

NORTH AND MID WALES ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**CYMRDEITHAS CYNGORHOU TRAF A CHYMRDEITHASAU MHWAF OGLEDID CYMRU**

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20th July 2016

To Town and Community Councils
 North and Mid Wales Association of Local Councils

From Robert Robinson
 Secretary

Dear Sir

Local Government re-organisation and Boundary Changes

Good morning.

As you will be aware there is to be a Town and Community Council review in the next few years which will follow the re-organisation of the County Councils (in whatever form is decided in the autumn of this year).

The proposals, as we are informed to date, is that there will be a substantial reduction in the number of Town and Community Councils, possibly to as little as around 100. The current thinking is that these new Councils would be based upon electorate numbers.

The Association has met with the Boundary Commission who will, in due course, be setting any new boundaries of Town and Community Councils. Not the County Councils, as in the past.

The Association is seeking the views of Local Councils on the possible changes and how they might be implemented. This information will aid the forming of a report the Boundary Commission in the autumn before they prepare any way forward for Welsh Government themselves.





Please can your Council consider and let us have your input. Note that this is not about whether it will happen but about how it is implemented.

Thank you for your time.

Yours faithfully

Robert Robinson FRICS FILCM
Secretary to the Association



LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL BOUNDARIES

Introduction

The Local Government (Wales) Bill contains a statement which says that it is 'long overdue review of Town and Community Councils'.

The Boundary Commission is to be asked to consider the boundaries of the new Councils likely to be called 'Common Councils'.

The current timetable for such a review ends with elections in 2023 of any new Council arrangements. Between Mid 2017 and later 2020 such a review is likely to be completed.

Whatever happens with the County Boundaries there is a commitment to a review of the Town and Community Councils and there is support nationally for a reduction in the number of those Town and Community Councils.

Meeting with the Commission

The Association met with the Commission the middle of the year and gained information on how matters are likely to proceed. It is from that meeting that this paper is brought forward.

The current position

The Welsh Government has not yet confirmed the final boundaries for County Councils but it is not expected that much change will be made from the Bill currently on the table. However, Mark Drakeford has stated that he will make a formal statement on the future of County Councils in the autumn.

It appears that the Welsh Government is seeking approx. 100ish new Councils to replace the existing 735.

Bearing in mind that most areas around Cardiff, Swansea and Newport do not have Town or Community Councils there is approx. 1.25m persons covered by the existing Local Councils.

Based upon 100 new Councils this would give new 'Common Councils' a population of 12,500 (+or-5%).

If the Government guidelines are worked on purely a numerical basis there are a number of issues which affect both larger towns and rural areas.

The general parameters also include for amalgamation and not dividing up existing wards or Local Councils. (this applies to both the County and Local Council Boundaries).

Boundary Commission

The Boundary Commission at present has no guidelines from Welsh Government on the new boundaries for Town and Community Councils forming Common Councils. However, they have confirmed that they expect:

- i) It to be done using electorate.
- ii) It to be done using existing boundaries.

The Commission is keen to receive any thoughts the Association has on how such new Councils may look. This exercise may influence the way the Welsh Government considers such guidelines when consulting with the Boundary Commission.

Issues

Some of the issues could be:

- i) **Size**
The present indications are that populations of around 12,500 per Council may be used. (taking 100 Councils serving 1.25m people).
- ii) **Larger Towns**
If an electorate basis is used what happens to towns which now have populations well in excess of this?
- iii) **Land mass**
The issue of the land area of a Council could be an issue if only electorate was used as the basis for calculation.
- iv) **Culture**
The culture of each area could be an issue. (ie a very Welsh community may not fit side by side with a very English community)
- v) **Political colours**
Mixing Councils of different political colours may need to be considered.
- vi) **Number of Councillors**
The number of Councillors will reduce. (if 7 Councils combine with an average of 10 members at present then the new Common Council may consist of approx. 21 members. A drop from 70 to 21 – losing approx. 65%)
- vii) **Representation of more than one centre**
The issue of a single Council and single Clerk managing more than one centre of a community.
- viii) **Roles and responsibilities**
It is not clear at present if there are to be any new duties on the new Common Councils – no any indication of how these would be funded if imposed.
- ix) **Funding and Clerks**
The matter of funding and costs of new Councils – particularly if a Clerk is required to manage a much larger portfolio than at present.
- x) **Clerks**
What happens to the Clerks of Councils which are no longer in being.

xi) Council Tax

There may well be a levelling of Council Tax over the Council areas forming a Common Council. In some may find their Council Tax rise and others fall as they join up.

Members may well have many more concerns or suggestions.

TOWN AND COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES -- LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW

Please can each member Council complete the attached (or in letter form) and return to Robert Robinson Secretary Triangle House Union Street Welshpool SY21 7PG or email wtcouncil@btinternet.com by no later than 30th September 2016. Thank you.

Robert A Robinson FRICS FILCM
Secretary

**NORTH AND MID WALES ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS
BOUNDARY CONSULTATION**

Please note this is not about if you agree with a reduction in Town and Community Council numbers as a principle it is about how the combining or enlarging is completed.

The Association is seeking your views on the following:

ref	subject	views
1	<i>The combining of Town and Community Councils either by clustering or enlarging by a numerical method. ie a set number of electorate in each Council area + or – 5%</i>	
2	<i>The combining of Town and Community Councils by joining together wards rather than areas.</i>	
3	<i>The effect on Council Tax of the new Councils – ie Councils with a higher tax may see it fall and those with a lower tax see it rise.</i>	
4	<i>The representation on the new Councils. 2/3 of the existing Council seats may disappear once Councils are combined or enlarged.</i>	
5	<i>Any issues with combining a Town with smaller Communities around it.</i>	
6	<i>Any issues around what duties might be passed onto the new Councils which are only powers at this time.</i>	
7	<i>Any issues around culture or links between communities which maybe combined or enlarged.</i>	
8	<i>Any other views or issues you wish to pass on.</i>	

Please pass your views to the Secretary of the North and Mid Wales Association of Town and Community Councils, Triangle House, Union Street, Welshpool SY21 7PG or email wtcouncil@btinternet.com