# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Local Authority Electoral Boundary Review – Update** |
| **DATE**  | **16 June 2021** |
| **BY** | **Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance and Local Government.**  |

The foundations of any democracy include fair and independently drawn electoral boundaries, creating electoral wards, so each community has fair and equal representation.

Importantly, those boundaries should be reviewed regularly so they reflect the changing nature of communities and their populations.

In Wales, a process has been underway over the last four years, to look at the electoral wards for local government in Wales – for the 22 principal local authorities. This process can have consequential implications for town and community council boundaries. However, this process is separate and distinct to the current review of UK Parliamentary boundaries.

The process of reviewing local government boundaries in Wales was started by the Welsh Government in 2016. Ministers have a duty under the Local Democracy (Wales) Act 2013 to ensure ‘effective and convenient’ local government across Wales. The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales was charged with looking at the boundaries in each of the 22 local authorities in Wales, and has consulted on a set of proposals for each local authority area.

The final proposals are now being presented to me to make a decision on.

My aim is to make decisions about each of the 22 boundary reviews by the end of September 2021, so that changes can be made in time for the 2022 local government elections.

Before the Senedd elections, the former Minister for Housing and Local Government wrote to Members to inform them that there were three areas where, as a result of the significant level of representations received, the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales had been asked to submit additional information. These areas are Cardiff, Flintshire, and Caerphilly.

I can confirm the Commission has provided additional information and it is currently being considered. This will help inform my decisions for these areas.

I want to take this opportunity to confirm the process by which I will communicate decisions about each area.

To give local authorities as much time to prepare for the 2022 elections, I will make the decisions public as they are made. This means that, from the week beginning 21June, I will announce the first set of decisions on the reviews. The First Minister will make the decision about the Swansea review because of my constituency responsibilities in my MS role.

There will be a regular rhythm of announcements about decisions from then on, between now and the end of the September 2021. This will include announcing decisions in the summer recess.

To provide clarity and consistency, from the week beginning 21 June, when a decision is made, I will issue a letter to the leaders and chief executives of the local authority concerned, the Welsh Local Government Association, One Voice Wales and the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales on the Wednesday outlining my decision. I will then issue a Written Statement to the Senedd on the following day to communicate those decisions.

This process will not impact all authorities in the same way - some areas have experienced significant expansions in population while others have experienced population reductions. I will try to prioritise decisions in those authorities where the greatest change has occurred.

This is a complex matter and it is not possible to provide further detail about estimated completion dates for each individual area.

Following each decision there will be a further period of time to undertake the administrative and legal processes to make each associated Order. This should not be interpreted as an opportunity to revisit decisions. This is the end of the statutory process.

However, in recognition that the communities we represent are not static, I will, following the conclusion of this set of 22 reviews, begin discussions with local authorities, the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission and other stakeholders about the forward work programme of the Commission.

A variety of factors have contributed to the current situation where some boundaries have not been reviewed for far too long and I do not want to wait another 25 years before changes are made again. I will, therefore, put in place a regular rhythm of reviews which requires that each local authority area is reviewed at least once every 10 years to ensure democratic representation is fair.

I will keep members informed of progress over the coming weeks.