

MEETING	FULL COUNCIL
DATE	15th JUNE, 2017
TITLE	REVIEW OF GWYNEDD ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES
AUTHOR	Senior Manager (Corporate Support)
RECOMMENDATION	To submit proposed observations to the Boundary Commission

Background

1. At its meeting on 2 March, the Council received a report on the Boundary Commission's review of the Gwynedd Council electoral boundaries. The report which explains the background of the review can be seen by clicking on the following link:-

<https://democracy.cyngor.gwynedd.gov.uk/ielistdocuments.aspx?cid=130&mid=1657&ver=4>

2. The Commission's proposals are driven by their own policies including a policy document on the size of councils that is appended to this report. In implementing those policies, the Commission's proposals are likely to lead to a reduction in the number of members on the Council from the current 75 to approximately 67 or 68 at the time of the 2022 election, with a further reduction to follow. There is an opportunity for the Council to seek to influence these proposals and the full Council agreed to ask officers to create draft proposals to be shared with all Council members following the election. It should be noted that the proposals have been created mainly to address problems in small constituencies which could be under threat as a result of the Commission's work. In some situations, this has resulted in consequential changes in neighbouring constituencies.

3. For Gwynedd, the Boundary Commission has proposed that the average number of electors for each member should be 1,243 electors. Clearly, every constituency is different and it is not practical to adhere too stringently to this figure in every case. Therefore, the aim of the draft proposals is to allow for a variance of up to 25% above or below that figure, based on the sorts of variance allowed by the Commission in the past.

4. Another principle which is at the core of these proposals is to seek to reduce the number of two-member constituencies in the county. The Council's opinion is, where geography and the nature of communities allow, single-member constituencies should be sought in order to simplify accountability for the electors.

5. It is important to emphasise one other thing before elaborating on the specific proposals. While the Council fully understands that there are many elements which affect councillors' workload, the only consideration which the Commission will give any attention to in reality is the number of electors. Therefore, although reference can be made to population not on the electoral register including seasonal population or student population when submitting observations, in reality, these are not considerations which the Commission will address. This needs to be challenged with the Boundary Commission being asked to justify this in terms of the need for effective local representation for the whole population.

6. The proposals are submitted by the Audit and Governance Committee after as much consultation as the tight timetable allowed with local members and some of the community and town councils affected by the proposals. The Committee is very keen for the Council, in submitting its observations, a draft of which are set out below, to make several important points:-

a. The consultation period, that crossed an election period, was completely inadequate for any meaningful local discussion and that impacted on the ability to go into detail about some proposals.

b. The Boundary Commission should consider the need for effective local representation on the impact of those not on the electoral register, on a particular date, when preparing their proposals. Specifically, the demand and workload arising from the presence of students, visitors and second home owners not on the local register of electors mean that these issues must be considered when deciding on constituency sizes.

Proposals

7.1 The proposals before the Council fall into three categories, the first where no changes are recommended (Paragraph 7.2), the second where the Audit and Governance did not come to a decision (Three areas in paragraphs 8.1 to 8.3) and the third, areas where the committee made specific proposals (Paragraphs 9.1 to 9.9).

7.2 We are not proposing any changes to the following:-

Arfon – Arllechwedd, Bethel, Deiniolen, Dewi (Bangor), Gerlan, Glyder (Bangor), Groeslon, Llanberis, Llanrug, Ogwen, Pentir, Penygroes, Tregarth and Mynydd Llandygai, Waunfawr, Y Felinheli.

Dwyfor – Abererch, Criccieth, Dolbenmaen, Efailnewydd / Buan, Llanystumdwy, Nefyn, Porthmadog (East), Porthmadog (West), Porthmadog (Tremadog), Pwllheli (South), Pwllheli (North)

Meirionnydd – Aberdyfi, Barmouth, Brithdir and Llanfachreth / Y Ganllwyd / Llanelltyd, Bowydd and Rhiw, Corris and Mawddwy, Dolgellau (South), Dolgellau (North), Penrhyndeudraeth, Bala.

Areas where the Committee made no specific proposals to change

8. The following are the specific area-based proposals formed after the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee and are based on more local discussions.

8.1 Bangor City Area

The area of the City of Bangor has been effected greatly by the change in the way that the register of electors is prepared. Although that has no influence at all on a councillor's workload, it has led to a significant reduction in the number of electors, particularly in some wards.

