

**DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION CYMRU MEETING  
HELD AT 10:00 AM ON 28 AUGUST 2024 AT HASTINGS HOUSE AND VIA MS  
TEAMS**

**Present:** Bev Smith (Chair) via MS Teams; Dianne Bevan via MS Teams; Frank Cuthbert via MS Teams and Ginger Wiegand via MS Teams.

**DBCC Officers attending:** Chief Executive; Head of Policy and Programmes; Finance Manager; Review Manager and Team Support Officer.

**Apologies:** Michael Imperato and Representative from Public Health Wales.

**Time Started: 10:00**

**Time Finished: 11:06**

**1. Declarations of Interest**

1.1. No Declarations of Interest were made.

**2. Chair's Briefing**

2.1. The Chair briefed the Commission on last week's meeting with Lisa James from Welsh Government. It was **noted** that 5<sup>th</sup> September was the anticipated date for Royal Assent for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bill.

2.2. The Cabinet reshuffle will likely take place on the week beginning 9<sup>th</sup> September so any decisions relating to reviews is unlikely to take place until those arrangements are finalised.

2.3. There was also confirmation that the change of sponsor division is due to happen in the coming months and that Lisa James will no longer be the sponsor lead. Arrangements will be made once the Commission moves to Cathays Park to host an appreciation lunch for Lisa and her team.

**3. Minutes of the Commission meeting held on 31 July 2024**

3.1. It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2024 as a correct record of the matters considered subject to minor amendments.

**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 0 FOI request between 24 July 2024 and 20 August 2024.
- 4.3. **(Issue 2)** It was **noted** that the Commission is currently undertaking Community Reviews for Ceredigion, Swansea and Pembrokeshire. Further details are included in a separate agenda item.
- 4.4. **(Issue 3)** It was **noted** that the lease has been received and the contractors have made an initial visit to Hastings House to plan for the relocation of the conference room furniture. A date has been arranged with BT for work to be carried out in mid-September and the Commission is planning for the physical move to commence on 23 September 2024. All Commission meetings will continue to be held online until further notice.
- 4.5. **(Issue 4)** It was **noted** that the Commission has received an official complaint in relation to the Vale of Glamorgan review. The complainant has been responded to. WG have informed the Commission that they have also received a complaint in relation to the review and have responded to the complainant.
- 4.6. **(Issue 5)** It was **noted** that the Senedd Cymru's Local Government and Housing Committee is undertaking an inquiry into the role, governance and accountability of the community and town council sector. The terms of reference for the inquiry are to examine:
- The role and value of community and town councils in Wales;
  - Whether the sector is fit for purpose in an evolving local government landscape;
  - Governance and scrutiny arrangements and its impact on accountability and transparency;
  - Scope of digital and new technology to improve decision-making, service provision and participation in local democratic processes;
  - How new powers and responsibilities for this tier of government are utilised to support communities.

The Commission has been invited to submit evidence and will prepare a response.

## 5. Transition Programme (for discussion)

- 5.1. It was **noted** that the Commission is waiting on Royal Assent for the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bil. It was also **noted** that during the CE's meeting with WG that the commencement date for EMB and GAAC will be in January so recruitment for the independent chair of GAAC will take place prior to that.

## 6. Future Work Programme

- 6.1. Consideration was given to the Future Work Programme Report dated 21 August 2024 by the CE.
- 6.2. It was **noted** that a shortlisting exercise has been undertaken in relation to Commissioner recruitment. 4 candidates (2 with RO experience) have been invited to interview.
- 6.3. It was **noted** that the recruitment for the Head of Democratic Health will go live at the end of August. The job will be advertised on the Civil Service Jobs and AEA websites.
- 6.4. It was **noted** that the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill is still awaiting Royal Assent.

