

**EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL
27 JUNE 2012**

**PROPOSALS FROM THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION
FOR WALES**

following a review of electoral arrangement in the County of Anglesey

THE REPORT OF THE MEMBERS TASK AND FINISH PANEL

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales, following its review of County Council electoral arrangements, published its report including proposals for the Minister on 21 May 2012 for consultation. The consultation period spans a 6 week period from the date of publication up to 29 June 2012.
- 1.2 An Awareness Raising Seminar was held for the elected members on 31 May 2012 and, at that meeting, the contents of the report, the rationale underlying the proposals and the possible implications for the pattern of local government in Anglesey were all highlighted in detail. The Seminar was followed by a meeting of political group leaders on 13 June 2012 to implement the resolution of the Extraordinary Meeting of the County Council on 9 June 2011 to establish a politically balanced Panel to consider the matter in detail and report back to an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council to resolve on the Council's response to the Welsh Government.
- 1.3 The Task and Finish Panel met on two occasions, namely 15 June and 25 June 2012, and the purpose of this report is to inform the members of the Council of the discussions and conclusions of the Panel which comprised Councillors Keith Evans (Chair), W. J. Chorlton, Trefor Lloyd Hughes, Elwyn Schofield, Hywel Eifion Jones, Ken Hughes, Tom Jones [15.06.12 only], Selwyn Williams [25.06.12 only] and Bryan Owen [ex-officio]. The members were assisted by the Chief Executive together with officers from the Legal, Finance and Electoral Departments.
- 1.4 To assist the Panel's work in seeking to reflect the opinions and viewpoints of the majority of members, the Chief Executive wrote to the Political Group Leaders, and every individual member, inviting them to submit their observations in advance for the Panel's consideration. Few members took advantage of this opportunity and the responses are listed in the background papers.

2. THE MEETING OF THE PANEL ON 15 JUNE 2012

2.1 At the first meeting of the Panel Councillor Keith Evans was elected Chair, and work began with an overview of the issues under consideration, namely:

- The timetable for responding to the recommendations and the arrangements for so doing;
- A summary of the recommendations in the Boundary Commission's report for the Isle of Anglesey County Council;
- A summary of the recommendations in the Commission's report for the size of Councils in Wales
- A summary of the main points raised at the County Council's Seminar meeting on 31 May 2012.
- A summary of the responses received from individual Council members.

2.2 It was noted that two important principles are incorporated in the Minister's directions that need to be borne in mind - the need to move away from single electoral wards to multi member wards and the need for wards to be fairly equal in terms of the numbers of electors (the general target figure is 1750 but, in Anglesey's case, where 30 members are proposed, the average figure would be 1649 – it would not be acceptable for the percentage variation above or below this figure to be excessive).

2.3 The deliberations concentrated on three headings, namely:

- i) the options to be considered
- ii) the numbers
- iii) geographical and community aspects.

In terms of the options, the following pattern was proposed:

- Retaining the status quo [40 members in single wards]
- Retaining the single wards but reducing the number of members to, for example, 35.
- Accepting the proposals
- Completely changing the options in terms of the pattern of wards.
- Accepting the recommendations with minor amendments.

2.4 The risk of arguing that it would not be possible to run the Council effectively with only 30 members was discussed, and it was suggested that a structure of a 30 member Council be explored on the one hand, and how, on the other, the scrutiny function could be strengthened with 32 members, emphasising that strengthening the scrutiny function is an important feature of the Authority's improvement plan. On the whole, members were willing to accept

a reduction to 30 but were also anxious to present a case for increasing the number to 32.

2.5 Detailed consideration was given to the timetable and it was reported that the electoral register must be drawn up by 15 October 2012 including any changes to the wards. Including radical proposals would make it difficult to complete the process before that date and would therefore be likely to cause problems given the intention to hold the election in May 2013. It was accepted that it would be unlikely that the Minister would be willing to change that date or to postpone the election further.

2.6 The main matters that arose in the deliberations were:

- The possible effect of any changes in ward profiles on deprivation grants.
- The disparate nature of communities included within some wards.
- The geographical size of some wards
- Contact with community councils within wards
- The effect of the number on the size of the Executive Committee.

2.7 Resolutions

Following a detailed discussion, the Panel resolved that it required further information before continuing its work. Officers were requested to undertake further work on the following matters and to report back to the next meeting of the Panel.

1. Developing a structure for corporate management of the Council with 30 members
2. A revision to the above structure demonstrating how the scrutiny responsibilities would be strengthened.
3. An analysis of the likely use of Special Responsibility Allowances in connection with the above proposed structure.
4. Information with regard to cost projections relating to a reduction in member numbers and implementing the reorganisation proposals.
5. Information with regard to any implications for external grants following reorganisation based on the proposals (e.g. grants for deprived wards).
6. Confirmation of the final date for receipt of observations or responses to the proposals.

3. THE MEETING OF THE PANEL ON 25 JUNE 2012

3.1 The Panel received information from officers in relation to matters raised at the previous meeting as follows:

3.1.1 The final date for submitting responses to the Boundary Commission's consultation is 29 June 2012.

3.1.2 In relation to the committee structure, if there were to be a reduction in the number of members, the work undertaken by the Legal Section shows that there are so many possible variations that it is difficult to complete the task before the final decisions are made, but it would show a reduction in the number of members on every committee, a reduction in the frequency of meetings and a likely reduction from 5 to 3 in the number of scrutiny committees.

If the member numbers were to increase from 30 to 32 no single member would have to attend more than one scrutiny committee. A table was also presented showing how 15 Special Responsibility Allowances could be used based on 30 members and 16 allowances based on 32 members (without counting the civic payments).

3.1.3 In terms of the financial implications, a report was provided by the Finance Department that the likely saving in reducing the number of members from 40 to 30 would be approximately £174k per annum based on the pay grades of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales for 2012/13. It was also reported that there was no evidence that the county could lose deprivation grants as a result of the reorganisation – it was noted that Communities First Funding is based on the boundaries of the current wards for the next 10 years. It was noted that the current Revenue Support Grant system does not give any weighting to wards in the allocation.

3.1.4 Maps were presented by the Electoral Department showing a different pattern for wards based on the proposals of the Boundaries Commission, namely 11 wards, a 12 ward pattern based on 32 members for the whole county, an 11 ward pattern but with variations in terms of the communities included within individual wards.

3.2 In the deliberations after having received information from officers, the following observations were made:

- any major changes to the proposals would lead to further consultation and would render it impossible to hold elections in May 2013 – they are therefore likely to be rejected;

- the pattern of wards should have been considered based on the population projections and not the current number of electors if the new arrangements are to be effective in the long term;
- arguments against multi-member wards would probably be rejected and any proposals submitted in response need to be realistic;
- a case should be made for having more compatible communities than has been proposed – local information with regard to the nature of communities is essential for the process if sustainable arrangements are to be secured;
- not to oppose a reduction to 30 members but it can be argued that the Council would run more effectively with 32 members;
- the new arrangements adopted must be acceptable to the majority of Anglesey's electors.

4. IT WAS RESOLVED TO SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS TO THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL

- 4.1 To unanimously approve the concept of multi-member wards and not to oppose the principle of dividing the county on that basis.
- 4.2 To accept that the county can be run with a reduced number of 30 members, but to highlight that there were two opinions amongst members of the Panel regarding seeking to increase the number to 32, namely:
 - i) that 32 makes it easier to arrange effective scrutiny committees and better reflects the need to surmount geographical size problems in rural wards;
 - ii) that an increase from 30 to 32 entails excessive organisational changes to the current proposals that cannot be deemed to be minor variations and would therefore be likely to cause major problems with the timeframe.
- 4.3 To suggest changing the name Bro Rhosyr to Brait as supported by the Community Council.
- 4.4 To transfer the communities of Trewalchmai and Bryngwran from Central Anglesey to Bro Aberffraw.

- 4.5 To transfer the community of Llangristiolus from Bro Rhosyr to Central Anglesey.
- 4.6 To transfer the wards of Llangaffo and Llangeinwen from Bro Aberffraw to Bro Rhosyr.
- 4.7 Consideration was given to combining Menai Bridge and Cwm Cadnant but there was no unanimity of opinion.
- 4.8 Consideration was given to adding to the above variations but the majority of the Panel's members were of the opinion that doing so would entail making significant changes that would cause problems in terms of securing agreement to the proposals within the timescale.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- A.** In considering the Boundary Commission's proposals the Panel examined the content of the following documents already distributed to the members of the Council:
1. The minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the County Council held on 9 June 2011.
 2. Electoral Reviews: Council Size Policy Consultation Paper May 2012; Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales.
 3. Review of Electoral Arrangements: Reports and Proposals, Isle of Anglesey; May 2012.
- B.** The Panel also considered the content of the documents listed below presented by groups and individual members of the Council expressing their viewpoints:
1. Correspondence from Councillor Keith Evans to the Chief Executive, dated 8 June 2012, expressing a personal choice in terms of the number of wards and members.
 2. Correspondence from Councillor Hywel Eifion Jones, 9 June 2012 [drawing particular attention to the response of Llanidan Community Council]
 3. A note from Councillor Bob Parry OBE to the Chairman of the County Council and a letter of acknowledgement from Councillor R. Llywelyn Jones, 11 June 2012, presenting revisions to the pattern of rural wards.
 4. An e-mail message from Councillor Trefor Lloyd Hughes to the Chief Executive, dated 11 June 2012, seeking information with regard to the voting arrangements in multi member wards.
 5. Correspondence from the clerk of Menai Bridge Town Council, dated 19 June 2012, expressing viewpoints on wards in the area.
 6.
 - a) Correspondence from Councillor Goronwy O Parry MBE, Leader of the Original Independent Group, presenting proposals for 14 single wards and 6 multi-member wards.
 - b) Correspondence from Councillor Goronwy Parry MBE, Leader of the Original Independent Group, dated 22 June 2012 with revisions to the previous correspondence.
 7. A note from Councillor J. V. Owen, dated 25 June 2012, presenting proposals for wards in the Holyhead area.
 8. Maps and tables from the Electoral Officer highlighting variations to the proposals based on discussions with members [submitted on 25 June 2012]
 9. A report from the Legal Section presenting observations on the constitutional structure of a Council with fewer members together with the distribution of Special Responsibility Allowances [submitted 25 June 2012].
 10. A report from the Finance Department presenting observations on the financial implications of the proposals for reorganisation [submitted 25 June 2012]

The above documents have not been distributed to members but are available for inspection as required.