

GWYNEDD COUNCIL



Report to a meeting of the Council

Date of the meeting : 1 Mawrth 2018
Report by: Councillor Mair Rowlands
Contact Officer Dilwyn Williams, Chief Executive
Title of the Item: Review of Gwynedd Council's Electoral Arrangements.

Background

1. The Council's members will be aware that the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission has now published its draft proposals for the review of electoral arrangements for Gwynedd Council.
2. We are required to respond by the 23 April 2018.
3. The Council last discussed this issue at its meeting in June 2017 when the Commission's criteria were considered and proposals submitted for the arrangements that the Council considered should be put in place.
4. The proposals we put forward can be seen by following the link given below.

<https://democracy.cyngor.gwynedd.gov.uk/documents/g2070/Public%20reports%20pack%2015th-Jun-2017%2013.00%20The%20Council.pdf?T=10>

The proposals

5. The Council currently has 71 electoral wards with 4 of them returning two members which results in a Council of 75 members. On average, this results in 1 member for 1,111 of the electorate. 12 of these electoral wards are within 10% of this average; a further 29 are within 25% of the average; a further 4 being 30% or less from the average and 26 being more than 30% over the average.
6. Having considered the Commission's criteria, in June 2017, the Council formulated proposals for 66 electoral wards with two of them returning two members, making a Council of 68 members.
7. As a fundamental principle, the Council noted at the time that it was against two member wards as they were inconsistent with the Commission's own

fundamental principle of ensuring electoral parity for each member nor the aim of ensuring effective and convenient local government, which they are required to take into account.

8. In the two electoral divisions where the Council proposed two members, in one case, this was due to a significant influx of students, and in the other, it was due to the disadvantaged nature of the area.
9. The Council's proposals resulted in an average of 1 member for each 1,226 electorate. 23 of the wards were within 10% of the average; a further 24 were within 25% of the average; and a further 9 were within 30% or less of the average. Our proposals meant that 10 divisions were beyond 30% of the county average.
10. The Commission's proposals have now been published creating 64 electoral wards with three of them returning two members and one returning three members, creating a Council of 69 members.
11. This results in a county average of 1 member to 1,208 electorate with 25 wards within 10% of the average; a further 33 wards within 25% and a further 6 wards within 30% or less with only one division beyond 30% of the county average.
12. From this, it is fairly obvious that it is the "county average" which is foremost in the Commission's thinking.
13. Having said that, of the proposals for 66 electoral wards put forward by the Council, the Commission have incorporated 43 of them in their proposals with an agreement on the boundaries in a further 2 but with a disagreement on the number of members for those wards.

Responding to the draft proposals

14. In one sense, responding to the draft proposals is a simple matter.
15. The Council has already noted its preference as to what should happen in its decision in June last year and all that we need to do now is accept the 43 proposals on which both we and the Commission agree, and try and persuade them to adopt our proposals rather than the other 21 wards that they have proposed.
16. The argument for not having multi member divisions is in my view a fairly strong one and we can supplement our objections in this area.
17. However, there is no certainty that they will accept our arguments relating to multi member electoral wards.

18. There are also wards where our original proposals mean that we have a variation of 48% and 49% from the county average in some places and this is unlikely to be acceptable to the Commission.
 19. Indeed, unless our arguments are very strong I suspect that we will have difficulty changing their minds for any division beyond 30% of the county average.
 20. I suggest therefore that there could be places where, whilst we would wish to continue to argue that our proposals are better, local members may consider that it would be prudent to suggest an alternative in order to obtain a better solution than that proposed by the Commission.
 21. As we need to respond by the 23 April the Cabinet will have to clear that response on the basis of direction given by the Council.
 22. **I therefore recommend** that the Council agrees to respond by reiterating the Council's original proposals and pressing the Commission to adopt that which was in our original submission, but to authorise the Chief Executive to conduct discussions with the local members for those areas where the local members consider it would be prudent to propose an alternative to the Council's original proposal, and to authorise the Cabinet to include that alternative if the local members are unanimous in their view.
 23. The Commission's proposals also suggest names for the electoral wards with some of them suggesting names not used locally. I therefore also **recommend** that the Council authorises the Cabinet to make alternative suggestions to those contained in the Commission's proposals if there is a local desire for us to do so.
-