

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Date of Meeting | Thursday, 22 July 2021 |
| Report Subject | Local Democracy & Boundary Commission for Wales: Review of Flintshire Ward Boundaries update |
| Report Author | Chief Executive & Chief Officer (Governance) |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Local Democracy & Boundary Commission for Wales Review of Flintshire Ward Boundaries started in 2018, with a presentation to Council by representatives of the Commission. The Commission's first proposals were published in 2019. There was to be a reduction in the number of Flintshire County Councillors from 70 to 63.

In June 2020, the Commission published their Final Recommendations Report. In that report, the number of Councillors in Flintshire was to be 66 (so a loss of 4). The three Member wards which we had strenuously opposed, in Buckley (2), Flint (1) and Holywell (1) were no longer being put forward. However, a new three Member ward for Flint had been included: this was for a combined Coleshill and Trelawny ward, with three Members.

We are concerned that the Commission, by introducing a new recommendation for one three Member ward in the County, in Flint, at the final stage may have gone outside their own procedures. We have never had three Member wards in Flintshire and it would be fundamentally wrong to introduce one now.

Each of the 22 principal councils in Wales has been reviewed. We are all to hold elections in May 2022, and want to start make arrangements for those, on the new wards basis as soon as possible. There will also be a need for political parties to select candidates on the basis of those new wards. We received an indication that we should know the result in September 2021. All of the Commission's Final Recommendations Reports are now with the Minister for Finance & Local Government, Rebecca Evans MS.

We are aware that the Minister has already asked the Commission for more details of their proposals for four councils: Cardiff, Caerphilly and Flintshire. However, it transpired that the concerns in Flintshire related to the Higher Kinnerton and Hope Mountain proposals, rather than to Flint, as we had hoped. . We understand that the Minister's decision is now imminent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | That Council notes the position and awaits the decision of the Minister for Finance & Local Government. |
|---|---|

REPORT DETAILS

| 1.00 | EXPLAINING THE PROCESS |
|------|---|
| 1.01 | The Local Democracy & Boundary Commission for Wales (LDBC) Review of Flintshire Ward Boundaries started in 2018, with a presentation to Council by representatives of the Commission. In September 2019, the Commission published its draft proposals for Flintshire. The proposed changes to the arrangement of local electoral wards was to make a step towards achieving electoral parity across the County, with a ratio of 1:1,895: we currently have electorates of between 1,041 and 4,582. |
| 1.02 | Members will recall that throughout the three consultation periods, we held extensive discussions with Members, including workshops, a series of drop-in sessions and both individual and group discussions. We drafted responses for consideration at County Council meetings. (January, September and November 2019). |
| 1.03 | <p>The Commission had published its second consultation document on 29th August 2019, proposing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a Council of 65 members – a reduction from the current size of 70. This would result in a proposed county average ratio of 1,836 electors per member;• 39 electoral wards - a reduction from the 57 existing wards;• no changes to 14 electoral wards;• 17 x single member wards, 18 x 2 member wards and 4 x 3 member wards. |
| 1.04 | We supported some proposals, and challenged others. Our opposition to the introduction of three Member wards, which has never been part of our representational culture was trenchant. Our submission was made following Council in November 2019. |
| 1.05 | <p>The Commission published its Final Recommendations in June 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a reduction of the Council to 66 Members, from 70 (Originally, we were to lose 7 Members, which was changed last year to 5.);• a new ratio – the recommended county average of 1,809 electors• 42 electoral wards, a reduction from 57 existing wards;• 23 Multi-Member wards; 22 two-Member wards and one three-Member wards;• no changes to 17 electoral wards.• The proposals provide for an improvement in electoral parity across the county, which is the LDBC's prime consideration. |