The nature of the city and some the communities within it have also changed since the last review and continues to evolve. No recommendations were made by the Audit and Governance Committee but Bangor City Council and the local members for Bangor are expected to prepare a proposal for the city's constituencies that we will report to the Council.

(A map showing the current boundaries is attached)

8.2 Abersoch, Aberdaron, Botwnnog, Tudweiliog, Morfa Nefyn and Llanbedrog Area

Various existing constituencies require attention in this area with the constituencies of Abersoch (523) Llanbedrog (734), Aberdaron (724) Tudweiliog (660) Morfa Nefyn and Edern (897) and Llangian (503) all too small to warrant individual seats according to the Commission's guidelines. The current community wards were considered as building blocks and there were discussions with local members about natural community links within the area.

Three options were shared at the committee but no recommendations were made by the Audit and Governance Committee. However, the local members for Lleyn are expected to prepare a proposal for the area's constituencies that we will report to the Council.

(A map showing the current boundaries in attached)

8.3 Llanwnda, Groeslon and Carmel

A number of proposals were considered for this area with the main need to respond to the size of the current Bontnewydd constituency, that is too small and subsequent changes. Following a discussion at the Audit and Governance Committee, there was a quick consultation with the relevant local members and now, the recommendations, that are different to the recommendations presented to the committee, are as follows:-

Leaving the Waunfawr and Groeslon constituencies as they are but making the following adjustments:-

Adding the Dinas ward (499) to the current Bontnewydd constituency (849) to create a new constituency of 1,339 electors that reflects the close community links between the Dinas area and the village of Bontnewydd in terms of community activities and local shopping and travel arrangements.

Bringing together the current wards of Rhostryfan (515) and Rhosgadfan (433) with Carmel (396) and Ceserea (241) to create a new constituency of 1,585 electors for the similar communities at the higher side of the valley and breaking the link between Carmel and Talysarn (see 9.6 below).

Areas where there are specific proposals by the Committee

9. The following are specific recommendations by the Audit and Governance Committee following consultation with local members and listening to the views expressed at the committee.

9.1 Caernarfon Town Area

Caernarfon is also an urban area that has seen changes since the boundaries were last reviewed. The proposals below, that have received the unanimous support of all the local members and Caernarfon Town Council, use the clear and obvious natural boundaries of Llanberis Road and the Link Road through the town.

Under the old boundaries, the constituencies of Menai and Cadnant were large, Menai particularly so at 1,718 electors and the proposals set out (shown in the maps attached) address that and reflect physical boundaries through and in the town that local people would recognise.

This leads to a proposal to reduce the size of the Menai constituency to approximately 1,500, reduce the size of the Cadnant constituency to approximately 1,307 and increase the size of the Peblig constituency to approximately 1,485.

This leaves the situation of the current Seiont constituency which, as a result of the aforementioned changes, would be a two-member constituency with approximately 2,392. However, in order to implement the Council's wish to seek to have single member constituencies, the Committee recommends splitting it into two constituencies - the Caernarfon Town Centre Constituency of approximately 1,177 and the Hendre Constituency, that is largely a large single housing estate, of approximately 1,215 electors.

(Maps showing the current boundaries and what is being proposed are attached)

9.2 Ffestiniog Area

While the Bowydd and Rhiw area is fine as it is, the Diffwys and Maenofferen constituency with 750 electors is too small as it is and the Teigl constituency (1,315) is a little larger than the average. The two constituencies together would make a constituency of 2,065 electors that could justify two members. As the Council is seeking to avoid two-member constituencies, it is suggested that a new boundary is established between the Diffwys and Maenofferen constituency and the Teigl constituency, across Manod Road, along a natural boundary agreed with the Town Council. This creates two single-member constituencies, Diffwys and Maenofferen with 1,012 and Teigl with 1,053.

(Maps showing the current boundaries and what is being proposed are attached)

9.3 Tywyn Area

The Tywyn constituency is currently a two-member constituency of 2,388. As the Council is seeking to avoid two-member constituencies, it is recommended that two new constituencies are established using the community wards as building blocks. This would mean creating two new constituencies, Morfa Tywyn with 1,240 electors and Tywyn Town (West and East) with 1,148 members.

