

**DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION CYMRU MEETING
HELD AT 10:00 AM ON 29 JANUARY 2025 AT CP2**

Present: Bev Smith (Chair), Michael Imperato (Deputy Chair), Dianne Bevan, Frank Cuthbert, Ginger Wiegand and Bethan Williams Price

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

Apologies: Karen Jones (Commissioner)

Time Started: 10:02

Time Finished: 12:58

1. Declarations of Interest

1.1. No Declarations of Interest were made.

2. Chair's Briefing

- 2.1. The Chair briefed that Frances Duffy has accepted the role as a DBCC Commissioner and that she will be delivering remuneration training after the February board meeting. It is anticipated that she will chair the Remuneration sub-committee.
- 2.2. The Chair briefed that Karen Jones was due to return to the UK and will begin working alongside the Democratic Health team on setting up the EMB.
- 2.3. The Chair briefed that advertising has begun for the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee (GAC) and will be picked up later in item 4. Issues Arising.
- 2.4. The Chair briefed that she met with Lisa James from WG this morning. The Chair briefed that Lisa James has been recently promoted and will be job sharing as Director of Local Government and Planning.
- 2.5. The Chair briefed on the key aims moving forward in 2025, focusing on the new functions of the DBCC and the importance of engagement with stakeholders.

2.6. The Chair briefed that the deputy Welsh Language Commissioner will be joining the April meeting which will incorporate a strategy day with a focus on the new functions as well as Reviews and GAC.

2.7. **Action:** DHPO to set up remuneration sub-committee meeting dates with Frances.

3. Minutes of the Commission meeting held on 27 November

3.1. It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2024 as a correct record of the matters considered.

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 2 FOI requests between 20 November 2024 and 22 January 2025.

4.3. **(Issue 2)** It was **noted** that the Commission has completed all the Community Reviews it has undertaken.

4.4. **(Issue 3)** It was **noted** that the office relocation has been successfully completed. It was **noted** that the costs have remained under budget, and the surplus funds will be returned to WG. Discussion was held regarding stakeholders response to the office relocation.

4.5. **(Issue 4)** It was **noted** that the DBCC Implementation Project Board met for the last time on the 15 January 2025. The final risk register and workstream update has been included with this paper. A closure report is currently being drafted and will be shared once available. Discussion was held regarding the transition board.

4.6. **(Issue 5)** It was **noted** that an operational plan / remit letter update has been included with this paper.

4.7. **(Issue 6)** It was **noted** that the role description for the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee has been agreed by the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Commission. The role has been advertised via: the DBCC website, Boards in Wales, Woman on Boards, Swyddle, Lleol, Jobs in Wales, LGA, Guardian and Times. The closing date is 12 February 2025.

4.8. It was **noted** that the sift for the new Team Support will be happening next week.

5. EMB

5.1. Consideration was given to the Registration without application pilots report dated 22 January 2025.

5.2. Discussion was held on the potential knock-on effects of the pilot on the Senedd Review, specifically the inclusion of electors registered during these pilots in the data for the next Senedd Review. It was **noted** that the Commission has started discussions with WG on possible mitigations.

5.3. Discussion was held on the future of the EMB and the makeup of the board moving forward. Discussion was held on the current depletion of ROs and EROs in Wales. It was **noted** that the Commission will need to run an exercise on recruitment for the EMB and will be discussed further with Karen Jones.

5.4. Discussion was held on the Welsh Elections Information Platform (WEIP) and its potential risks and implications. It was discussed and **noted** that the Commission has engaged the work of Sarah Ling to consult on the Platform with the Commission having received written confirmation to use some budget underspend on this consultancy work. Discussion was held on the translation / language of candidate statements on the WEIP and Welsh Language Standards and existing similar website which publishes candidate statements. Discussion was held on engaging external legal advice.

5.5. Discussion was held on the need to consult with people with protected characteristics during the upcoming work on the WEIP.

5.6. Discussion was held on existing platforms and the restrictions placed upon them.

5.7. It was **noted** that the regulations for the WEIP will be laid next week.

5.8. **Action:** Sarah Ling to draft a paper on feasibility of the platform for a detailed discussion at the next meeting

6. Remuneration

6.1. The update on Item 6 was given verbally.

- 6.2. An update was given on the Remuneration Legacy Report and it was **noted** that this report will be discussed at the March meeting.
- 6.3. It was **noted** that the DBCC will be hosting the final IRP meeting in March.
- 6.4. **Action:** DHPM or DHPO to circulate Determinations Report to Commissioners.

