the discussion a potential objective relating to diversity of elected members was raised. It was **agreed** for the CE to further develop the objectives and a draft plan would be brought back to the Commission.

- 4.12. It was also **agreed** during the discussion that the EIA needed to be prepared for the Remuneration determinations report.
- 4.13. **Action:** CE to develop the SEP and a draft to be brought back to the board
- 4.14. **Action:** To include an EIA for Draft Annual Report.
- 4.15. A discussion was held on if there are other areas the Commission is unaware they have duties to uphold. It was discussed to have a form of audit for the Commission to pick up on duties that may slip through the net.
- 4.16. It was **noted** that the Chair and CE will be meeting with the EHRC and a separate meeting is being arranged for KJ with a focus on the EMB and the WEP.
- 4.17. **(Issue 5)** A research plan for 25/26 has been drafted as per the requirement of the remit letter. The Commission is asked to consider and approve the research plan.
- 4.18. It was **noted** that the Commission has been asked to undertake research into the feasibility of a CTC Council Size Policy and this has been reflected in the report.
- 4.19. It was **noted** that the EMB would need to agree the research relating to their function and that a paper would be brought to the next EMB meeting to seek their agreement.
- 4.20. It was **agreed** to include the objective relating to resettlement payments and senior salaries in the research plan.
- 4.21. **Action:** To prepare a paper for the next EMB meeting relating to the relevant research objective.
- 4.22. **Action:** To add in the resettlement payments and senior salaries review.
- 4.23. A discussion was held on the inclusion of research around the definition of “effective and convenient local government” and whether developing a definition could constrain the Commission’s decisions in the future.
- 4.24. It was **agreed** to amend the research objective to focus on the criteria used to determine “effective and convenient local government”. This criteria could be

utilised by the Commission when undertaking electoral reviews and also used by Principal Councils when they undertake community reviews.

- 4.25. **Action:** To amend the objective relating to “effective and convenient local government”.
- 4.26. **(Issue 6)** A proposed structure for the Corporate Plan has been included. The Commission is asked to consider and approve the structure.
- 4.27. It was **noted** that some feedback on the structure had been received via email and this will be incorporated into the plan.
- 4.28. The structure was **agreed** and the CE would draft the plan and provide Commissioners with a first draft.
- 4.29. **Action** : CE to draft the Corporate Plan based on the agreed structure, incorporating the feedback from Commissioners.

## 5. EMB

- 5.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated June 2025 by the EMB Chair and **noted**.
- 5.2. It was **noted** that the English language domain for the platform was not available and an alternative has been identified.
- 5.3. It was **noted** that the Steering group will meet in September to have a revised plan on the residual risk within the project including delivery and financial risk.
- 5.4. A discussion was held on the financial costs from ESM's on inputting data from local authorities onto the platform.
- 5.5. It was **noted** that the first part of the standalone report being undertaken by the internal auditors on the WEIP is almost complete and the focus is on the procurement exercise.
- 5.6. It was **noted** that the EMB are organising workshops for ROs and their team as part of the preparation for the 2026 Senedd elections. Workshops are being held in North and South Wales in October.
- 5.7. It was **noted** that other members of the Board are welcome to join these workshops.

- 5.8. Background was provided on StormID and their previous experience of running platforms that have high usage in a short period of time. They have also worked with multiple public sector organisations. It was **noted** that they already have a partnership agreement in place with Ateb to help with the Welsh language provision. It was **noted** that BW is an associate with ATE and was not involved in the awarding of the contract.
- 5.9. It was **noted** that the PID with StormID will be signed off by the end of this week.

## 6. Remuneration

- 6.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated June 2025 by the SDHPM and **noted**.
- 6.2. It was **noted** that RA-W and FD met with WLGA officials last week as part of their pre consultation engagement and their approach of keeping in line with average constituents salaries was supported.
- 6.3. It was **noted** that they also discussed the work on the resettlement payments research and the senior salaries review.
- 6.4. It was **noted** that the main change in this report is the annual uprate.
- 6.5. It was **noted** that there is a statutory responsibility to release the draft report and a period of consultation with stakeholders will close in November and it will come back to the board in December with the final determinations.
- 6.6. It was highlighted that the annual uplift is 6.4%.
- 6.7. A discussion was held around a BBC piece was published a few days ago regarding the ONS ASHE database, suggesting it is not properly weighted to reflect smaller employers and whether ASHE continued to be a suitable rate to be used. It was **noted** that the Commission is not bound to use ASHE and this will be reviewed next year.
- 6.8. A discussion was held on the CJC element in the report which suggests it might just involve leader of councillors however legislation governing CJC's states they need to have members on a number of other committees.
- 6.9. **Action:** To change wording to reflect that CJC's were now a more complex organisation now than it was when they started.
- 6.10. A discussion was held on the percentage increase 6.4 not being featured within the document – for transparency it should be shown to members

instead of them calculating what the increase is themselves.

**6.11.** A discussion was held on resettlement payments regarding Paragraph 4 – WG have said it is intended to be for Principal Councils.

**6.12.** Subject to minor changes, it was **agreed** for the Draft Report to go out for public consultation.

## **7. Budget Monitoring Report 2024-25**

**7.1.** Consideration was given to the Report dated 27<sup>th</sup> August 2025 by the Finance Manager and **noted**.

**7.2.** It was **noted** that these draft accounts have been circulated to Board members previously.

**7.3.** It was **noted** that there is currently a delay in completing these audits due to a lack of information from WG that Audit Wales need.

**7.4.** It was **noted** that supporting documents from WG are needed regarding the preparation work done for the DBCC moving into the WG building from Hastings House. An invoice has been sent but an accurate breakdown of these costs is needed.

**7.5.** It was **noted** that it has been raised with MK in WG as without this it delays the report being published.

**7.6.** Subject to the invoice needed, the Board has approved the draft report.

## **8. Risk Management – Risk Register**

**8.1.** Consideration was given to the Report dated 27<sup>th</sup> August 2025 by the Finance Manager and **noted**.

**8.2.** It was **noted** that the register has gone back to GAC for further review and the amendments have been made.

**8.3.** It was **noted** that there has been further change to risk CR6 as redrafted by the EMB Chair to show that there are further controls to mitigate the risk. It was **noted** that these amendments do not affect the score.

**8.4.** It was **noted** that all the information delivered through the platform will be in the public domain and so the wording has been changed due to it reflected there was a risk when there isn't.

**8.5.** AB **noted** that there is a phased approach to reviewing this register.

- 8.6. It was **noted** that in the September GAC meeting there will be a further deep dive into the risk register.
- 8.7. It was **noted** that CR6 is the highest rated risk and the commission should be aware of this at this current stage.
- 8.8. A discussion was held on CR1 and maintaining good working relationships with Principal Council's and senior stakeholders however all the actions refer only to WG and this will need to be amended.
- 8.9. A discussion was held around CR5 and the Commission's credibility around engagement.
- 8.10. It was **noted** that there is an October workshop on risk appetite which would be a good opportunity to tie in with the risk register.

## 9. Report of GAC Meeting 28 July 2025

- 9.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 27 August 2025 by the Finance Manager and **noted**.
- 9.2. It was **noted** that this Report covers two meetings held on 17<sup>th</sup> June and 28<sup>th</sup> July.
- 9.3. It was **noted** that the meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> June was regarding ICT arrangements of the Commission and the SLA with QW.
- 9.4. It was **noted** that the meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> July mostly focused on fine tuning the internal audit plan and getting it correct. There was a review of the corporate risk and issue of indemnity assurance.
- 9.5. It was **noted** that these topics are being revisited at the end of this financial year to see if the current ICT arrangements with QW are still appropriate given the increased scale and complexity of the DBCC.
- 9.6. It was **noted** that GAC met with the new internal audit partners and expectations have been set around work.
- 9.7. A discussion was held on the increased complexity of the organisation and how GAC is helping it move forward.

## 10. Reviews Progress Report

- 10.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 14<sup>th</sup> August 2025 by the Head of Reviews and **noted**.
- 10.2. It was **noted** that the Committee is still awaiting advice from WG on electoral ward names in terms of RCT review where changes have been agreed but clarity is needed as consequence of any changes made.

- 10.3. It was **noted** that for Carmarthenshire there is only one proposed change. It is now in a 6 week period where the Commission cannot do anything and so it will be brought to September meeting for the Board to agree with the recommended changes.
- 10.4. It was **noted** that the Review Committee met on 13<sup>th</sup> August to consider proposed options for the Electoral Reviews, with the Reports being published in October.
- 10.5. It was **noted** that the Welsh Language Commissioners comments on proposed name changes have been received.

