

Report

Democratic Services Committee



Part 1

Date: 14 February 2019

Item: 6

Subject Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales Review of Electoral Arrangements for the City of Newport

Purpose To present a proposed approach for developing a Council response to the current consultation process.

Author Head of Law and Regulation

Ward All

Summary The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales is reviewing the electoral arrangements for the City of Newport with a view to considering and formulating proposals for future arrangements. This is part of the Commission's programme to review all principal councils in Wales, in time for new arrangements to be introduced for the next local government elections in 2022. Newport is the 17th council to be reviewed.

The Commission has published initial consultation documents, showing the current elector to Councillor ratios in the City and how these compare to their Council Size Policy and ideal ratios. The Commission is inviting comments on these documents and the potential changes required to future electoral arrangements in Newport.

The 12-week consultation period began on 30 January 2019 and closes on 24 April 2019.

After this date, the Commission will prepare its draft proposals for Newport's electoral arrangements. This will be followed by a further statutory period of consultation before the Commission's final recommendations are made to Welsh Government.

Proposal The Committee is asked to endorse:

- 1 The formulation of a cross party working group, comprising a representative of each of the Council's registered political groups, to review evidence and submissions;
- 2 The review methodology proposed by this report;
- 3 The scheduling of an additional meeting for this Committee in mid-April to receive and comment upon the cross-party working group's findings before a report is presented to April's full Council meeting;
- 4 The proposed request to the Commission to extend their consultation period until after the full Council meeting on 30 April 2019.

Action by Head of Democratic Services

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Chief Executive / Returning Officer
- Head of Law and Regulation / Monitoring Officer
- Head of People and Business Change
- Head of Finance

Signed

Background

The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales is reviewing the electoral arrangements for the City of Newport with a view to considering and formulating proposals for future arrangements. This is part of the Commission's programme to review all principal councils in Wales, in time for new arrangements to be introduced for the next local government elections in 2022. Newport is the 17th council to be reviewed.

The Commission has published initial consultation documents, showing the current elector to Councillor ratios in the City and how these compare to their Council Size Policy and ideal ratios. The Commission is inviting comments on these documents and the potential changes required to future electoral arrangements in Newport.

The 12-week consultation period began on 30 January 2019 and closes on 24 April 2019.

After this date, the Commission will prepare its draft proposals for Newport's electoral arrangements. This will be followed by a further statutory period of consultation before the Commission's final recommendations are made to Welsh Government.

Statutory Requirements and Commission Policies

The Commission's role in reviewing electoral arrangements is set out in the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013. Its primary function in reviewing electoral arrangements is to seek to ensure "effective and convenient local government" - this was further described by the Commission in its presentation to Council as "coherent electoral wards with common interests and good internal communications links".

Electoral arrangements are defined in the Act as:

- a) the total number of Members on the Council;
- b) the number, type and boundaries of the electoral wards;
- c) the number of Councillors for each electoral ward;
- d) the names of electoral wards.

Through the review, the Act requires the Commission to:

- a) seek to ensure that the ratio of electors to Councillors is, as nearly as may be, the same in every electoral ward
- b) foster community identity by
 - i) Fixing boundaries that are easily identifiable
 - ii) Not breaking local ties
- c) take account of
 - i) any discrepancy between the number of electors and the number of people eligible to vote
 - ii) any change to the number or distribution of electors in the next five years

The existing communities and community wards are the building blocks for electoral wards. There is also the power to amend communities / community wards as a consequence of changes to electoral wards, but this must be put forward at draft proposal stage to allow for the proper consultation on changes to a community.

The Commission's preference is for single member wards, but multi-member wards (up to three members) will be considered in cases supported by evidence to the character of the ward, or in the interests of electoral parity. Wards with more than three members will only be considered if this is the existing pattern and there is substantial evidence of local support for such a ward.

