

**DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION CYMRU MEETING
HELD AT 10:00 AM ON 30th July 2025 AT CP2 and via Teams**

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

DBCC Officers attending: Tom Jenkins (Head of Reviews); Dave Carr (Finance Manager); Ellie Chapman (Team Support Officer)

Apologies: Shereen Williams (Chief Executive); Mark Pascoe (Head of Democratic Health); Roger Ashton-Winter (Senior Democratic Health Policy Manager)

Time Started: 10:01

Time Finished: 11:48

1. Declarations of Interest

1.1. No declarations of interest.

2. Chair's Briefing

2.1. The Chair briefed the Commission on the CX, KJ and the DBCC team attending WLGA conference in North Wales, with it being a good networking opportunity for leaders.

2.2. The Chair briefed on attending the Public Leaders forum and it providing a good context on the Well-Being of Future Generations Act.

2.3. The Chair briefed that there was a meeting yesterday with MK from WG, with the Remit Letter being discussed. Discussion held by commissioners regarding the section around senior roles which suggests the committee are looking at Senior roles within CTC's as well as Principal Councils. Further amendments are needed for clarification around vague wording regarding resettlement payments and what the regulations are.

2.4. **Action:** To write a response to the Remit Letter seeking clarification and amendments.

2.5. The Chair briefed on the self-assessment model with the timing agreed for next year and the need to reflect on changes that have happened in the last 12-18 months. There will be a discussion with the new Chair to review

the resources used/needed.

- 2.6. The Chair briefed on recruitment and an updated job description for the Chair with new functions. An advert for the Chair role will go out on 4th August, with interviews in mid-late October and an appointment being made at the end of December. December will be a handover period, with hope for new Chair to shadow DBCC meeting. Decision made by WG to not recruit for Commissioner posts alongside Chair but recruitment to go reasonably quickly after appointment is made.
- 2.7. **Action:** Commissioners to circulate recruitment details amongst contacts where possible to increase exposure.
- 2.8. The Chair updated Welsh Government on the progress with the Election Information Platform; the awarding of the contract and the continued risks associated with integration costs. This was **noted** by Welsh Government and will be discussed as the project progresses and there is further clarity on costs.
- 2.9. The Chair discussed the issue raised by the Governance and Audit Committee on the requirements for indemnity insurance for the Commission. In discussions with Welsh Government it was confirmed that the legal team will provide wording for considerations that confirm the risk is mitigated as the sponsor body. Chair also confirmed that the LGBCE had the same arrangements with UK government and did not have its own indemnity insurance.
- 2.10. **Action:** Legal wording to be reviewed by Commission legal advisors on receipt and should a decision be needed on the requirement for Indemnity Insurance a report will be presented back to Board for consideration and decision.
- 2.11. The Chair recognised the uncertainty over the timelines for parachute payments with a need for clarification to enable work to start and confirmed that Welsh Government would provide further details.
- 2.12. The Chair updated that it would aid discussions between WG officials and Ministers to have clarity on the actions being taken in preparation for the Senedd elections with regards to platform and election work.
- 2.13. **Action:** KJ to take this forward in the regular catch-up meeting with Welsh Government.

- 2.14. The Chair confirmed that there was no appetite for any major decisions to be made prior to the Senedd election with regards to the future of CTCs..
- 2.15. The Chair briefed that the GAC Chair, EMB Chair and CX met regarding governance, with progress made on clarity and understanding of roles and responsibilities, the outcome of which is included in the meeting papers.

3. Minutes of the Commission meeting held on 30th April 2025

- 3.1. It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2025 as a correct record of the matters considered.

4. Issues Arising

- 4.1. Consideration was given to the report dated 23rd July 2025 by the Chief Executive on Issues Arising.
- 4.2. 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:
- 4.3. **(Issue 1)** FOI Requests - The Commission received 3 FOI requests between 23 May 2025 – 22 July 2025.
- 4.4. **(Issue 2)** Remit Letter – The Chair provided an update on the Remit Letter which has since been received.

5. EMB

- 5.1. Full Consideration was given to the Report dated June 2025 by the EMB Chair. Commissioners acknowledged the significant amount of work completed and the progress made on key areas such as governance and the Electoral Information Platform.
- 5.2. It was **noted** that the next meeting for the EMB is on the 8th August, with commissioners to be provided a full update when they next meet.
- 5.3. The Board **noted** and **accepted** the governance arrangements and thanked the Chair of Governance and Audit committee and the EMB Chair for the work in providing the board with clarity.
- 5.4. It was **noted** that the strategic register and product risk register will be received at each GAC meeting, and it was agreed to ask the internal audit

team to do additional assurance work around the platform due to risk surrounding timescales.

