

MEETING OF	The Full Council
DATE	6 December, 2018
CABINET MEMBER	Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn
CONTACT OFFICER	Vera Jones, Democratic Services Manager
TITLE OF ITEM	Local Democracy and Boundary Commission - Final Recommendations Report
PURPOSE	To ask the Council to approve the recommendation to make further representations to Welsh Government, as noted in Appendix A.

BACKGROUND

1. All Council members will be aware that the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission has published its "Final Recommendations Report" for the review of the electoral arrangements for Gwynedd Council on 6 November, 2018.
2. The recommendations of the Commission were submitted to Welsh Government. The work of Welsh Government will now involve the implementation of these recommendations, either as submitted or with amendments.
3. Any further representations regarding the matters of the report may be submitted to Welsh Government within six weeks of publishing the report (by 18 December, 2018). It is noted that anyone may directly submit representations on the recommendations to Welsh Government for consideration by the Minister.

THE COUNCIL'S CORE PRINCIPLES

4. Since the Boundary Commission review commenced in March 2017, as a Council we have emphasised some basic principles, and we continue to emphasise them.
 - Respect towards the need for an electoral member:elector ratio, but emphasis on the rural nature of the county and what is sensible in terms of natural community links.
 - Object to electoral wards with two or more members in order to ensure that each councillor has an equal electoral ratio.
 - The need to focus on the requirements of effective local representation and the impact of the population not on the electoral register at specific points in time (specifically the impact of students and visitors).

The core principles are elaborated upon further in points 4 - 13 of the draft response - see Appendix A.

SUMMARY OF THE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT - THE SITUATION IN GWYNEDD

5. At present, the Council has 71 electoral wards with four of them electing two members, which is a total of 75 Council members. The final recommendations report by the Boundary Commission recommends a Council with 65 electoral wards with four of them electing two members, leading to a total of 69 Council members.
6. I am pleased to note that the report is based on the Council's proposals in a number of wards, and this should be welcomed.
7. The Commission recommends that there is no change to 27 of the existing wards. This corresponds with the Council's opinion.
8. The Council's recommendations on proposed changes for 20 of the wards have been accepted. They are based on a combination of the Council's original proposals or further consultation. The Council submitted proposals for the boundary adaptation of a number of wards in order to create wards that corresponded with the Commission's primary consideration, namely to ensure an average of 1,243 electors for every member in Gwynedd.
9. There are 18 wards where the recommendations of the Boundary Commission are different to the Council's proposals. We continue to stand by the original proposals given by the Council, which were based on meeting the average need per member, and also on a strong awareness of the local area and the best solution for local people. However, by now we must accept that we will not be able to change the recommendations that are not consistent with the Council's opinion and must focus our effort on those elements which continue to make no sense.
10. Details of the above information can be seen in [Appendix B](#).

SPECIFIC ISSUES

11. However, whilst considering the report, there are some areas where use of multi-member seats needs to be questioned and it is considered that this needs to be brought to the Minister's attention, specifically the Bangor Area and the Bethel / Felinheli Area.

BANGOR AREA

12. The draft proposals by the Boundary Commission accepted the Council's original proposals regarding changing boundaries within the Bangor area, with the impact on the existing areas of Deiniol, Hiraol, Hendre, Garth and Menai, but disagreement about the number of members for those wards.

13. In its final report, the recommendations by the Boundary Commission are different to those noted in any consultation. Merging the wards of Marchog, Hiracl and a part of Deiniol with two members representing the ward would be contrary to the basic principle of ensuring a consistent electors to member ratio, and it would create confusion for electors as they attempted to identify their elected representative. Furthermore, it does not consider factors regarding the underprivileged nature of the Marchog ward and the additional requirements on councillors who represent that ward.
14. Merging the wards of Garth, Menai, Hendre and a part of Deiniol with two members representing this proposed ward would again be contrary to the basic principle of ensuring a consistent electors to member ratio, and it would create confusion for electors as they attempted to identify their elected representative. Furthermore, it does not consider the additional pressures and responsibility on local members that derive from the increase in student population for several months of the year.
15. Therefore, it is recommended that the Council states to Welsh Government that we disagree with recommendations in the final report and recommend adherence to the Council's original proposals for the area as noted in point 19 of Appendix A. Should Welsh Government not deem the Council's original proposals as the best option for the situation of the Bangor area, the Council wishes to state the opinion that it considers the draft recommendations of the Boundary Commission as a better solution for the area than the recommendations noted in its final report.

