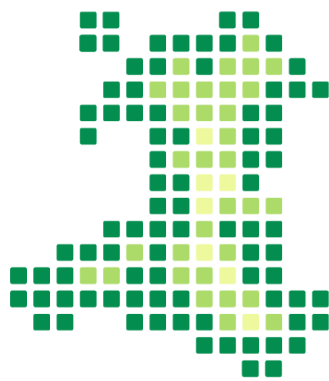


THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES



Comisiwn Ffiniau a
Democratiaeth Leol
Cymru

Local Democracy and
Boundary Commission
For Wales

***ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL
STATEMENTS
2023/2024***

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CHAIR'S FOREWORD

The Commission is pleased to present its Annual Report for 2023/24.

The Report contains information about the Commission, its activities and the governance arrangements for the reporting period. The Commission has continued to support local authorities to carry out Community Reviews as part of the preparations for the next Electoral Review Programme. There has also been significant focus on preparing to implement the Welsh Government's proposals to expand the Commission's functions to include undertaking the Senedd Boundaries Review as well as the transfer of functions of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and the establishment of an Electoral Management Board. This work will ensure the Commission has the capacity, skills and resources in place to carry out its new functions effectively.

During the year the Commissioners have continued to engage with stakeholders, partners and the communities of Wales to support our decision making.

The Commission hopes that this Annual Report will assist in informing you more about the work of the Commission, how it went about its tasks, and how the Grant-in-Aid allocated to it by the Welsh Government was utilised.

Beverley Smith
Chair
23 September 2024

PERFORMANCE REPORT

for the year ended 31 March 2024

OVERVIEW

This section gives a summary of the Commission's purpose, corporate objectives, the key risks to the achievement of its objectives and how it has performed during the year.

Chief Executive's Statement on the Performance of the Commission

The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (the Commission)'s Remit Letter of 24 April 2023 issued by Welsh Ministers set out what the Commission should achieve during the financial year 2023-24. A subsequent operational plan setting out how the Commission would achieve its objectives was submitted to Welsh Government.

I consider that the Commission met all of its objectives fully. This is considered in more detail under the Performance Analysis and Review of Activities during 2023-24 sections of this report below on pages 3 to 8.

Statement of Purpose and Activities

The Commission is a Welsh Government Sponsored Body (WGSB). The Commission was established in 1974 under the terms of the Local Government Act 1972 as the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales and renamed under the terms of Section 2 of the Local Government (Democracy)(Wales) Act 2013 (the 2013 Act). The provisions of the 2013 Act in respect of the Commission replace those of the 1972 Act.

The purpose of the Commission is:

To monitor areas and electoral arrangements relevant to local government in Wales for the purpose of considering whether it is appropriate to make or recommend changes. In carrying out its duties the Commission must seek to ensure effective and convenient local government.

The Commission is required under the 2013 Act to carry out reviews of the electoral arrangements of Wales's principal councils at least once every 10 years.

The Commission conducts its reviews by means of consultation with the principal councils, community councils and other interested parties including the public. The Commission announces and publicises its intention to conduct the review and invites representations from all interested parties for a period of between six and twelve weeks. The Commission then takes account of representations received when formulating its draft proposals which are published in a report outlining the Commission's decisions in respect of changes (if any) to the existing boundary or electoral arrangements. The Commission announces the publication of its Draft Proposals Report and enters into a further consultation period during which further representations are invited from interested parties. These representations are then taken into account when the Commission formulates its final recommendations. The Commission's final recommendations are published in a report which is submitted to Welsh Ministers, who may if they think fit make an order giving effect to any proposals made by the Commission, either as submitted or with modifications. The Commission publicises the publication of its Final Recommendations Report and there is a six-week period during which interested parties may make representations concerning the Commission's proposals to the Minister.

Corporate Objectives

The Commission's Corporate Objectives are set out in the Commission's Corporate Plan agreed in November 2019:

- Ensuring principal area electoral arrangements are fit for purpose – Developing a programme of electoral reviews in line with Welsh Government policy objectives.
- Ensuring community boundaries and electoral arrangements are fit for purpose – Work with principal councils to ensure Community boundaries and electoral arrangements are regularly reviewed and coordinated with the programme of electoral reviews.
- Ensuring the boundaries of principal council areas are fit for purpose – As appropriate review principal area boundaries.
- Developing the effectiveness and efficiency of our business – Maintain a high level of Corporate Governance, constantly engage with stakeholders to create a reputation for excellence in all that we do and ensure that the skills of the staff are developed and maintained.
- Ensuring that the Welsh Government's principles in respect of sustainable development, equality and diversity and the Welsh language are embedded in our work.

Risks and uncertainties

Risks faced by the Commission relate largely to operational and information areas, the technical capacity to carry out its programme of review work and meet the Welsh Ministers' requirements set out in their annual Remit Letter to the Commission. The risks relating to capacity to carry out review work are managed by reviewing staff requirements and structure and adopting policies, such as the direct employment of staff, to ensure continuity of knowledge of the review procedures. The Commission also reviews its future budgets to ensure they are adequate for the programme of work to be undertaken. Operational risks are managed by the maintenance of clear desk instructions for staff. Information requirements are limited to specialised areas including the use of Geographical Information System software. There are also elements of risk in the areas of health and safety and fraud/theft. Regular health and safety checks are carried out by senior management and acted upon by the Commission. Integral to the Commission's internal system of control is the engagement of independent accountants whose role in the financial systems and accounts production reduces the risk of fraud and money laundering. The Commission's internal auditors produce an annual report which is considered by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the recommendations made are acted upon.