(Maps showing the current boundaries and what is being proposed are attached)

9.4 Trawsfynydd, Harlech, Dyffryn Ardudwy and Llanbedr Area

Various existing constituencies require attention in this area with the constituency of Llanbedr (789) much too small according to the Commission's guidelines, and other constituencies which will require attention in the longer-term in relation to their size.

The recommendation to the Council is to change the four seats (Trawsfynydd, Harlech, Dyffryn Ardudwy and Llanbedr) into three, affecting Dyffryn Ardudwy (1,179), Llanbedr (442), Llanfair (347) Harlech (1,045), Talsarnau (428), Maentwrog (428) and Trawsfynydd (672). Therefore, the new constituencies would be:-

One seat - Harlech, Talsarnau and Llanfair (1820) (three entire community council areas)

One seat – Llanbedr, Dyffryn Ardudwy and Talybont (1,621) (two entire community council areas)

One seat - Trawsfynydd and Maentwrog (1,016) - no change (one community council area)

9.5 Llanrug Area

There is a need to refine the situation in the Llanrug area in order to even-out the constituencies by dealing with the current community wards of Cwm y Glo (438), Brynrefail (224) and Ceunant (305) and also Penisarwaun (560) and Rhiwlas (533).

The recommendation to the Council, supported by Llanrug Community Council, is as follows:-

One constituency for Cwm y Glo, Brynrefail and Ceunant (967) creating a horseshow shaped constituency around the southern side of the village of Llanrug

One constituency for Penisarwaun and Rhiwlas (1,093) creating a constituency extending to the communities to the north east of the village of Llanrug

(Maps showing the current boundaries and what is being proposed are attached)

9.6 Llanllyfni, Talysarn and Nantlle Area

The existing ward of Talysarn (which includes Carmel) has been the subject of local discussion for some time because of the obvious natural boundary between the two main areas of the constituency. This means that, currently, to get from one part of the constituency, it means driving through the separate Penygroes constituency and the current constituency includes several small different communities.

It is recommended to merge Llanllyfni (513) Talysarn (704) and Nantlle (152) to create one new constituency of 1,369 (most of the Llanllyfni Community Council geographical area).
(Maps showing the current boundaries and what is being proposed are attached)

9.7 Clynnog, Trefor and Llithfaen Area

Various existing constituencies require attention in this area with the constituency of Clynnog with only 713 electors requiring specific attention.

The committee's recommendation is that the current constituency of Llanaelhaearn (1,151) remain as it is, although calling it "Yr Eifl" would be more sensible. The Nebo ward (233) would then be added to Clynnog bringing that constituency up to 946 electors (that is still a small constituency in the Commission's terms), coming from the Llanllyfni constituency reducing the size of that constituency to a more reasonable 1,369. This would address concerns raised by Pistyll Community Council about joining small rural communities with larger and very different areas.

9.8 Penllyn Area

This area needs to be refined a little to safeguard the situation of some small constituencies. The scope to change in a rural area such as this is limited but it is felt that the proposed changes address the need whilst accepting that constituencies in rural areas will always be smaller.

It is recommended that two wards (Cwm y Glyn) and (Llanycil) are swapped between the two current constituencies, keeping two seats so that there would be three seats in the whole area, namely Bala and also Penllyn West - Llanuwchllyn (494), Cwm y Glyn (83) and Llanycil (323) (a constituency of 900) and Penllyn East - Gwalia (125), Llan y Betws (456) and Llanfor (347) (a constituency of 928). Looking to the future, the constituencies are small, but this is inevitable in such a rural area.

(Maps showing the current boundaries and what is being proposed are attached)

9.9 Llanegryn, Brynchrug and Friog Area

The situation of the constituencies in the area needs to be addressed. With Brynchrug and Llanfihangel having only 755 electors currently whilst the constituency of Llangelynnin has 1,577 electors.

It is recommended that the Llanegryn ward is moved from one constituency to the other in order to create two more equal constituencies in terms of the number of electors:-

Llanegryn, Brynchrug and Llanfihangel being a constituency of 1,000 (covering three Community Council areas)

Y Friog, Islaw'r Dre and Llangelynnin being a constituency of 1,332 (covering two Community Council areas)

(Maps showing the current boundaries and what is being proposed are attached)