BETHEL AND FELINHILI AREA

16. The recommendations in the final report by the Boundary Commission continue to recommend the merging of the Bethel and Felinheli wards in order to create one ward with two members.
17. The Council has consistently responded by objecting to this opinion in accordance with the Council's basic principle of objecting to multi-member wards. In addition, the Council has outlined the cultural and community nature of these wards, and this is elaborated further upon in points 20 – 24 of the Council's response in Appendix A.
18. Therefore, it is also recommended that the Council states to Welsh Government that we disagree with recommendations in the final report and recommend adherence to the Council's original proposals for the area of Bethel and Felinheli, as noted in point 25 of Appendix A.

RECOMMENDATION

19. The Full Council is asked to fully approve Gwynedd Council's response to the final recommendations report of the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (November 2018) as noted in Appendix A.



GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE "FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT" BY THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES (NOVEMBER 2018)

BACKGROUND.

1. Gwynedd Council is pleased of the opportunity to respond to the final recommendations report of the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales, dated November 2018 (published 6 November, 2018). The response is submitted to Welsh Government within six weeks of publishing the report.
2. The Council submitted draft proposals and responses to the draft proposals of the Boundary Commission and we are pleased that the Council's observations have been incorporated in a number of observations.
3. We continue to stand by the original proposals given by the Council, which were based on meeting the average need per member, and also on a strong awareness of the local area and the best solution for local people.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

4. There are some basic principles we wish to emphasise.
5. Whilst accepting that the Commission has to aim towards the electoral member:elector ratio of approximately 1:1200, or as close as possible to this, Gwynedd Council emphasises the rural nature of the County and what is sensible in terms of natural community links in order to ensure an effective representation for the people of Gwynedd. This could mean deviating from the visual appearance on a map that would lead to the best ratio, to a slightly less balanced ratio but a much more sensible democratic representation for the community.
6. As a basic principle, we have already noted that we are against electoral wards with two or more members as it is not consistent with the Commission's basic principle of ensuring that each Councillor has an equal electoral ratio, nor the objective of ensuring an effective and convenient local government, as is required for them to address.

7. We note that the Commission had stated in its policy and practice document 2016 that it is required to endeavour to ensure an equal ratio of local government electors to the number of Council members to be elected in each electoral ward.
8. We presume that the purpose of this requirement is to ensure a somewhat equal workload and representation across the area of the Council.
9. The Council is of a strong opinion that creating constituencies with more than one member would be contrary to this principle.
10. As members cannot arrange at the time of an election for one member to represent half of the constituency and another member to represent the other half, a constituency is created where two members have to represent double the number of electors.
11. In areas where there is a significant political difference, it can also lead to votes from individuals meaning less as they are not reflected in the Council's member constitution.
12. For example, if we take two constituencies with 1,000 electors each: Constituency A has 800 electors for Party X and 200 electors for Party Z; and Constituency B has 400 electors for Party X and 600 electors for Party Z - by keeping them separate, Party X would gain one member and Party Z would gain one member. However, by creating a two member constituency, Party X would gain two members and Party Z would not be represented at all.
13. In addition, we continue to reinforce the opinion noted originally that there is a need to consider the requirements of effective local representation and the impact of the population not on the electoral register at a specific point in time, when forming proposals. Specifically, the demands and workload which arise as a result of the presence of students, tourists, second home owners and others who are not on the local electoral register mean that this must be addressed when determining the size of constituencies.

SPECIFIC REPRESENTATIONS

BANGOR AREA

14. The draft proposals by the Boundary Commission accepted the Council's original proposals regarding changing boundaries within the Bangor area, with the impact on the existing areas of Deiniol, Hiracl, Hendre, Garth and Menai, but disagreement about the number of members for those wards.

15. In its final report, the recommendations of the Boundary Commission are different to what was noted in any consultation.
16. Merging the wards of Marchog, Hirael and a part of Deiniol with two members representing the ward would be contrary to the basic principle of ensuring a consistent electors to member ratio, and would create confusion for electors as they attempted to identify their elected representative. Furthermore, it does not consider factors regarding the underprivileged nature of the Marchog ward and the additional requirements on councillors who represent that ward.
17. Merging the wards of Garth, Menai, Hendre and a part of Deiniol with two members representing this proposed ward would again be contrary to the basic principle of ensuring a consistent electors to member ratio, and it would create confusion for electors as they attempted to identify their elected representative.
18. In addition, we believe that consideration to the student population in the wards of Menai and Garth is essential, as the population more than doubles during the academic year. There are additional pressures on services and problems arise due to the higher numbers as a result of student population, and therefore, it is inevitable that the responsibility of the local member(s) increases. Whilst we are aware that a number of students do not register, it is noted that the University could provide current information regarding the number of students who live in Bangor. It is noted that the Boundary Commission refers to, and addresses, the likelihood of a population increase in the Penrhosgarnedd/Pentir area as a result of Redrow's new housing development. Those individuals are yet to arrive in the area, and they certainly have not registered as electors. If it is possible to consider this likely population, we note that we believe that the unregistered student population should also be considered.
19. The Council wishes to state to Welsh Government that we disagree with recommendations in the final report and recommend the Council's original proposals for the area. The reasoning has been noted in points 14 - 18 above. Should Welsh Government not deem the Council's original proposals as the best option for the Bangor area, the Council wishes to state the opinion that it considers the draft recommendations by the Boundary Commission as a better solution for the area instead of the recommendations noted in its final report.

