



COUNCIL – 17TH JANUARY 2023

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF COMMUNITIES AND ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members that the Council has a duty under Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 to keep its communities under review and report to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (the Commission) on how it keeps its communities under review. To achieve this the Council has approached the Commission to carry out a review of communities and electoral arrangements in Caerphilly on its' behalf.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The last community review in the county borough was completed in 2010. Prior to the recent review of County Borough arrangements / boundaries by the Commission a report was presented to council to delay a community review whilst that review was underway. With the next local government elections scheduled for May 2027 now is an ideal time to meet the council's statutory obligation. Any Community review would also be completed in time for the next county borough review.
- 2.2 There are two different elements of a community review that should be carried out by principal councils, which are subject to different sections of the Act.

Section 25 Review - A review of community boundaries. Should ensure that communities continue to reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government. This review would allow the council to 'tidy-up' boundaries that may have become outdated due to housing developments, shifts in population etc. This review will consider any consequential changes required to the electoral arrangements because of any boundary changes and is the element that will be undertaken by the Commission.

Section 31 Review - A review of the electoral arrangements. To identify issues with electoral arrangements of community/town councils independent of any boundary issues.

- 2.3 In order to assist with the conduct of the review the Council may appoint a politically balanced working group of Councillors to oversee the review and have responsibility

for working with the Commission to ensure any recommendations accurately reflect our communities and the terms of reference of the review (Appendix 1). This approach worked well during the recent review of the county borough electoral arrangements.

- 2.4 The council should set a council size policy as part of the terms of reference to ensure a focussed and transparent review is used in the decision-making process. A table illustrating proposed levels of representation are outlined in the main body of the report.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that: -

- 3.2 The Section 25 review of community boundaries commences in February 2023.

- 3.3 That a working group comprising of the following members be established:

- Leader of the Council
- Leader of the Plaid Cymru Group
- Leader of the Independent Group
- 2 additional members from the Labour group
- 1 additional member from the Plaid Cymru Group

- 3.4 That the Council Size Policy outlined in the body of the report be adopted for this and future reviews.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To comply with the Council's statutory duty to keep its' communities under review.

- 4.2 To allow community boundaries to be realigned where they have overgrown historical boundaries so as to ensure efficient and effective local government.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The first stage of the review is to ask all interested parties to consider the current community boundaries and submit their views on any changes required to create communities that provide for effective and convenient local government. All submissions will then be considered, and the Commission will publish a Draft Proposals Report and will hold a consultation on those proposals. All submissions will then be considered, and Final Recommendations will be submitted to Welsh Government Ministers. Welsh Government Ministers will then if it thinks fit, to give effect to these recommendations either as submitted, or with modifications.

- 5.2 The review will start in February 2023 with final recommendations being provisionally scheduled to be submitted for adoption in April 2024.

- 5.3 The aim of the review will be to ensure that community boundaries reflect the identities and interests of the communities across the Caerphilly county borough area and that they are both effective and convenient.

5.4 As part of the review, the Commission will have regard to:

- the creation, abolition or merging of communities and community wards
- the name of the community and, where warded, the name of community wards
- Where changes have been made to the boundaries of communities or community wards the number of councillors representing the community and, where warded, the number of councillors per ward.

5.5 It is important to note that the whole county borough is divided into community areas even where those areas are not served by a Town or Community Council. These areas will also be part of the review.

5.6 The National Association for Local Councils have provided supplementary guidance to English local authorities conducting community governance reviews and recommend that a community should have no fewer than seven councillors and no more than 25 to carry out its statutory responsibilities effectively. This provides a reasonable framework to work within and even though each community should be considered on its' own merits, having regard to its population and geography a formal council size policy should be adopted. No community council should have less than 500 electors.

Electorate	Suggested Councillor Allocation
> 500	7
501-5000	8 -14
5001 - 6000	15 - 16
6001- 10000	17 -20
Greater than 10001	19 - 22

5.7 The review would be based on the electorate as at the new register published on 1st December 2022 and a 5-year forecast of electorate figures.

5.8 Any changes made at a community level may lead to consequential changes being required to county borough electoral divisions. To make these changes it is envisaged that the Commission will carry out the next county borough review early on in the next round of reviews and before the local government elections in 2027.

5.9 **Conclusion**

There has been over 12 years since the last community review and in that time, there have been many changes, such as new housing developments, that mean that some community boundaries need to be reviewed. There are no planned elections in 2023 so now is the ideal time for this work to be undertaken. The review is also in good time for any changes to implemented ahead of the next local elections in 2027.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 There are no assumptions in this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An assessment has not been completed for this report as the Council has a statutory responsibility to carry out a community review.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 All costs associated with the Community Review will be met from the existing Electoral Services budget. The Commissions fee for conducting the review is £13,500.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 All consultation responses are incorporated into the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Community Review Terms of Reference (Local democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales)