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COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Special Remote Meeting held on 21st May 2024.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor R.M. Birch (Chair); Councillor M.R. Wilson (Vice-Chair); Councillors A. Asbrey, S.J. Haines, N.P. Hodges, and S.D. Perkes.

Representing Town and Community Councils: B.E. Brooks (Substitute) (Barry Town Council), G. Thomas (Llantwit Major Town Council), M. Cuddy (Penarth Town Council), C. Hadley (Substitute) (Colwinston Community Council), M. Phillips (Substitute) (Dinas Powys Community Council), H. Osbourne (Llancarfan Community Council), J. Shaw (Llandow Community Council), L. Lock (Substitute) (Llanfair Community Council), G. Smith (Llanmaes Community Council), L. Green (Substitute) (Llanmaes Community Council), B. Gaskill (Substitute) (Michaelston le Pit and Leckwith Community Council), P. Summers (Penllyn Community Council), A. Parry (St. Brides Major Community Council), G. Halliwell (St. Donats Community Council), I. Perry (St. Nicholas and Bonvilston Community Council) and C. Hawkins (Wick Community Council).

Also present: Councillors G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport, and Wellbeing), Dr. I.J. Johnson and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

53 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

54 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors S. Campbell, C.A. Cave, W. Gilligan, S.M. Hanks, J. Lynch-Wilson, H.M. Payne and R.R. Thomas (Vale of Glamorgan Council); S. Hodges (Barry Town Council), B. Morris (Colwinston Community Council), K. Hatton (Dinas Powys Community Council), J. Radcliffe (Ewenny Community Council), S. Jefferies (Llandough Community Council), S. Bonnar (Llanfair Community Council), M. Narusberg (Llanmaes Community Council), G. Marks (Michaelston le Pit and Leckwith Community Council), S.M. Toker (St. Athan Community Council), T. Partridge (St. Donats Community Council) and

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N. Parry (Sully and Lavernock Community Council).

55 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

56 VALE OF GLAMORGAN COMMUNITY REVIEW (ERO) –

The Chief Executive of the Vale of Glamorgan Council began his presentation of the report by briefly summarising the long-standing context and reporting timeline for the Vale of Glamorgan Community Review, as detailed in the Background, Section 1, of the covering report presented.

The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (“The Commission”) published its Final Report which was released on 16th April, 2024, and the matter was reported to the Vale of Glamorgan Full Council on 29th April, 2024. The report was factual in nature. Full Council considered the report and, following debate, accepted the report, recommending that a copy of the report be circulated to all Clerks of all Town and Community Councils for information and to enable Town and Community Councils to submit any additional comments in response to the review. As agreed by Full Council, the Council had responded to the Welsh Government Minister and a copy of the report was submitted to Welsh Government on 7th May, 2024. The Welsh Minister was also informed that all Councillors were advised to reply separately if they wished to do so.

The Chief Executive added that the Special meeting of the Community Liaison Committee had been scheduled to run through the final recommendations (pages 5 through 8) as approved by Full Council, and submitted to the Welsh Ministers, as well as to give Town and Community Councils the opportunity of airing views which, in turn, would allow them to respond either on an individual basis or as a collective in groups and / or clusters directly to the Welsh Minister, noting that there was no further time permitted within the reporting process to make specific recommendations to the Vale of Glamorgan Cabinet as outlined in the covering report.

The Commission had now completed its review of the Vale of Glamorgan Principal Community area and its final recommendations had been submitted to Welsh Government on 16th April, 2024. It was now for Welsh Government and the relevant Minister to consider the Commission’s recommendations and decide how to proceed and whether to make an Order. The Commission recommendations could be taken forward by the Welsh Government Minister either as submitted or modified or they could take no action.

In conclusion, the Chief Executive advised that the Commission report made it clear that any further comments should be addressed to the Welsh Government no later than 6 weeks from the date of the Commission’s report (Tuesday, 16th April, 2024) which would be Tuesday, 28th May 2024. Therefore, Town and Community Councils

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were encouraged to submit any comments to Welsh Government by this date if they had not already done so.