Council Size Policy

The Commission has worked with WLGA, Welsh Government and local Councils to develop a Council Size Policy for the whole of Wales. This policy splits the 22 authorities into four categories, based on their population density and urbanisation. There is a different recommended councillor to elector ratio for each category:

Category	Urban nature (% population living outside of towns with more than 10k population)		Population density (persons per hectare)	Councillor : Elector Ratio
1	Less than 40%	AND	Greater than or equal to 10	1 : 4,000
2	Less than 40%	AND	Greater than or equal to 4.5	1 : 3,000
3	More than 40%	AND/OR	Less than 4.5	1 : 2,500
4	More than 40%	AND	Less than 2	1 : 2,000

The Commission has also set the following constraints on Council size:

- minimum of 30 members
- Maximum of 75 members
- Change in members capped at 10%

This policy places Newport in Category 2, with a Council Size Aim of 49 Councillors in total.

Currently Newport has 109,423 electors and a membership of 50 - an average of one councillor to 2,188 electors. Applying the council size aim of 49 Councillors will result in a ratio of one councillor to 2,233 electors.

Representations

The Commission will consider:

- variance - but ideally as close as possible to 2,188 electors per councillor
- Community tie arguments that justify atypical levels of electoral equality
- Natural boundaries - topography, hills, rivers
- Man made boundaries - major roads and motorways, railways, rural / urban divides

The Commission will not consider:

- parliamentary or assembly constituency boundaries
- Local political implications of proposals
- Postcodes or addresses
- Transfers of wards / areas from one councils to another
- Changes to boundaries of school catchment areas or polling districts

Council Response

The Commission is keen for Councils to be proactive in developing and recommending their own schemes and proposals as part of the consultation process, as we are best placed to understand the communities and boundaries within our own areas. A majority of Councils reviewed so far have successfully come up with their own options or preferred schemes as part of the initial consultation process.

This report proposes the formation of a cross party working group to review the available evidence, invite submissions from stakeholders, and devise options for a proposed new scheme of electoral arrangements.

A proposed methodology for this review is attached to this report. This would require a report back to the full Council meeting on 30 April 2019 for a coordinated Council response to be approved, and therefore requires the Commission to grant a short extension to the current consultation period which is due to end on 24 April.

Financial Summary

This review will be conducted from within existing resources and has no budgetary impact.

Any increase or decrease in the overall number of Councillors in the final proposals of the Commission will impact on the number of allowances drawn from Members Allowances budget, the levels of which are externally set by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

Risks

The review will take place whether or not the Council submits a response to the current consultation. Not submitting a response would mean a missed opportunity to set out the workable options based on the council's extensive and recognised knowledge of its communities. The Commission would have to formulate draft proposals without the benefit of this knowledge, which may result in proposals which are not the best fit for the local area.

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

This is a statutory review by the independent Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales, aiming to improve electoral parity between the different parts of the City.

Options Available and considered

Option 1 - undertake a review and coordinate a Council response to the Commission's consultation process.

Option 2 - not undertake a review and not send a coordinated Council response to the consultation.

Preferred Option and Why

Option 1 - undertake a review and coordinate a Council response to the Commission's consultation process.

The Commission is keen for Councils to be proactive in developing and recommending their own schemes and proposals as part of the consultation process, as we are best placed to understand the communities and boundaries within our own areas. A majority of Councils reviewed so far have successfully come up with their own options or preferred schemes as part of the initial consultation process.

The Committee is therefore asked to endorse:

- 1 The formulation of a cross party working group, comprising a representative of each of the Council's registered political groups, to review evidence and submissions;
- 2 The review methodology proposed in Appendix 1;

- 3 The scheduling of an additional meeting for this Committee on 10 April 2019 to receive and comment upon the cross-party working group's findings before a report is presented to April's full Council meeting;
- 4 The proposed request to the Commission to extend their consultation period until after the full Council meeting on 30 April 2019.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

