



REVIEW OF COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES AND ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

TERMS OF REFERENCE

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Introduction

This document outlines the Terms of Reference for the Community Boundary Review to be conducted by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

The legislation that covers community reviews is the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 (the Act). Under the Act the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (the Commission) has a general duty to monitor arrangements for local government across Wales. Each principal council however has a duty to monitor the communities in its area and, where appropriate, the electoral arrangements of such communities for the purposes of considering whether to make or recommend changes. These changes are brought about by means of community boundaries reviews and community electoral reviews.

The Principal Council (the Council) is conducting a review of its community arrangements. This review is being carried out under section 25 and 31 of the Act, which covers the changes to boundaries and any consequential changes to electoral arrangements, as well as electoral arrangements where there are no boundary changes.

The first stage of the review is to ask all interested parties to consider the current community boundaries and submit their views on any changes required to create communities that provide for effective and convenient local government. All submissions will then be considered, and the Council will publish a Draft Proposals Report and will hold a consultation on those proposals. All submissions will then be considered, and Final Proposals will be submitted to the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru. The Commission will then if it thinks fit, give effect to these recommendations either as submitted, or with modifications.

The review will start in January 2026 with final recommendations being provisionally scheduled to be submitted for adoption in July 2026.

This document provides an overview and supporting information about the review.

Why are we undertaking this review ?

The Council has a duty to review the community arrangements across the principal council area and to report to the Commission on their community arrangements every ten years. This is with the aim of ensuring that communities continue to reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government.

What is the aim of the review ?

The Council aims to ensure that community boundaries reflect the identities and interests of the communities across the principal council area and that they are both effective and convenient.

At the conclusion of a community boundaries review under section 25 of the 2013 Act, the Council may recommend to The Commission “*such community boundary changes as it considers appropriate*”. In this context, a “community boundary change” may mean a change to the boundary of an existing community, or the abolition of an existing community and/or the creation of a new community.

If the Council recommends community boundary changes at the conclusion of a community boundaries review, it also has power to recommend certain kinds of further change where the further changes are a *consequence of* the boundary changes. The permitted further changes are:

- “*community council changes*”, meaning the dissolution of an existing community council, the establishment of a new community council, or the addition of communities to (or subtraction of communities from) a common community council; and
- “*associated changes to the electoral arrangements*” of one or more of the communities under review or of the principal area. In this context, the “electoral arrangements of a community” refers to the number of members of the community council and any arrangements for the division of the community into wards for the purposes of elections to the community council, while the “electoral arrangements of the principal area” has a corresponding meaning at the level of the principal council

The Council aims to ensure that community boundaries reflect the identities and interests of the communities across the Council’s area and, most importantly, that the boundaries are as conducive as possible to effective and convenient local government.

As a general matter, community boundary changes will often result in changes to the populations of affected communities. For example, if an area is incorporated into a new community due to the position or road connections of a new housing development, that same area will necessarily be taken out of the community of which it previously formed part. As a result, both the enlarged community and the reduced community may benefit from consequential changes to their community council and/or electoral arrangements, particularly if there is a change in the number of local government electors in both communities that will be brought about by the boundary change.

As part of the review, the Council will also have regard to:

- the name of the community and, where warded, the name of community wards
- the wards that are contested and uncontested in recent community council elections

What will be considered under this review ?

The Council will consider whether to recommend community boundary changes and other consequential changes, as described above.

The principle underpinning the Council’s review is its general duty to “*seek to ensure effective and convenient local government*”.

The Council considers that *effective and convenient local government* is served by community arrangements which are internally coherent, in the sense that communities have reasonable internal road links and mirror patterns of settlement and ease of communications. This is intended to ensure that all electors in the community can engage in the affairs and activities of all parts of it without having to travel through an adjoining community, for example.

In conducting a community boundaries review, the Council will also take into account the Council's policy as to the size of communities in its area. This is addressed further below, under the heading "Council Size Policy".

The 2013 Act lays down specific matters that the Commission must take into account when considering whether to recommend consequential changes to the electoral arrangements of a community.

First, when the Council is considering changes to the electoral arrangements of a community, it will need to decide whether the community should be divided into wards for the purposes of elections to the community council. In this context, the Council is required to consider whether the number or distribution of the local government electors for the community is such as to make a single election of community councillors impractical or inconvenient, and whether it is desirable that any area of the community should be separately represented on the community council.

Second, if the Council decides that the community council should *not* be divided into wards, it will need to determine the number of councillors for the community. In this context, the Council is required to have regard to the "number and distribution" of local government electors in the community, and to any change in that number or distribution that is likely to take place in the following five years.

Third, if the Council decides that a community *should* be divided into wards, it will need to fix boundaries for the wards and determine the number of community councillors for each ward. In resolving those matters, the Council is required to take into account the desirability of fixing boundaries that are easily identifiable, any local ties that might be broken by particular ward boundaries, and any change in the number or distribution of local government electors in the community that is likely in the next five years.