Following the Chief Executive's presentation of the covering report, the Chair invited comments from the Committee which could be summarised as follows:

- **Councillor Gaskill [Michaelston Le Pit and Leckwith Community Council]**
- Michaelston Le Pit and Leckwith Community Council was a small council that consisted of two rural communities on the edge of Cardiff, and its interests were not the same as Llandough Community Council which was a suburban community forming part of Cardiff running into the Penarth area. The Community Council was saddened by the prospect of being abolished and what it regarded as considerable underrepresentation under the new amalgamated authority being proposed. Therefore, the Community Council objected to the Commission's recommendations in relation to the Community Council and had made representations to the Commission as such.
- **Councillor Haines [Vale of Glamorgan Council]** – The Commission's report was devastating to rural areas of the Vale of Glamorgan and was removing a lot of the intrinsic character of smaller towns and Community Councils in the area. The viewpoints of Community Councils had been underrepresented, which was evident within the Commission's report and therefore, the Community Liaison Committee should pass on a comment to the Minister that the comments of Town and Community Councils be considered.
- **Councillor Green [Llanmaes Community Council]** – At the October 2022 Community Liaison Committee meeting there was a discussion around a Consultation to take place on the Council size policy based on the number of Electors however, it appeared that the consultation had not taken place to date. Therefore, how were decisions made on the Council size policy?
- **Councillor Parry [St. Brides Major Community Council]** – The Community Council recognised the huge amount of work that had gone in to developing the Commission's report and recommendations to date, however, it objected to the recommendation for St.Brides Major to join with Ewenny Community Council that was very different to themselves. The Community Council also acknowledged that there may need to be a change in the number of Councillors. Regrettably, the previous Clerk for the Community Council had not submitted the Council's recommendations to the Commission in time to inform the Commission's report, but Council's representations had been made to Welsh Government since publication of the Commission report.
- **Councillor Hadley [Colwinston Community Council]** – The Community Council was most unhappy with the Commission recommendations and felt that it had more to lose than would be gained by joining with Llangan and St.Mary Hill. Colwinston Community Council was a very good council with evident results and dedicated Councillors, but the Commission recommendations would dilute the Council. Therefore, the question was put to the Chief Executive on what they felt the benefits were from getting rid of

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good Councillors and ending up with one size fits all for the four villages that were proposed to be merged together. There appeared to be a lack of real facts in relation to council size decisions and therefore decisions were being made to suit personal opinion.

- **Councillor Shaw [Llandow Community Council]** – The Community Council was also unhappy and had concerns regarding the proposed recommendations by the Commission for the following reasons:
 - there seemed to have been very little credence paid to the other objectives of the review other than merely following the proposals for numbers
 - Guidance,
 - the fact that the review was meant to reflect local identities was something that had been completely lost,
 - Llandow was moving from three wards to six, one of which included three small villages that did not share common interests with the Community Council as a result of distinctive highway, business, household waste and leisure facilities in its area,
 - community councils were the closest tier to their local communities and the recommendations were effectively making the electorate more remote from democracy. So, instead of invigorating and making vibrant communities, it was making it much more difficult for people to choose to participate,
 - the Vale of Glamorgan Council gave by little credence to the local voice so, unless it resolved that particular issue, local democracy would continue to fail,
 - Councillor Shaw understood that the demographics of local community councillors tended to be retired people, but the Vale of Glamorgan Council was not going to encourage younger people to participate if they felt that their voice was not being heard. The fact that the special meeting of the Community Liaison Committee was timed for 10.00 a.m. on a weekday had meant that, even with the current demographics, there were quite a lot of people who had to send their apologies because they could not attend,
 - most Community Councils were the first port of call for local residents and they provided vital services and there was a distinction between the rural and urban Vale of Glamorgan electorate,
 - the proposed recommendations were diluting local democracy in the rural areas of the Vale of Glamorgan to the detriment of local communities and the Community Council had put in an objection with no disrespect to the other two Councils that it was proposed that Colwinston Community Council join with. The Community Council was different to other councils and therefore, wished to remain as it was.
- **Councillor Perry [St.Nicholas and Bonvilston Community Council]** - It was unfortunate that the special meeting was called at 10.00 a.m. which was very early in the day to support attendance. St.Nicholas and Bonvilston Community Council stood to benefit from the Commission's recommendations because it meant that hamlets it had always been associated with would come under the Community Council making it a more coherent community and economies of scale in terms of representation and membership. The Community Council had had a vacancy on the Council since 2014 so Councillor Perry echoed Councillor Shaws comments in relation to difficulties faced in involving new people in local democracy. Political parties putting