BETHEL AND FELINHELI AREA

20. The Bethel and Felinheli area is two separate wards within an adjacent area. There are 1,007 electors (projection of 995) in the Bethel ward, which is 17% below the current average. The Felinheli ward has 1,694 electors (projection of 1,736), which is 40% above average. The Boundary Commission has recommended combining both wards to create one new electoral ward named Bethel and Felinheli, which would

consist of 2,701 electors (projection of 2,731) which is 12% above average, which would be represented by two members.

21. In accordance with the previous observations, we object to multi-member wards for the reasons already noted. We continue to stand by our original proposal, namely to keep both wards separate, as they currently are. There are no community links that bring both areas together, albeit the proximity of the two areas on a map.
22. Though comparatively small according to the Commission's guidelines, the Bethel ward is a village which has its own identity as a unit and is a natural community which grows and develops and it makes cultural and community sense. There are community links with the Llanddeiniolen and Llanrug area. On the other hand, the Felinheli ward has its own identity as a unit - it is a self-sufficient community, both on a cultural and community level.
23. Accepting that the Felinheli constituency is 40% above average, not everything can be boiled down to a mathematical measure and, in this case, we are of a strong opinion that we must accept one larger than normal constituency as the option recommended by the Commission makes no sense on a community level.
24. Furthermore, in accordance with our arguments for multi-member constituencies, we would not be creating a representative balance, but a situation where both members would have to represent a constituency that is 123% above average.
25. The Council wishes to state to Welsh Government that we disagree with recommendations in the final report and recommend the Council's original proposals for keeping the Bethel and Felinheli wards separate.

RETAINED ELECTORAL WARDS = total of 27

Arfon	Deiniolen, Groeslon, Llanberis, Llanrug, Penygroes, Dewi (Bangor), Glyder (Bangor), Tregarth and Mynydd Llandygai [8]
Dwyfor	Abererch, Cricieth, Dolbenmaen, Efailnewydd/Buan, Llanystumdwy, Nefyn, Porthmadog (East), Porthmadog (West), Pwllheli (South), Pwllheli (North), Llaanelhaearn [11]
Meirionnydd	Aberdyfi, Dyffryn Ardudwy, Trawsfynydd, Barmouth, Brithdir, Bowydd and Rhiw, Corris and Mawddwy, Bala [8]

WARDS WHERE THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION CORRESPOND WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COUNCIL = total of 20

Boundaries were adapted in order to create wards that corresponded with the Boundary Commission's primary consideration, namely the number of electors per elected member, with the Commission noting that there would be an average of 1,243 electors for every member in Gwynedd.

Arfon	Cwm y glo, Penisarwaun, Caernarfon (wards of Cadnant, Menai, Peblig, Seiont, Town Centre), Llanllyfni. Also the wards of Rachub, Gerlan and Ogwen in the Bethesda area instead of one ward with three members as noted in the Commission's draft proposals. [11]
Dwyfor	Clynnog, Morfa Nefyn and Tudweiliog, Aberdaron and Botwnnog [3]
Meirionnydd	Bro Dysynni (Bryncrug and Llanfihangel), Arthog and Llangelynnin, Morfa Tywyn, Tywyn (West). Also, the wards of Dolgellau (North) and Dolgellau (South) that were adapted from the Commission's draft proposals following the Council's observations. [6]

WARDS WHERE THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION ARE DIFFERENT TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COUNCIL = total of 18

The Council has responded to the draft consultation and has emphasised that we continue to stand by the original proposals given by the Council, which were based on meeting the average need per member, and also on a strong awareness of the local area and the best solution for local people.

Arfon	Arllechwedd, Pentir, Bontnewydd, Waunfawr, Llanwnda, Talysarn(Tryfan), Bethel and Felinheli *, Bangor Area* (2 new wards in accordance with the final report) [9]
Dwyfor	Abersoch and Llanengan, Llanbedrog and Mynytho, Porthmadog-Tremadog [3]
Meirionnydd	Penrhyndeudraeth, Llandderfel, Llanuwchllyn, Teigl, Diffwys and Maenofferen, Harlech and Llanbedr (1 ward, 2 members) [6]

* SEE MAIN REPORT FOR RECOMMENDATIONS