## 11. Draft Proposals Report – Carmarthenshire

- 11.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated August 2025 by the Reviews Manager and it was **noted**.
- 11.2. It was **noted** that for Carmarthenshire there were few areas that fell above/below the 20% variance. The 5 areas were Lwnhendy, Hendy, Llandeilo, Llanfihangel Aberbythych and Penygroes.
- 11.3. It was **noted** that there was only 1 representation that was applicable from Carmarthenshire County Council and they wrote in for all 5 areas.
- 11.4. It was **noted** that for Lwynhendy, which has a 21% variance, the option considered was to combine Lwynhendy and Bynea to propose a 3 member of ward – reducing it from 4. It would reduce the overall council size to 74. A single language name of Lwynhendy and Bynea was proposed.
- 11.5. It was **noted** that Carmarthenshire County Council wanted it kept as a 4 member ward however as it is a rural area it was felt 4 members was too much as that is usually reserved for larger urban areas.
- 11.6. It was **noted** that the Welsh language commissioner didn't make any comments regarding the single language name.
- 11.7. It was **noted** that Hendy had the highest variance at over 30%. It was **noted** that 3 options were looked at and the chosen option was number 1 to combine Hendy with Tygroes.
- 11.8. It was **noted** that this was the preferred option of Carmarthenshire County Council who also recommended it remained with 2 electoral members. This brings the variance down to 19.9% but they are both within the same community area which is preferred even though the other options had better levels of variance.
- 11.9. It was **noted** that the next wards for consideration were Landeilo, Llanfihangel Aberbythych and Penygroes. Two options were considered and Option 1, to combine Penygroes and Llandybie, and Llanfihangel Aberbythych and

Llandeilo was chosen as it didn't split a community and was the preferred option of Carmarthenshire County Council.

- 11.10.** A discussion was held on the lack of response and this is mainly because there aren't many responses at the initial consultation stage as nothing has been proposed yet and that localised advertising options will be used when the reviews are in the draft proposal stage.
- 11.11.** It was **noted** that the Commission having the minutes of the Review Committee before the next Board meeting would be useful.
- 11.12.** The proposed changes were **agreed** by the Board.
- 11.13.** It was **noted** that there are 2 electoral ward names that haven't been approved by the Welsh Language Commission. For Hendy and Tycroes, they have proposed using the single-language name Yr Hendy Tŷ-croes and it was **noted** that the Welsh definite article is an integral part of the name.
- 11.14.** It was **noted** that for Laugharne Township, the Welsh Language Commissioner doesn't believe 'Township' is needed in the English name.
- 11.15.** It was **noted** that for Sanclêr Llansteffan, the Welsh Language Commission recommends Sanclêr / St Clears but are happy with the proposal to use the single name Sanclêr.
- 11.16.** It was **noted** that for Swiss Valley, it was proposed for the single name of Swiss Valley to be used but the Welsh Language Commission recommended Dyffryn y Swistir.
- 11.17.** It was **noted** that for the Tyisha ward, the Welsh Language Commission recommends Tyisa but recognises there is wide use of the more dialectical form 'Tyisha'.
- 11.18.** The proposed name changes were **agreed**, with Township being accepted in the English name as it is widely known.
- 11.19.** It was **noted** that depending on when the Review Committee meet, there might not be enough time for the Welsh Commissioner names to be approved by the Committee before it goes to the Board.

## **12. Draft Proposals Report – Vale of Glamorgan**

- 12.1.** Consideration was given to the Report dated August 2025 by the Review Manager and it was **noted**.
- 12.2.** It was **noted** that the initial consultation period closed on 16<sup>th</sup> July and there were 16 representations received. There were only 4 areas that required attention.
- 12.3.** It was **noted** that the Llandow ward currently has a variance of 42% and only 1 option was considered which was to transfer the community of Colwinston

into the neighbouring ward of St Brides Major, increasing the members from 2 to 3. It was **noted** that the overall council membership will increase from 58 to 59 and provides for a better variance which is 19% below.