7. Budget Report 2024-25

- 7.1. Consideration was given to the Budget Monitoring Report dated 29 January 2025 by the FM which showed the budget position to the end of December 2024.
- 7.2. The Commission noted the virements to several budgets where funds had been transferred to cover estimated overspends.
- 7.3. It was **noted** that since the report had been drafted, the estimated underspend for the year end had changed from £123,000 to £89,000 and, in light of this, the proposed amount to be surrendered back to Welsh Government was £50,000 not £60,000. This would result in an estimated underspend at the year end of £39,000. Discussion was held regarding possibilities for utilising some of the estimated underspend on additional communications and engagement moving forward.
- 7.4. It was **agreed** that £50,000 of the Commission's 2024-25 Grant In Aid allocation would be surrendered back to Welsh Government.

8. Risk Management

- 8.1. Consideration was given to the DBCC Risk Register dated 29 January 2025.
- 8.2. It was **noted** that risk CR3 was removed from the Risk Register following the Commission's 27 November meeting as the accommodation move has been successfully completed.
- 8.3. It was **noted** that there remains a slight risk to the Commission due to the unrestricted access to the Commission's office space. However, Welsh Government facilities are to address this by installing card reader access to the Commission's offices in the near future. It was **agreed** that this residual risk would be dealt with by adding it to the Operational Risk Register.
- 8.4. The Risk Register was **agreed** subject to an amendment made to Risk 8 which was changed from amber to red and remains at a current risk status of 4.
- 8.5. It was **noted** that the Future Work Programme Risk Register has now been incorporated into the Corporate Risk Register rather than continue as a standalone document. It was **noted** that the combined risks have been renumbered.

- 8.6. Discussion was held on Risk CR8. It was **agreed** to change this risk from amber to red to accommodate the risks and implications of the Welsh Elections Information Platform subject to awaiting the feasibility report.
- 8.7. The current Corporate Risk Register was **agreed** subject to the amendment made to risk CR8.

9. Report on Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings held on 23 September and 26 November 2024

- 9.1. Consideration was given to the Report on Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings held on 23 September 2024 and 26 November 2024.
- 9.2. The Report was **noted** and **agreed**.

10. Reviews Progress Report

- 10.1. Consideration was given to the Reviews Progress Report dated 20 January 2025 by the HoPP.
- 10.2. It was **noted** that the Pembrokeshire Community Review Final Recommendations Report would be published at 2pm. Discussion was held on the meeting held between DBCC staff and colleagues from Pembrokeshire Community Council the day before.
- 10.3. It was **noted** that the Commission is currently awaiting decisions and orders from WG on 5 Community Reviews.
- 10.4. It was **noted** that other Community Reviews are being completed by Local Authorities themselves.
- 10.5. Discussion was held on the lessons learned log from Community Reviews and the application of these lessons on Electoral Reviews.
- 10.6. Discussion was held on the development of Council Size Policy moving forward.
- 10.7. Discussion was held on the Electoral Review Programme.

11. Carmarthenshire Community Review

- 11.1. Consideration was given to the Carmarthenshire Community Review Report dated 09 January 2025 by the HoPP.

- 11.2. It was **noted** that the boundary change recommendations within the report are minor.
- 11.3. It was **noted** that Carmarthenshire County Council only received 2 consultation responses, and the Commission received 0 responses during the review period.
- 11.4. Discussion was held on the scope of the Carmarthenshire Community Review.
- 11.5. The recommended changes put forward in the Report were **noted** and **agreed**.
- 11.6. **Action:** HoPP to notify Carmarthenshire of the Commission's approval of the recommendations.

12. Senedd Review (Options and Comms update)

- 12.1. Consideration was given to the Senedd Review Options for Final Determinations and Final Determinations Report based on recommendations.
- 12.2. Discussion was held on the scope, quality and number of representations received during the consultation period. An overview of the content of the representations was given by the RM.
- 12.3. Discussion was held on the number of representations mentioning single language names.
- 12.4. Consideration was given to pairing options for constituency 1. The Commission **agreed** on the Secretariat recommendation. It was **agreed** to revert to the initial proposal for this area due to the strength of support. (Please refer to Decision Making Standard for more information.)
- 12.5. Consideration was given to pairing options for constituency 2. The Commission **agreed** on the Secretariat recommendation. It was **agreed** to revert to the initial proposal for this area due to the strength of support. (Please refer to Decision Making Standard for more information.)
- 12.6. Consideration was given to pairing options for constituency 3. The Commission **agreed** on the Secretariat recommendation. (Please refer to Decision Making Standard for more information.)
- 12.7. Consideration was given to pairing options for constituency 4. The Commission **agreed** on the Secretariat recommendation. (Please refer to Decision Making Standard for more information.)

- 12.8. Consideration was given to pairing options for constituency 5. The Commission **agreed** on the Secretariat recommendation. (Please refer to Decision Making Standard for more information.)
- 12.9. Consideration was given to pairing options for constituency 6. The Commission **agreed** on the Secretariat recommendation. (Please refer to Decision Making Standard for more information.)
- 12.10. Consideration was given to pairing options for constituency 7. The Commission **agreed** on the Secretariat recommendation. (Please refer to Decision Making Standard for more information.)
- 12.11. Consideration was given to pairing options for constituency 8. The Commission **agreed** on the Secretariat recommendation. (Please refer to Decision Making Standard for more information.)
- 12.12. Consideration was given to pairing options for constituency 9. The Commission **agreed** on the Secretariat recommendation. (Please refer to Decision Making Standard for more information.)
- 12.13. Consideration was given to pairing options for constituency 10. The Commission **agreed** on the Secretariat recommendation. (Please refer to Decision Making Standard for more information.)
- 12.14. Consideration was given to pairing options for constituency 11. The Commission **agreed** on the Secretariat recommendation. (Please refer to Decision Making Standard for more information.)
- 12.15. Consideration was given to pairing options for constituency 12. The Commission **agreed** on the Secretariat recommendation. (Please refer to Decision Making Standard for more information.)
- 12.16. Consideration was given to pairing options for constituency 13. The Commission **agreed** on the Secretariat recommendation. (Please refer to Decision Making Standard for more information.)
- 12.17. Consideration was given to pairing options for constituency 14. The Commission **agreed** on the Secretariat recommendation. (Please refer to Decision Making Standard for more information.)
- 12.18. Consideration was given to pairing options for constituency 15. The Commission **agreed** on the Secretariat recommendation. (Please refer to Decision Making Standard for more information.)

- 12.19.** Consideration was given to pairing options for constituency 16. The Commission **agreed** on the Secretariat recommendation. (Please refer to Decision Making Standard for more information.)
- 12.20.** Discussion was held on the naming policy, with particular attention given to the names for constituencies 1 and 2. It was **noted** that the uniformity of the naming policy was based on recommendations made by the Welsh Language Commissioner (WLC). Discussion was held on the strength of proposals received against single language place names and it was **noted** that the decision to use single language place names was based on the Act and the Naming Policy.
- 12.21.** The name of Caerdydd Penarth was **agreed** for constituency 1.
- 12.22.** The name of Caerdydd Ffynnon Taf was **agreed** for constituency 2.
- 12.23.** Discussion was held on the name for Constituency 10 and was amended from Sir Gâr to Sir Gaerfyrddin for the final recommendations based on recommendations from the WLC.
- 12.24.** Discussion was held on the name for Constituency 12 and was amended from Merthyr Cynon Taf to Pontypridd Cynon Merthyr for the final recommendations. This decision was based on the strength of representation to include Pontypridd in the name, despite support for the previous name during the revised consultation period.
- 12.25.** Discussion was held on the name for Constituency 14 and was amended from Mynwy Torfaen to Sir Fynwy Torfaen for the final recommendations based on the strength of representation and a representation received from Monmouthshire County Council.
- 12.26.** Discussion was held on the name for Constituency 16 and it was **agreed** to keep the dashes in the name of Pen-y-bont Bro Morgannwg despite representations received which suggested removing them. This decision was based on recommendations made by the WLC.
- 12.27.** Discussion was held on the publication timeline for the Senedd Final Report.
- 12.28.** Discussion was held on Communications and Engagement plan for the Senedd Final Report.
- 12.29.** It was **noted** that the next step on the Senedd Final Report is translation.
- 12.30.** The CEM briefed on the Senedd Review Communications so far. It was **noted** that much of the campaign was managed by Media Angel, who offered great value for their work. It was **noted** that media coverage has been very good, with senior Secretariat staff having been interviewed by all main broadcasters in Wales. It was **noted** that all major newspapers in Wales have covered the Senedd Review.

13. 2025 ERP – Policy and Practice

13.1. Consideration was given to the 2025 ERP – Policy and Practice Report dated 22 January 2025 by the HoPP.

13.2. The Report was **agreed**.

13.3. Discussion was held on Commissioner allocation for the Electoral Review Programme. It was **agreed** to re-allocate Commissioners to areas where they have already completed Community Reviews to best utilise experience and expertise.

14. Calendar of Events

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

15. Any Other Relevant Business

18.1 It was **noted** that the training with the IRPW Chair will take place after the February meeting.

Date of Next Meeting: 26 February 2025