Who will undertake the review ?

The Council is responsible for undertaking the review under section 25 of the Act. On completion of the review, the Council will submit recommendations to the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru. The Commission will then, if it thinks fit, give effect to these recommendations either as submitted, or with modifications.

The review process

In the first stage of the review, the Council asks all interested parties to consider the current community boundaries and submit their views on any changes which may be appropriate or necessary in order to create communities that provide for effective and convenient local government.

The Council will consider all submissions that it receives during the first stage, then the Council will publish a Draft Proposals Report containing any proposals for change to the existing community arrangements.

Once the Draft Proposals Report is published, the Council will hold a consultation on the proposals in the report. During this consultation period, members of the public and other interest parties can inform the Council of their views of and responses to the proposals for change described in the Council's report. The Council will then consider all submissions it receives in response to its proposals, before preparing Final

Recommendations which will be published and submitted to the Democracy and Boundary Commission. The Commission will then if it thinks fit, give effect to these recommendations either as submitted, or with modifications.

Participating in the review

When undertaking the review, the Council is required to take action to:

- inform persons who may be interested in the review (stakeholders) about the process,
- share any draft proposals or recommendations, and;
- seek the views of the public and other stakeholders on any draft proposals and recommendations.

In addition to consulting with the wider public, the Council undertakes to meet these duties by writing to:

- The Democracy and Boundary Commission for Cymru;
- The Community Councils across the principal council area;
- The Senedd Members representing the area;
- The Regional Senedd Members for the area;
- The Members of UK Parliament representing the area;
- Elected Members;
- The Police and Crime Commissioner;
- South Wales Fire & Rescue Authority;
- The Welsh Language Commissioner;
- The Welsh Government;
- Trade Unions; and
- Ordnance Survey

The Council will also give official notice at different stages of the review, deposit copies of reports and documents at the Council's Electoral Services Offices and on the Council's website.

Comments and submissions may be made at two stages of the review, the initial investigations and draft proposals consultation periods.

All comments and submissions will be given due consideration in the review if the following criteria are met: -

- Comments are received by 11.59pm of the timetabled deadline.
- All comments are received with a name and address identifying the sender. Anonymous submissions will not be accepted, though personal details of members of the public will not be made public. Submissions from representative bodies and persons such as Councillors and Members of the Senedd etc will be named within the report.
- Where an organisation or an individual is making submissions concerning the review, they shall show how either maintaining the status-quo or making changes are desirable in the interests of effective and convenient local government.

The Council encourages community councils, elected representatives, interested parties and the general public to make representations and suggestions as part of the

process of review. The Council welcomes representations that are based on evidence and facts which are relevant to the matters under consideration.

The Council invites interested parties who support its proposals to submit representations alongside those who object or consider other solutions to be preferable, so that the Council has a fully informed view of local opinion as to the matters under review. The Council also invites those who object to its proposals to put forward alternative suggestions, with supporting evidence.

Council Size Policy

The Council's community review will be undertaken subject to section 25 of the Act and therefore will focus on making boundary changes to ensure that community boundaries reflect the identities and interests of the communities across the principal council area and that they are both effective and convenient.

The total number of electors within a community council area should be no fewer than 3,750 electors; For community councils of less than 3,750 electors, expressions of interest in voluntary mergers will be sought as part of the review, however mergers will only be progressed if an expression of interest is received from both/all community councils that would be affected by the merger.

The Council has stated that communities should be represented by no less than 7 councillors and no more than 26 councillors.

The principal council has also stated that the ratios of councillors to electors should be 1:650 and based on a sliding scale as set out in the following table:

No. of Electors in Community Council	No. Community Councillors
0 – 4,000	7
4,001 – 6,000	7 – 9
6,001 – 8,000	9 – 12
8,001 – 10,000	12 – 15
10,001 – 12,000	15 – 18
12,001 – 14,000	18 – 21
14,001 – 16,000	21 – 24
16,001 plus	24 – 26

Community and Community Ward names

In the creation of any new names the Council will consult the Welsh Language Commissioner (WLC). The WLC is responsible for advising on the standard forms of Welsh place names. The WLC has convened a Place-names Standardisation Panel to provide recommendations and expert advice in this field. In forming its recommendations, the Panel follows national standardisation guidelines and also gives consideration to the meaning, history and etymology of the place names, as well as their usage. The WLC will be included as a mandatory consultee in the review.

Timetable for review

The review will start in January 2026 with final recommendations being provisionally scheduled to be submitted to the Commission in July 2026. Any changes that occur

as a result of the review process would then come into effect for the next Local Government Elections in 2027.

Action	Period	Date
Start of Review and initial publicity		January 2026
Initial Publicity and feedback captured	6 weeks	January to March 2026
Draft Proposals Publication		May 2026
Consultation on Draft Proposals	6 weeks	May to June 2026
Final Recommendations Submission		July 2026

Supporting Information

Further information relating to the review, including electorate figures, a map of the existing community boundaries and guidance, are available on the Councils' website.