- 5.5. It was **noted** that two tenders had been received for the Information Platform. A tender has been awarded and is now in the standstill period.
- 5.6. It was **noted** that there was an accessibility workshop held regarding the platform and challenges within the regulations. It was **noted** that the regulations specify a PDF format is used for electoral addresses, but this isn't good for accessibility. The workshop was held to look at mitigating risks.
- 5.7. It was **noted** that there was a political parties workshop held last week also and there will hopefully be some help with testing the way they put candidate statements in place on the platform.
- 5.8. It was **noted** that UK Gov have published a wide range of reforms to be implemented by 2028.
- 5.9. It was **noted** that between now and March 2026 there are 5 GAC meetings scheduled where they will receive the EMB risk register plus project process reports. The purpose is to provide support and positive assurance to the board, with FD also invited to talk about risks relating to remuneration. A discussion was held on how the Chair wants to receive the positive assurance, with the decision of there being a quarterly verbal update as well as in written format.
- 5.10. A discussion was held on automatic voter registration. This was discussed with MK who specified this will not be delivered for the Senedd 2026 elections. Some pilot work will impact registration of electors for upcoming elections and there is interest from UK gov on these pilots.
- 5.11. A discussion was held on how the nature of GAC has changed and whether GAC is being adequately resourced in terms of staffing.
- 5.12. **Action:** CX to review resources at appropriate milestone.
- 5.13. A discussion was held on the project report for the Information Platform and the decision that the Supplier will host the service instead of the Commission and whether this creates new risks for the future. It was **noted** that there is a need to rely on external support in short term. CD from WG is providing support on the contract and mitigating risk.

- 5.14. A discussion was held on the EMB draft rules of procedure with regards to Paragraph 3.13. The role of GAC was also discussed and whether it needs to be explicitly stated.
- 5.15. A discussion was held on the relations between EMB and GAC, with clarification that as the project is developing it is providing more governance and audit to help mitigate risks.
- 5.16. A discussion was held on the DBCC being listed as a public body and the requirement to publish Equality Impact Assessments.
- 5.17. **Action:** Separate paper to come to either August or September meeting to talk about responsibilities of the Board under The Equality Act 2010: the Public Sector Equality Duty. Opportunity for the EMB to feed into this and how it is being picked up with regards to the Senedd 2026 election.

6. Remuneration

- 6.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 23rd July 2025 by the SDHPM.
- 6.2. It was **noted** that for the August board meeting the board will receive the draft annual report with determinations for board consideration prior to the start of formal consultation. The report will focus on the uplift recommended for 26/27 financial year. A discussion was held on this report coming out before the Senedd election (end of February) which states a 6.4% pay increase for principal councillors and the need for a robust communication and engagement strategy to support the draft recommendation.
- 6.3. **Action:** Remuneration committee to consider approach to communication and engagement.
- 6.4. It was **agreed** that the August meeting will be virtual.
- 6.5. A discussion was held on the CTC paper including the wider work conducted by Welsh government on the work of CTCs and the challenges around size and resources in complying with the requirements for reporting on the use of remuneration.
- 6.6. It was **agreed** that a desk top exercise be carried out to collate evidence on CTC remuneration payments and take up, and that a full review was

not required at this point in time.

- 6.7. **Action:** Work to be completed at a desk top level until after the Senedd election.

7. Budget Report 2025-2026

- 7.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 30th July 2025 by the Finance Manager and it was noted.
- 7.2. It was **noted** that there was £40,000 underspent by the end of June with staffing costs underspent by £5,000 but there will be an additional staff member by end of year. An additional 3.75% salary increase is to be taken into account.
- 7.3. It was **noted** that the main contributor for underspend was that the Commission hasn't received the first quarter's invoice for the accommodation rent.
- 7.4. A discussion was held on monthly reporting on cash and resource expenditure reports and whether both are needed. It will be shifting to a different model of reporting going forward.
- 7.5. **Action:** CX to review the financial reporting frequency and content for Board meetings.

8. Risk Management – Risk Register

- 8.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 30th July 2025 by the Finance Manager.
- 8.2. It was **noted** that there were some outdated references within the risks associated with the key Corporate Plan objectives and that the Governance and Audit Committee had not yet completed its review of the risk register format.
- 8.3. The Board **agreed** to note the current strategic risks and review the risk register fully on completion of the work by Governance and Audit committee.
- 8.4. **Action:** Risk review to be scheduled on the forward plan for Board consideration.

- 8.5. Risk Appetite report to be presented to the same Board as the updated risk register supported by the GAC Chair.

9. Reviews Progress Report

- 9.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 23rd July by the Head of Reviews and it was **noted**.
- 9.2. It was **noted** that the committee is still awaiting a decision from Minister for Pembrokeshire and Swansea.
- 9.3. It was **noted** that they are still awaiting a decision on name changes for RCT order.
- 9.4. It was **noted** that the committee is still awaiting submissions from any other local authorities doing their own reviews which will be brought to commission when they are received.
- 9.5. It was **noted** that the first committee meeting is on 15th August with discussions on it being in person.
- 9.6. It was **noted** that the draft proposal reports will go to the Commission at the next Board meeting.
- 9.7. It was **noted** there has been an update to the timetable, as there is now no time for Pembrokeshire and Swansea electoral review before next election.
- 9.8. **Action:** Programme to be revised for Chair to take back to MK for discussions.

10. Calendar of Events

- 10.1. The Commission **noted** the calendar.
- 10.2. It was discussed that with regards to the new Chair handover, December Commission meeting needs to go into calendar.
- 10.3. **Action:** Tentative date to go into calendar.

11. Any Other Business

11.1. There was no other business to discuss.

Date of Next Meeting: 27th August 2025