To follow.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the report. The Council has the option of doing nothing and waiting for the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales to publish their draft proposals and then respond during the statutory consultation process. However, the Commissioners actively encourage councils to come up with their own proposals for revised electoral arrangements prior to the draft being prepared because of their local knowledge and this is the only opportunity to suggest changes to existing community boundaries, should the need arise. Therefore, it is recommended that the Council should undertake its own review and agree a preferred option or range of proposals that can be presented to the commissioners before the end of April. The revised arrangements will need to reflect the optimum council-size recommended by the Commissioners and also address issues of under and over-representation in existing wards and projected population growth. The review will need to be evidence-based and political considerations are wholly irrelevant. Therefore, it is recommended that a cross-party working group is established to undertake the review, which will report back to DSC and make recommendations to full Council for consideration on 30th April.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales Review of Electoral Arrangements for the City of Newport details an approach to a statutory consultation and as a result there are no human resource implications. In responding to the consultation the Council will be able to provide feedback on how the proposals further develop the Well-being of Future Generations Act well-being goals, as they apply to citizens and communities within Newport. Newport City Council has provided population estimates to support this process and more data can be accessed to support the Committee and the Council in this exercise.

Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010

Not applicable

Children and Families (Wales) Measure

Not applicable

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

This is a statutory review being carried out by the Boundary Commission, and supports the Wellbeing Goal "A Wales of Cohesive Communities" within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Not applicable

Consultation

The proposed review methodology includes consultation with key stakeholders.

Background Papers

LDBC policy documents and consultation papers.

Dated: 7 February 2019

Proposal: Electoral Review Cross Party Working Group

Membership

One nominee from each of the Council's political groups.

Terms of Reference

Formulate and recommend a preferred option or options for a coordinated Council representation to the Boundary Commission as part of their initial consultation process:

1. Gather and review available data and other evidence
2. Invite submissions and interview key stakeholders
3. Consider options for changing electoral arrangements
4. Agree a final report for consultation with Democratic Services Committee and submission to Council.

Secondary Research Gathering

To include:

- All information submitted to the Commission in preparation for the review
- Statistical data for each community area and ward (where a community is warded)
 - Current population estimates and number of electors, and numbers of those eligible to vote
 - A five year projection of population, number of electors, and numbers of those eligible to vote
 - This data for the last five years
- Data analysis
 - A commentary on how the projected figures were calculated
 - Detail on the main development areas, timescales for progress and how these will impact upon current communities and boundaries
 - % changes over 5 years
 - % of people eligible to vote and not registered
- Maps
 - Detailed maps to street level showing current electoral ward, community, and community ward boundaries.

Primary Research Gathering

- Written submissions invited from all of the Commission's mandatory consultees
- Engagement with Community Council representatives

Proposal Formation

Establish viable options for improving electoral parity within the statutory requirements and Commission policies.

If possible, identify preferred options for presenting a single Council recommended scheme to the Commission. Alternatively, a series of evidenced options could be presented.

Report Consultation and Approval

Final report presented to Democratic Services Committee special meeting in April for consideration and comment.

Final report presented with DSC comments to Council on 30 April.

Current Wards and Communities

Electoral Ward	Councillors	Community	Community Ward
Allt-yr-yn	3	Allt-yr-yn	-
Alway	3	Alway	-
Beechwood	3	Beechwood	-
Bettws	3	Bettws	-
Caerleon	3	Caerleon (TC)	-
Gaer	3	Gaer	-
Graig	2	Graig (CC)	Lower Machen
			Rhiwderin
			Bassaleg
Langstone	2	Langstone (CC)	Langstone
			Llandevaud
		Penhow (CC)	-
		Llanvaches (CC)	-
Lliswerry	4	Lliswerry	-
		Nash (CC)	-
Llanwern	1	Llanwern (CC)	-
		Bishton (CC)	Bishton
			Underwood
		Goldcliff (CC)	-
		Redwick (CC)	-
Malpas	3	Malpas	-
Marshfield	2	Marshfield (CC)	-
		Coedkernew (CC)	-
		Michaelstone-y-Fedw (CC)	-
		Wentlooge (CC)	Peterstone
			St Brides

Pillgwenlly	2	Pillgwenlly	-
Ringland	3	Ringland	-
Rogerstone	3	Rogerstone	-
Shaftesbury	2	Shaftesbury	-
St Julians	3	St Julians	-
Stow Hill	2	Stow Hill	-
Tredegar Park	1	Tredegar Park	-
Victoria	2	Victoria	-