

COUNCIL

(Civic Centre, Port Talbot)

Members Present:

28 June, 2018

The Mayor: **Councillor D.Keogh**

The Deputy Mayor: **Councillor S.Jones**

Councillors: A.R.Aubrey, S.Bamsey, D.Cawsey, M.Crowley,
S. ap Dafydd, A.P.H.Davies, D.W.Davies,
N.J.E.Davies, O.S.Davies, R.Davies,
C.Edwards, J.Evans, S.E.Freeguard,
C.Galsworthy, W.F.Griffiths, J.Hale, S.Harris,
M.Harvey, N.T.Hunt, H.N.James, C.J.Jones,
D.Jones, L.Jones, R.G.Jones, S.A.Knoyle,
E.V.Latham, A.Llewelyn, A.R.Lockyer,
A.McGrath, S.Miller, R.Mizen, J.D.Morgan,
S.Paddison, S.M.Penry, D.M.Peters,
M.Protheroe, L.M.Purcell, S.Purse, S.Pursey,
S.Rahaman, P.A.Rees, S.Renkes,
S.H.Reynolds, P.D.Richards, A.J.Taylor,
R.L.Taylor, A.L.Thomas, J.Warman,
D.Whitelock, C.Williams, R.W.Wood and
A.N.Woolcock

Officers in Attendance: S.Phillips, H.Jenkins, A.Evans, A.Jarrett,
M.Roberts, C.Griffiths, K.Jones, C.Furlow,
C.Sim and A.Manchipp

Representatives of the Translation Service: Present

1. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor was pleased to announce the following recipients in the Queen's Birthday Honours:-

Member of the Order of the British Empire

Miss Janet Waldron, Head Teacher Pontardulais Comprehensive School, Swansea for services to Education who is from Neath Port Talbot.

Medallist of the Order of the British Empire

Mrs Jayne Nicholls for Services to Care Standards for Patients with Learning Disabilities in Wales who is from Baglan, Neath Port Talbot.

Medallist of the Order of the British Empire

Clive Owen for Services to Older People in Wales who is from Taibach, Neath Port Talbot.

Medallist of the Order of the British Empire

Jonathan James Ridd for Services to Care Standards for Patients with Learning Disabilities in Wales who is from Baglan Neath Port Talbot.

2. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS OF COUNCIL:**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the following meetings of Council be confirmed:-

29 March, 2018
4 April, 2018
26 April, 2018
2 May, 2018

3. **PRESENTATION BY THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES ON THE ELECTORAL REVIEW OF NEATH PORT TALBOT**

The Mayor welcome Ceri Stradling, the Lead Commissioner, Steve Halsall, the Chief Executive, Matt Redmond, the Deputy Chief Executive and Cher Cooke the Review Officer from the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales to Council.

Council then received a presentation on the upcoming electoral review of Neath Port Talbot and noted that the Commission was

independent of the Welsh Government and political parties and reported directly to the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services

Members noted details of the review process and the 12 week consultation period which would commence on 3 July and finish on 24 September, 2018.

Council noted the Legislation around the requirement to carry out the review which was the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 and that any subsequent changes as a result of the review would be in place for the Local Government Elections scheduled to be held in May 2022. Members noted that the ten year review programme had been suspended in 2013 due to Welsh Government's proposed changes to local government and had been reinstated in 2016. Members received, circulated at the meeting, a Policy and Practice Document which had been updated since its original publication in 2013. The Commission also outlined the Statutory Criteria involved in the Review.

From the data considered by the Commission, the Authority would be a Category 3, with the elected member to population ratio of 1:2,500. This would equate to a reduction from the current 64 Members to 56. However, in line with the Commission's 10% cap on changes to Council size, this would result in 58 Members (1:1,828), although this may vary +/- 1 dependant on electoral parity.

In arriving at the configuration of electoral wards, such things as natural and manmade boundaries would be taken into consideration.

Members received, circulated at the meeting, a map and statistics of the Authority area where each electoral ward had a Red, Amber Green status indicating how far it deviated from the desired ration of 1:1,828

In addition Members noted some issues which the Commission would not take into account which included such things as Parliamentary and Assembly Constituency Boundaries, Local political implications, postcodes or addresses and changes to school catchment areas, etc. Details of the review process were also noted.

Members of Council then raised the following:-

- Members sought assurances that the review would not affect

the Town and Community Councils and the links with the current electoral wards. The Commission was unable to provide such assurances as they were able to make consequential changes to Community Council boundaries and electoral arrangements as a result of the electoral review process.

