

MEETING	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	29th September 2015
REPORT TITLE	Consultation to the draft directions by the Welsh Government to the review by the Boundary Commission Wales.
PURPOSE	Comment on the draft directions in order to respond to the consultation.
RECOMMENDATIONS	Present any comments and encourage fellow members to respond to the consultation.
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As part of its programme of local government reform the Welsh Government will require the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission Wales to conduct reviews of electoral arrangements for proposed new local authority areas.
- 1.2 The consultation seeks your views on the draft directions (Appendix A), including thoughts on council size and the ratio of electors for each elected member.
- 1.3 Note that the consultation does not seek views on the map of proposed new local authority areas which was announced by the Minister for Public Services on 17th June, 2015, but it is a basis for the draft directions to the Commission.
- 1.4 The consultation has been distributed to all Members through Rhaeadr, asking members to present their views directly to the Welsh Government or email to the Democratic Services team to be included in the Council's response gwasanethdemocrataidd@gwynedd.gov.
- 1.5 It was also decided to consult with the following:
- Business Group (17 September),
 - Democratic Services Committee (29 September)

with the Committee's comments to be presented for a discussion in the Full Council meeting on 8th October 2015.

- 1.6 The consultation closes on 9th November, 2015.
- 1.7 A second short formal consultation will follow on the draft of the directions, and once the final directions are published the Commission will begin work to identify the most appropriate electoral arrangements for the proposed new local authorities in Wales.
- 1.8 The Commission's deadline for making the last report will be 31 July 2018

2. THE CONSULTATION

- 2.1 It is important to note that the consultation is for the period following the reorganisation of Local Government. It is likely that arrangement will not be operational until approximately 2019. (To remind members, the local elections to be held in Gwynedd in May 2017 will lead to a reduction in elected members from 75 to 66).

2.2 Prior to commenting on the questions asked, it is important to note that the Minister for Public Services has announced that the cap of 75 members per local authority will be removed following the reorganisation. Directions do not specify a maximum or minimum number of elected members.

2.3 There are three main streams to the consultation.

- a) *“the number of councillors for a local authority should be no smaller than the number produced by a councillor to elector ratio of one councillor to every 4,000 electors.”*

The table below included the minimum number of Councillors for the two options proposed for North Wales. (See questions 1 – 5)

Merging Authorities	Total electors (2015 local government electorate figures)	Total Electors for Proposed new Council	Minimum Number of Councillors for Proposed new Council (based on ration of 1:4,000)	Current Councillor Numbers
OPTION 1				
Gwynedd	81,672			
Isle of Anglesey	50,352	132,024	33	105
OPTION 2				
Gwynedd	81,672			
Isle of Anglesey	50,352			
Conwy	93,051	225,075	56	164

- b) *“The Draft Directions specify that the Commission must consider the particular characteristics of a proposed local authority area Particular characteristics may include density of population in an area, the mixture of Welsh and English speaking communities and the geography of an area or issues such as poverty. “*
- c) *“It is expected that commonly used and locally accepted Welsh language names will be used. Where there is no commonly used Welsh language name for a ward, the Commission must also propose an English language equivalent.”.*

There are specific matters relating to Gwynedd to be considered – rural area and the Welsh Language. (see questions 6-7)

3. CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Question 1: Do you think the suggested ratio provides for effective and convenient local government?

Question 2: Do you think there is a minimum number of councillors required to ensure the effective and democratic working of a local authority? If so, what is it and why?

Question 3: Do you think a minimum number of elected members per local authority should be specified in the Draft Directions?

Question 4: Do you think that there should be a cap on the maximum number of elected members per local authority? If so, what do you think the maximum number should be and why?

Question 5: Do you agree that each ward within a local authority area should have roughly the same number of electors per elected member?

Question 6: What effect should the particular characteristics of an area have on the number of councillors needed to represent the population?

Question 7: Do you agree that commonly used Welsh language names for wards do not also need an English language equivalent? If not, do you think that each ward should have an English and Welsh name?

4. RECOMMENDATION

4.1 The Democratic Services Committee is asked to comment on the draft directions during the Committee so that the comments can be presented to the Full Council meeting on 8th October, and encourage members from their political parties to respond to the consultation.