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forward candidates on paper but that had no interest in the local community or serving was unhelpful to democracy. It was acknowledged that the Community Council had built a younger demographic within its membership, but this had resulted in shorter periods of membership due to individuals being too busy or participating during maternity leave. Reducing the number of Councillors would not increase democracy and would actually decrease diversity of members.

- **Councillor Halliwell [St. Donats Community Council]** – Councillor Halliwell echoed the comments made by Councillors Perry and Hadley in relation to the impacts of the proposed recommendations on local democracy and the essence of rural life; democracy was not aided by reducing the number of councillors and individuals would stand if they wanted to help their community. Therefore, reducing the number of councillors was not going to help.

On the Chair's request, the Chief Executive added the following points of advice in response to the comments raised by Committee Members:

- The Vale of Glamorgan Council had already responded to the consultation following consideration and lengthy debate at Full Council on the Commission report and recommendations. It was resolved at Full Council that the comments of Full Council be provided to the Welsh Government Minister to meet the duty placed on the Vale of Glamorgan Council to respond within the consultation timeframe.
- It was pleasing to see from the comments raised during the special meeting that Community Councils had also responded to the consultation and that comments had been passed on as necessary. Any further observations that Community Councils would like to make would likely be welcomed by Welsh Government irrelevant of any other/previous responses being received.
- Time was of the essence in relation to 28th May, 2024 response deadline and therefore the special meeting of the Community Liaison Committee meeting was arranged at the most practical slot that the Council could find to make it a meaningful meeting, with time left afterwards to allow Town and Community Councils to put any additional observations through to the Welsh Government minister.
- What was seen from the proposed recommendations, in the rural Vale of Glamorgan areas in particular, was an amalgamation of some Community Councils however wards would continue to exist. For example, in relation to the recommendations relating to Colwinston and Llangan Community Councils, the wards would still exist within the individual communities and would still be represented although part of bigger building blocks which would form the new Community Council. Therefore, representation would still exist at ward level but, as a result of the review, less community councillors representing a bigger area. The reasons for this being:
 1. The Commission had looked at the way that previous elections had been run across the Vale of Glamorgan and how many councillors were elected rather than co-opted into position, and
 2. The Commission used the Council Size Policy as guidance to achieve a level of representation that was relevant to particular areas.

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- There would be differing views on whether changing the number of councillors for an area would improve democratic accountability however, it was evident from previous elections in the Vale of Glamorgan that individuals were standing uncontested. The point was discussed several times over the previous two years whether that be at the Community Liaison Committee, Full Council or the Cross-Party Working Group that was established to help guide the Vale of Glamorgan Council to feed into the review. It was argued that a smaller number of community councillors, for a larger area as a result of the review, would increase the chances of competition for the relevant Community Council seats.
- There was an overview on the Council Size Policy given at the October 2022 Community Liaison Meeting and the policy was attached to the terms of reference of the Cross-Party Working Group that were presented within a report to Cabinet and shared with all Town and Community Councils in the Vale of Glamorgan area. The Council Size Policy was shared at an early stage in the review process with an opportunity to feedback on the policy and the Commission was required to accept whether the Council Size Policy was fit for purpose at that time.

With no further comments raised, the Committee subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the comments raised by both Elected Members and Town and Community Council Representatives of the Committee, in relation to the Vale of Glamorgan Community Review, be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions held at the meeting on the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission publication of their Final Recommendations Report in relation to the review of community arrangements of the County Borough of the Vale of Glamorgan as accepted when reported to Full Council on 29th April 2024 (with formal submission of the report to the Welsh Ministers on 7th May 2024).