## 7. Budget Report 2024-25

- 7.1. Consideration was given to the Budget Monitoring Report dated 28 August 2024 by the FM which showed the budget position to the end of July 2024.
- 7.2. It was **noted** that changes had been made to budget categories to address the following underspends;

- Room Hire / Interpretation (13) increased by £200 from £0 to £200

The above increase was met by making reduction to the following budget:

- Staff Training (8) reduced by £200 from £14,500 to £14,300.

- 7.3. It was **noted** that the Commission budget position at the end of July was a £40,766. This was due to staff salaries but it should be **noted** that there will be a

staff pay increase later in the year and also the possibility of the recruitment of an additional member of staff. Additionally, from July onwards, the Commission is no longer being reimbursed the costs for the member of staff seconded to Welsh Government. It is also **noted** that the legal budget had been underspent by £3,849 due to there being limited requirements for legal advice during April and July 2024. There will be a significant requirement for legal advice later in the year for the Policy and Practice in preparation for the next programme of electoral reviews.

- 7.4.** It was **noted** that the Commission's overall expenditure to the end of July 2024 on both cash and resource basis were well within budget with a cash underspend of £36,946.

## **8. Risk Management**

- 8.1.** Consideration was given to the DBCC Risk Register dated 18 August 2024.
- 8.2.** The Risk Register was **noted** and **agreed** by the Commission.

## **9. DBCC Future Work Programme Risk Register**

- 9.1.** Consideration was given to the DBCC Future Work Programme Risk Register dated 16 August 2024.
- 9.2.** The Future Work Programme Risk Register was **noted** and **agreed** by the Commission.

## **10. Board Effectiveness**

- 10.1.** Consideration was given to the DBCC Board Governance and Effectiveness Report dated 20 August 2024.
- 10.2.** It was **noted** that the Commission had identified key actions from Phase One of the Board Effectiveness Review and the need for performance review structured induction training. This would act as an induction to new member on what the functions of the Commission are. It was **agreed** that a review of the board effectiveness questionnaire would be implemented.
- 10.3.** It was **agreed** that an external assessment of the Commission structure would be postponed summer 2025 as there will be new board members and six months of EMB for a more thorough assessment.

**Action:** Structured induction programme and future training programme for Commissioners.

**Action:** Review of the board effectiveness questionnaire.

## **11. Reviews Progress Report**

- 11.1. Consideration was given to the Reviews Progress Report dated 21 August 2024.
- 11.2. It was **noted** that considerations were given to the Ceredigion Final Recommendations Report and that it is going through the QA process..
- 11.3. It was **noted** that the considerations were given to the Swansea Final Recommendations Report. The Final Options were agreed at the July meeting.
- 11.4. It was **noted** that the consultation period for the Pembrokeshire Draft Proposals will close on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024
- 11.5. It was **noted** that the publication of the IPR and consultation period will start on 3 September and run through until 30 September. The Commission will consider its revised options at a meeting in October.

## **12. Swansea Community Review – Final Report**

- 12.1. Consideration was given to the Swansea Community Review – Final Options paper dated 21 August by the RO.
- 12.2. It was **noted** that the report would be published for mid to late October.
- 12.3. It was **agreed** that the Commission made decisions on the ward names of the following:
  - Bonymaen
  - Knelston
  - Llanmadog

## **13. Ceredigion Community Review – Final Options**

- 13.1. Consideration was given to the Ceredigion Community Review – Final Options paper dated 21 August 2024 by the RO.
- 13.2. It was **agreed** the Commission made a decision on the ward name of Caelanamaesmawr.
- 13.3. It was **agreed** that going forward in future community reviews that Ceredigion can be used as an example for lessons learned.

**13.4.** It was **noted** that Ceredigion report would be published in mid – late October.

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

**14.1.** Consideration was given to the Calendar of Events.

**14.2.** It was **noted** that virtual meetings will be sent out for next meeting due to the accommodation move and a spreadsheet of availability for Commissioners.

#### **15. Any Other Relevant Business**

**18.1** No other relevant business was noted.

**Date of Next Meeting:** 25 September 2024