- 12.4. It was **noted** that the Wenvoe ward is currently at 23% variance. It was **noted** that one of the options was to combine Wenvoe with St Nicholas and Llancarfan - a community it used to be apart of and have only been apart for one electoral cycle so this wasn't ideal to rejoin them.
- 12.5. It was **noted** that for option 2, combining Wenvoe with Peterston-super-ely wasn't ideal due to the road links between them. Option 3 was to retain the existing arrangements as it is projected to decrease to within 20% variance by 2030. This was the preferred option and was preferred by the existing councillor. It was **agreed** to adopt option 3.
- 12.6. It was **noted** that the Cosmeston ward is currently at 61% variance. It was **noted** that the Committees proposal is to combine Cosmeston and Plymouth which doesn't increase the overall number of council members and improves electoral parity.
- 12.7. It was **noted** that the next ward of Cowbridge was led by representations and didn't need to be considered by variance. It was **noted** that Penllyn Community Council proposed to divide the ward as they felt their voice can often be drowned out by the larger Cowbridge area and wanted to form a ward of their own and so this was **agreed** by the Committee.
- 12.8. It was **noted** that Illtyd ward is currently at above 20% and it was **agreed** to retain existing arrangements as by 2030 the variance decreases to an acceptable level.
- 12.9. It was **noted** that there are two names that require input from the Commission.
- 12.10. It was **noted** that for St Bride's Major, the Welsh Language Commissioner has recommended dropping the apostrophe as their road sign doesn't have it.
- 12.11. It was **agreed** by the Commission to drop the apostrophe.
- 12.12. It was **noted** that the other name change is regarding St Nicholas and Llancarfan. It was **noted** that the Welsh Language Commissioner has recommended both the Welsh 'Sain Nicolas' and the English 'St Nicholas' are acceptable. It was **agreed** to have a single name, choosing the Welsh form of Sain Nicolas.
- 12.13. It was **agreed** to accept the proposals and the relevant name changes.

### 13. Draft Proposals Report – Caerphilly

- 13.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated August 2025 by the Review Manager and it was **noted**.
- 13.2. It was **noted** that the Aber Valley ward had two options. It was **noted** that the Committee recommends Option 1 which was to reduce number of elected members from 3 to 2 to improve electoral parity and reduces the size of the council to 68 as recommended by Council size policy.
- 13.3. A discussion was held on the ward Crosskeys and Ynysddu. The Committee recommends combining the two areas together but it was **noted** that this is the one option not approved by WG.
- 13.4. It was **noted** that there is a strong need to address the level of variance so it is the proposed option and at the final consultation this allows the community to put forward their opposition against it.
- 13.5. A discussion was held on the Risca ward and combining Risca East with Risca West. It was **noted** that in the community review of Caerphilly, Risca was combined into one community. It was **noted** that the proposed option is to combine them into one large Risca ward with 4 members where the boundaries should be easily identifiable.
- 13.6. A discussion was held on Aberbargoed and Bargoed they are in the same community and it is proposed to combine them into one electoral ward.
- 13.7. It was **noted** that there are two names requiring a decision.
- 13.8. It was **noted** that the Welsh Language Commissioner has worked with Caerphilly local authority on standardising Welsh place names.
- 13.9. It was **noted** that for the Maesycwmwr ward, the Welsh Language Commissioner has recommended to use the two forms of Welsh (Maesycwmwr) and English (Maesycwmer).
- 13.10. It was **noted** that the Committee proposed to retain the existing bi-lingual names for Cwm Darran (Darran Valley) ward. It was **noted** that the Welsh Language Commissioner has recommended to use the singular Cwm Darran.
- 13.11. The Commission has **agreed** to use the single Welsh name for Maesycwmwr as it is in line with the Commissions policy to use the singular form when needed. It was **agreed** to use Cwm Darran as there is an argument that those who use the English form know the Welsh form widely.
- 13.12. It was **noted** that the Caerphilly observer will be used to promote the proposals so people are aware and have the chance to share their views.

**13.13.** A discussion was held on Aber Valley to reduce councillors – losing councillors can be quite contentious politically however this has to be in line with the council size policy.

**13.14.** The proposed recommendations were **agreed**.

**13.15.** It was **noted** that a discussion will be held outside the meeting to ensure good methodology will be created to know the relevant information is shared with the Board to allow for good decisions without rehashing what has been said already in the Committee.

#### **14. Calendar of Events**

**14.1.** Consideration was given to the Calendar of Events and it was **agreed**, subject to minor amendments.

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

**15.1.** It was **noted** that in discussions with the WLGA last week, booking space for a workshop at the next WLGA conference was mentioned as this will be at the time when the Commission will look to publish it's pre-2027 elections draft determinations report.

**15.2.** It was **noted** that the WLGA and WG are hosting a women in local government leadership event and an invite to the Commission has been requested.

**15.3.** The CE informed the board that CL was leaving the Commission to pursue her Masters in London. The Chair thanked CL for her work at the Commission, particularly over the past 12 months in establishing the new functions and wished her all the best with her move.

**Date of Next Meeting:** 24<sup>th</sup> September 2025