

Report

Newport City Council



Part 1

Date: 30 April 2019

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

Purpose To present the final report of the cross-party working group convened to formulate a Council response to the Commission's initial consultation process.

Author Democracy and Communication Manager

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 3 May 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.

A cross-party working group was set up to review the evidence and options for future electoral arrangements in Newport, and formulate a draft response to the Commission's initial consultation process. The group's final report is attached at Appendix 1 for Council consideration.

Proposal Council is asked to consider the following recommendations of the working group to form the Council's response to the Boundary Commission:

Recommendation 1: Council is asked to support the minor amendments to boundaries set out in the Minor Anomalies section of this report.

Recommendation 2: Council is asked to agree the preferred option for Llanwern:

- **Option 2a:** Move Llanwern Community into Ringland.
- **Option 2b:** Move Bishton Community Council area, comprising Bishton and Underwood Community Wards, into Langstone.

Recommendation 3: Council is asked to agree the preferred option for Rogerstone

- **Option 3a:** Create two new wards of Rogerstone West community ward (two Councillors) and combining Rogerstone North and East community wards (two Councillors)
- **Option 3b:** Create three new wards of Rogerstone West community ward (two Councillors), Rogerstone North community ward (one Councillor), and Rogerstone East community ward (one Councillor).

Recommendation 4: Council is asked to agree the preferred option for Stow Hill

- **Option 4a:** Add the “Riverside” area of Pillgwenlly to Stow Hill
- **Option 4b:** Add the Mon Bank area of Pillgwenlly to Stow Hill

Recommendation 5: Council is asked to agree the preferred option for Tredegar Park

- **Option 5a:** Merge Tredegar Park and Marshfield
- **Option 5b:** Add St Brides and Coedkernew Community Wards to Tredegar Park

Recommendation 6: Council is asked to agree the preferred option for Beechwood

- **Option 6a:** Retain three Councillors in Beechwood
- **Option 6b:** Reduce Beechwood ward to two Councillors

Recommendation 7: Council is asked to agree the preferred option for Bettws

- **Option 7a:** Retain three Councillors in Bettws
- **Option 7b:** Reduce Bettws ward to two Councillors

Recommendation 8: Council is asked to support the proposal to retain four representatives in Llisbury, and retire the old spelling of Liswerry in favour of the bilingual form of Llisbury.

Action by Democracy and Communication Manager

Timetable To submit a response to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales by the consultation deadline of 3 May 2019.

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Chief Executive
- Head of Law and Regulation
- Head of Finance
- Head of People and Business Change
- Democratic Services Committee

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.

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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.

Following a report to Democratic Services Committee on 14 February 2019, a cross party working group was set up to review the available evidence, invite submissions from stakeholders, and devise options for a proposed new scheme of electoral arrangements. The Group's report to Council is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Financial Summary

This Working Group's report has been produced 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.

Proposal

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Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There are no direct budget impacts of responding to this Consultation. Any increase/decrease in Member numbers will have budget impact coming from allowances paid and support costs such as IT provision etc. These will need to be assessed and built into budgets when final recommendations are known.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales have a statutory duty under the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 to review the electoral arrangements in all principal councils in Wales, to ensure effective and convenient local government. The current programme will ensure that all reviews are completed prior to the next local government elections in 2022. The statutory review of electoral arrangements in Newport commenced with the start of the informal consultation period on 30th January and initial proposals will need to be submitted by 3rd May 2019.

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 was agreed that the Council should undertake its own review to identify a preferred option or range of proposals that could be presented to the commissioners before the 3rd May. A cross-party working group was set up by Democratic Services Committee to undertake this review and their report is attached.

Although the Commissioners will consider community cohesion issues when determining “effective and convenient” electoral arrangements, 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.

The Working Group have come up with a range of options for consideration by Council. Some minor amendments to community boundaries have been identified in order to correct obvious anomalies. Alternative options have then been identified for resolving problems of under and over-representation in 4 existing wards, which would bring the proportion of electors to Councillors within acceptable margins and provide flexibility for future projected growth and increased electors in those areas. Council will need to take a collective view on the preferred option in each case, when responding to the Boundary Commission. There is also the option of reducing the number of Councillors in the Bettws and Beechwood wards to ensure that the overall number of Councillors complies with the Commission’s

council size model of 49 members. The modelling of the electoral data demonstrates that a reduction of councillors in other wards is not possible, without taking the proportionality figures outside accepted tolerances or changing community boundaries completely.

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 cross party working group consisted of representatives of each of the Council's political groups. At the start of the review, representations were also sought from Group Leaders, Community Councils, and other key stakeholders. Group comments were fed in through the working group representatives, and one additional submission was received from Llanwern Community Council.

The Democratic Services Committee was consulted on the working group's draft findings on 10 April 2019, and its comments are reflected in this report.

Background Papers

Policies and other background documents and final reviews published on the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales' website at <https://ldbc.gov.wales/>

Dated: 15 April 2019