

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM
21 NOVEMBER 2022

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE
COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Town & Community Councils with an outline of the process for a full Community Governance Review in Bridgend to be implemented for the May 2027 Local Elections.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objective under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

- **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.

3. Background

- 3.1 The review and implementation of Bridgend Council's ward boundaries and electoral arrangements by the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (LD&BCW), were implemented for the May 2022 Local Elections.
- 3.2 The LD&BCW review also included some consequential changes in two Community Councils: Brackla Community Council and Porthcawl Town Council; and these were also implemented for the May 2022 Local Elections.
- 3.3 The Council also undertook a review of the electoral arrangements in Coity Higher Community Council following a formal request from the Community Council, which was also implemented in time for the May 2022 Local Elections.
- 3.4 The last full Community Governance Review was finalised in 2009 and would normally follow a 10-year cycle. The delays to the completion of the Bridgend Electoral Review and the pandemic resulted in insufficient time to undertake a full review in time for the Local Elections in May 2022.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 The key document that starts the Community Governance Review is called the Terms of Reference (ToR). The ToR sets out the proposed timetable and procedures for the review, provides guidance, and sets out the issues that will be

considered during the review. It also allows the Council to ensure it is following a set procedure, takes into account appropriate considerations for the review, and allows interested parties to understand how to effectively engage in the review. It also provides the LD&BCW with information as to whether the Council has appropriately conducted the review under the terms of the Act.

4.2 Among other things, the ToR for a Community Governance review might contain:

- an indicative timetable for the review
- a description of the process the Council will follow
- the proposals for consultation during the review
- Information as to relevant considerations during the review – which might include explanations of:
 - electorate forecasts,
 - demographic trends,
 - naming conventions
 - the council size policy
 - considerations as to the grouping and amalgamation of communities
 - an outline of the permissible outcomes of the review and any limitations imposed by the Act on the Council's ability to recommend or make changes.

4.3 Reviews must be carried out in accordance with the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013. Section 25 covers the changes to boundaries and any consequent changes to electoral arrangements; and Section 31 covers just the changes to electoral arrangements.

4.4 Any review of Boundaries must reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government. A community review offers an opportunity to put in place strong, clearly defined boundaries tied to ground features, and to remove any anomalous boundaries that exist.

4.5 In terms of the electoral arrangements, the review provides the opportunity to consider the degree to which “electoral parity” is achieved across the communities in Bridgend, and across any wards that exist within a community. This is known as a council size policy, and it will consider:

- An approximate councillor allocation per electorate
- Provision of an overall minimum and maximum number of community councillors for a community council. Historically the minimum number of councillors for a community council has been 7. The largest community council in Wales at present is 24. The maximum size may be dependent on the following factors:
 - The existing community council sizes
 - The scale of the activity of the community councils.
 - The geography of the Council area
 - The population density of the Council area

4.6 In terms of amalgamation and grouping of communities, this can either come as request as part the consultation or may be proposed by the Council. For example, if

the Council wishes to delegate functions to communities, these communities will need to be of a certain specific size, geographically or in terms of electorate, for them to have sufficient capacity to discharge those duties.

- 4.7 If amalgamation of two or more communities is recommended then the existing community councils are dissolved, and a new separate community area is established. In these circumstances it is usual for the community to be warded to reflect the boundaries of the former communities that have been amalgamated.
- 4.8 If grouping of two or more communities is recommended then they will come together under a common community council, however they will continue to have separate representation on the common community council.
- 4.9 The process will take a minimum of 12 months to complete from the publication of the ToR once it has been formally approved by the Council. The estimated date for the start of the consultation process is the 1st June 2023 and allows for at least 12 weeks consultation at both the initial investigation stage and the draft report stage.
- 4.10 The preliminary stage will publish the ToR and then invite initial submissions for the Council to consider in drafting recommendations for any changes to both boundaries and electoral administration. The draft recommendations are then published, and a further consultation exercise is undertaken inviting further submissions. After consideration of any further submissions, the Council will publish the final recommendations and conclude the review. The final stage is the making of the Order to implement any changes to boundaries and electoral arrangements which will come into force for the May 2027 Local Elections.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 There is no effect upon the Council's policy framework or procedure rules as a result of this report.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

- 6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

- 7.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act have considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there is no significant or unacceptable impact upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are financial implications from this report

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that the Town and Community Council Forum notes the report.

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Background documents: None