| | |
|------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was to be one three Member ward only, Flint Coleshill & Trelawny, a new proposal which had not previously featured in any consultation. <p>Prior to publication, our statutory officers were briefed on proposals. The Commission’s representatives emphasised that <i>‘It is important to remind you that this review should result in proposals which achieve effective and convenient local government, ensuring as far as it is possible, for there to be an equal value to your vote wherever you live within a council.’</i></p> <p>And, in relation to the Flint Coleshill/Trelawny ward also said that: <i>‘The Commission acknowledge that this creates a three-member ward and the opposition to three-member wards received during the consultation period. However, the Commission felt that the right number of members to represent the town to reflect the number of electors is five. The Commission considered other arrangements for the area but considered that the recommended arrangement returned the best levels of electoral parity while providing five members for the Town of Flint.’</i></p> |
| 1.06 | <p>In their previous recommendation, Flint retained six members. Why, at the last stage, has the Commission changed its view? The proposal is entirely new and is not, for example, a response to something requested during consultation. No rationale has been given. Appendix 2 shows that the final Recommendation figures are not hugely better than those at the August 2019 Proposals stage – apart from the reduction by one Member. The proposal therefore does not seem to justify departure from the Commission’s own principle that single member wards should be seen as the most desirable option.</p> |
| 1.07 | <p>Following an all Member briefing and a series of ward workshops, we maintained our opposition to proposals in some areas, whilst recognising that some changes were inevitable. We made our case by letter at the end of July 2020. We reiterated our opposition to the principle of three Member wards and specifically to the late introduction of the new recommendation, reducing the number of seats in Flint from six to five and creating a combined Coleshill and Trelawny ward.</p> |
| 1.07 | <p>The final decision on the Flintshire Electoral Wards Review rests with the Minister for Finance & Local Government (now Rebecca Evans MS). We had been making representations at a number of levels for the early publication of the decisions. Each of the 22 principal councils in Wales has been reviewed. We are all to hold elections in May 2022, and want to start make arrangements for those, on the new wards basis as soon as possible. There will also be a need for political parties to select candidates on the basis of those new wards. We received an indication that we should know the result in September 2021.</p> |
| 1.08 | <p>At the end of last month, some information was published. We had already been told by the Commission that the Minister had accepted their Final Recommendations for 19 of the 22 principal councils. For three councils: Caerphilly, Cardiff and Flintshire, the Commission had been asked to provide more evidence to support their proposals. It transpired that the concerns in Flintshire related to the Higher Kinnerton and Hope Mountain proposals, rather than to Flint, as we had hoped.</p> |

| | |
|------|--|
| 1.09 | In our response to the Commission last July, we had expressed particular concerns that the Final Recommendations for the town of Flint were inconsistent with Section 21(3) of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013. This states that the Commission ‘must seek to ensure effective and convenient local government’. We did and do not accept that the Commission’s final recommendations for Flint meet this requirement We understand that the Minister’s decision is now imminent. |
|------|--|

| | |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| 2.00 | RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS |
| 2.01 | To be determined. |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 3.00 | CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT |
| 3.01 | There has been extensive consultation throughout this process, of which this is the final stage. |

| | |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 4.00 | RISK MANAGEMENT |
| 4.01 | To be determined. |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 5.00 | APPENDICES |
| 5.01 | Appendix 1: the case against a three Member ward in Flint – extract from the Council’ July 2020 response to the Local Democracy & Boundary Commission’s Final Recommendations Report as part of the Review of the Electoral Arrangements for the County of Flintshire. Appendix 2: analysis of the ‘quota’ for Flint in the August 2019 Proposals Report and the June 2020 Final Recommendations Report. |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 6.00 | LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS |
| 6.01 | Electoral Reviews: Policy and Practice document 2016 http://ldbc.gov.wales/reviews/electoralreviews/58417614/?lang=en Draft Proposals Report- Local Democracy & Boundary Commission for Wales Review of the Electoral Arrangements for Flintshire. https://ldbc.gov.wales/reviews/08-19/flintshire-draft-proposals Report of the Chief Executive and Chief Officer (Governance): Local Democracy & Boundary Commission for Wales Local Review. 11 th September 2019 http://modgov:9070/documents/g4579/Public%20reports%20pack%2011th-Sep-2019%2014.00%20Flintshire%20County%20Council.pdf?T=10 |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>Report of the Chief Executive and Chief Officer (Governance): Flintshire Electoral Review. 19th November 2019 http://modgov:9070/documents/g4648/Public%20reports%20pack%2019th-Nov-2019%2014.00%20Flintshire%20County%20Council.pdf?T=10</p> <p>Local Democracy & Boundary commission for Wales: Review of the Electoral Arrangements of the County of Flintshire: Final recommendations Report, June 2020 https://ldbc.gov.wales/reviews/06-20/flintshire-final-recommendations</p> <p>Contact Officers: Robert Robins, Head of Democratic Services and Lynn Phillips, Electoral Services Manager Telephone: (01352) 702320/01352 702329 E-mail: robert.robins@flintshire.gov.uk Lyn.phillips@flintshire.gov.uk</p> |
|--|--|

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 7.00 | GLOSSARY OF TERMS |
| 7.01 | <p>Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales: The role of the Commission is to keep under review all local government areas in Wales, and the electoral arrangements for the principal areas, and to make such proposals to the Welsh Government as seem desirable in the interests of effective and convenient local government.</p> <p>Local Government (Democracy) Wales Act 2013: An Act of the National Assembly for Wales to make provision about the constitution and functions of the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales; to make various provisions relating to local government; and for connected purposes.</p> <p>Electoral Review: A review of electoral arrangements for a local authority area.</p> <p>Council Size Methodology: A model the Commission has adopted for determining the size of Councils.</p> |