

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
DATE: TUESDAY, 16 APRIL 2013
REPORT BY: DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE MANAGER
SUBJECT: COMMUNITY REVIEW

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.01 For Council to recommend to the Cabinet:-
- a) The guiding principles for the proposed community review.
 - b) That the community review be commenced.
 - c) The consultation process for this phase of the review.

2.00 BACKGROUND

- 2.01 The County Council has a duty under the Local Government Act 1972 to keep Town & Community boundaries and electoral arrangements for communities within its area under review. Over a period of time the numbers living in the communities change as a result of factors such as new housing developments. This can lead to anomalies and inconsistencies, not only between differing communities but also within different wards of a single community.
- 2.02 The County Council has not completed a community review of all electoral areas since coming into being. For some time it has been the intention to undertake a review during 2013 and early 2014 to take advantage of the fact that no elections are planned until May 2014 so the Council's elections staff would have the capacity to assist in the community review process.
- 2.03 At its meeting on the 19 February the Council received a report on the proposed community review. That report referred to the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Bill published on the 29 November 2012 which contains provisions relating to community reviews. The report explained how that could create a potential difficulty if the Council conducted a community review in accordance with the detailed provisions in that Bill and those provisions were amended as part of the parliamentary process. That potential difficulty has been overcome as it has been clarified that community reviews commencing before the Bill receives Royal Assent will be governed by the 1972 legislation.

- 2.04 At its meeting on the 28 February the County Forum received a report on the proposed community review including a draft timetable showing the various stages of a community review and an indicative timescale for each stage (appendix 1). On the 12 March all Town & Community Councils were written to seeking their views on the draft guiding principles for the review. Those draft guiding principles are attached as appendix 2.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.01 At the time of preparing this report the responses received from Town or Community Councils to the proposed draft guiding principles are shown on appendix 3. Those guiding principles to a large extent are based on the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972. The Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Bill replicates these provisions but also adds detailed provisions about the process that should be followed in conducting a community review. An update on responses to consultation on the draft principles will be given at the meeting. The Council's views on the draft guiding principles will be reported to the Cabinet meeting on the 23 April 2013.

- 3.02 Guidance issued by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales indicates that following the launch of a community review the first formal stage is to write to all Town & Community Councils and other potential interested parties with a view to identifying potential changes to the existing community boundaries and electoral arrangements. It also indicates that a public notice announcing the review might be helpful. It suggests that this initial consultation period should be 9 weeks.

- 3.03 In addition to the proposals in paragraph 3.02 the Council intends to consult with the Police & Crime Commissioner for North Wales and with the Boundary Commission itself. It is also proposed to devote a section of the Council's website to the community review. The Council is keen to engage with each Town & Community Council and as part of this intends to send each a questionnaire on relevant issues for their community. It is also proposed to co-host with individual Town or Community Councils a series of consultation meetings. In addition, officers will be available to deal with any queries.

- 3.04 All information obtained during the consultation period will then be collated, analysed and considered so that a report with proposals for change or no change can be prepared for consideration by the Council and Cabinet in the autumn.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 The Council recommends to Cabinet:
- a) That the community review be commenced.

- b) That the guiding principles of the review be as in appendix 2 subject to any amendments Council feels appropriate.
- c) That the consultation on the first formal stage be as indicated in paragraphs 3.02 and 3.03.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 Budget provision of £10K for the costs of publicity and consultation.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 None as a result of this report.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 None as a result of this report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 None as a result of this report.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 The workload arising from the community review can be accommodated within existing resources.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 None in advance of this report.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 With Group Leaders and with Town & Community Councils.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 Appendix 1 - Draft timetable
Appendix 2 - Draft guiding principles
Appendix 3 - Town or Community Councils responses

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Community review guidance issued by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales

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