- Errors in the paperwork circulated at the meeting were pointed out by Members to the Commission together with discrepancies between the tables presented. The Commission apologised and advised that the figures, etc would be rectified, together with the information on its website.
- Members referred to the reduction in the number of Councillors as a result of the Local Government Reorganisation in 1996 and felt that the proposed further reduction to 58 would result in the risk of Councillors workload becoming unmanageable. The proposed reduction would result in a democratic deficit. Councillors did not have the benefit of support staff to assist their work. Local government had lost staff (through the austerity measures imposed on it), whilst having increased responsibilities with no additional funding. It was felt that the scrutiny process in local government would suffer.
- The changes in the review criteria were welcomed, in particular considering both natural and manmade boundaries.
- Members asked about the population statistics and the County Borough's average? How significant would the population projections be? The Commission advised that the figure 1:1,828 would result in an over representation rather than and under representation and that the LDP had also been considered in relation to any significant planning or outline planning applications which might result in an increase in population.
- Members referred to Welsh Government's Green Paper and the proposed additional responsibilities/changes for local government. The Commission's proposals would result in fewer elected Members resulting in a reduction in democratic representation and a consequential reduction in scrutiny including on joint working arrangements. Valley areas in particular would suffer.
- Members asked whether the process across Wales would be completed and submitted to Welsh Government piecemeal or as a whole and were advised that as each review was completed it would be submitted to the Cabinet Secretary for determination. Whether Welsh Government then chose to create Orders for each local authority area on an individual basis or all 22 at the same time was then up to Welsh Government.

- Concern was expressed that the proposals were based almost entirely on figures. The Commission responded that all reviews would be based on the Council size model as agreed by Welsh Government. It was therefore unlikely that there would be any inconsistencies. The Commission stressed that the review may, in some authorities result in an increase in the number of Councillors.
- Members questioned whether the index of social deprivation would be considered as part of the review and were advised that this was not one of the factors. Members then expressed concern, particularly as the electoral wards that deviated the most from the desired ratio (according to the Plan circulated), were those with the highest social deprivation. The Commission advised that a fair democracy was its aim and that if certain factors were borough wide, these would not be considered. If the factors were in some electoral wards and not all, representations could be made to the Commission on behalf of those particular electoral wards. It was felt that this would result in Member competing against Member in order to prove a special case for their electoral ward. This was not how Neath Port Talbot wanted to go forward.
- The differing amounts of workload as a result of, for instance, the number of local business, the work commitments of fellow Ward Members or as a result of social deprivation were raised and the Commission was asked whether these could also be considered. The Commission confirmed that these would not be considered but if changes to the criteria were required these could be taken on board at the next review.
- Members asked for the cost of the exercise for all 22 Local Authorities and were informed that it would cost £3m over the 5 year period.

The Leader of Council then summed up expressing concerns over the timeliness of the review in light of the other reviews on the table, such as the Parliamentary Boundary Review, etc. Members were advised that an all Member Seminar would be held on 17 July to start the collective response process and that Officers would then come back to Council in the Autumn with a proposed response. After being thanked for their attendance at today's meeting, the Commission's Officers withdrew from the room.

4. **APPOINTMENT OF NEW PRINCIPAL SOLICITOR AS A PROPER OFFICER**

RESOLVED: that Joanna Stevens be designated a Proper Officer for the Council and that she be entitled to exercise the powers delegated to the role in The Constitution of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

5. **MINUTES OF CABINET AN CABINET BOARD 2018/19**

RESOLVED: That the undermentioned Minutes be noted, subject to Officers confirming that the correct Regulations had been quoted in Minute No 3 of the Cabinet Minutes of 2 May 2018:-

Cabinet	21 March 2018
Cabinet	25 April 2018
Cabinet	2 May 2018
Cabinet	9 May 2018
Cabinet	16 May 2018
Education, Skills and Culture	15 March 2018
Education, Skills and Culture (Special)	24 April 2018
Social Care Health and Wellbeing	8 February 2018
Social Care Health and Wellbeing	8 March 2018
Social Care Health and Wellbeing	5 April 2018
Social Care Health and Wellbeing	10 May 2018
Regeneration and Sustainable Development	9 March 2018
Regeneration and Sustainable Development	20 April 2018
Regeneration and Sustainable Development	18 May 2018
Streetscene and Engineering	6 March 2018
Streetscene and Engineering	13 April 2018

CHAIRPERSON