Risks are also managed by the maintenance of a risk management policy together with Corporate, Operational, Pensions and ICT Risk Registers. The Corporate Risk Register is reviewed at every Commission meeting and all risk registers are reviewed at Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings. In addition to this the Commission maintains a Business Continuity Plan which is tested and updated on a regular basis. The Commission has also developed a Future Work Programme Risk Register to address and regularly review the risks associated with the Welsh Government's proposals to expand the Commission's functions to include undertaking the Senedd Boundaries Review as well as the transfer of functions of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and the establishment of an Electoral Management Board.

Further details of the risks faced by the Commission can be found in the Governance Statement on page 13.

Going Concern

These accounts are prepared on a going concern basis. To the best of my knowledge I am satisfied that the net current liabilities will be financed from resources voted by the Welsh Government (Grant-in-Aid) in the future.

Performance Summary

During 2023-24 the Commission worked towards meeting the requirements of its Remit Letter and keeping to deadlines set in its timetable for the review of electoral arrangements for principal councils in Wales. The Commission considers that it successfully met both of these aims as set out in the Performance Analysis below.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

For 2023-24 the Welsh Ministers' Remit Letter issued on 24 April 2023 stated that she expected the Commission:

- To work with the Welsh Government and local government to set out the next ten-year review programme, including the order of the reviews and their individual timetables.
- To develop policy and practice and approach to council size methodologies for the next ten-year review programme, taking into account lessons learnt from the previous programme.
- To work with the Welsh Government to inform any relevant future legislation.
- To work with Welsh Government and the Independent Remuneration Panel (the Panel) for Wales to consider the implications for the transfer of the Panel's functions to the Commission, including development of the staffing and member structure of the organisation.
- To undertake a research programme aimed at informing future review processes in light of lessons learned, and proposals for change within the Electoral Administration and Reform White Paper consultation.
- To work with the Welsh Government to develop and establish the Commission's Chief Executive Officer recruitment framework as set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
- To review the Commission's processes in respect of conflicts of interest to ensure the arrangements are robust.
- To continue to work with Welsh Government on revisions to documentation relating to the partnership arrangements between public bodies and the Welsh Government.
- To continue to support possible principal councils, where possible, in taking forward community reviews across Wales.

The Commission's operational plan set out how it intends to fulfil the Minister's requirements. The following details the proposed actions and to what extent they were fulfilled:

To work with the Welsh Government and local government to set out the next ten-year review programme, including the order of the reviews and their individual timetables.	In response to the proposed legislative changes, the Commission has developed an initial review program and timeline. This plan outlines clear timescales for completing between 9 to 11 Electoral Reviews and prioritises Principal Councils that are conducting Community Reviews.
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<p>To develop policy and practice and approach to council size methodologies for the next ten-year review programme, taking into account lessons learnt from the previous programme.</p>	<p>The Commission has drafted an initial outline of changes for the next Electoral Review Programme. This includes expanding the number of categories in the Council Size policy and specifying a minimum and maximum number of councillors that Principal Councils can request for their review. The Commission will finalise its policy based on the research findings and consult on the complete policy and practice in 2024/25.</p>
<p>To work with the Welsh Government to inform any relevant future legislation.</p>	<p>The Commission actively contributed to each stage of the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill and the Elections and Elected Bodies Bill. This involvement included providing evidence to committees, offering advice to officials, and participating in the Senedd Electoral Reform Delivery Board. Additionally, the Commission is a partner on the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru Implementation Board.</p>
<p>To work with Welsh Government and the Independent Remuneration Panel (the Panel) for Wales to consider the implications for the transfer of the Panel's functions to the Commission, including development of the staffing and member structure of the organisation.</p>	<p>Through the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru Implementation Board, the Commission has collaborated closely with the Panel and Welsh Government to develop a clear transition plan for the transfer of functions. Besides establishing a resilient and sustainable staff structure for DBCC, the Commission has assigned key staff members to shadow the Panel and provide secretariat support as needed.</p>
<p>To undertake a research programme aimed at informing future review processes in light of lessons learned, and proposals for change within the White Paper consultation.</p>	<p>The quantitative phase of the research was completed and analysed this financial year, and the initial findings were shared with key stakeholders. The second stage, which focuses on qualitative data, is being conducted in 2024/25.</p>
<p>To work with the Welsh Government to develop and establish the Commission's Chief Executive Officer recruitment framework as set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.</p>	<p>The Commission and the Welsh Government have agreed on the principles of the recruitment framework. The next steps are to finalise the framework document and integrate these principles into the Commission's recruitment process.</p>
<p>To review the Commission's processes in respect of conflicts of interest to ensure the arrangements are robust.</p>	<p>The Commission keeps a publicly accessible register of members' interests and formally reviews conflicts of interest at each meeting. Additionally, potential external appointments are discussed in advance to ensure they do not interfere with the Commissioners' ability to fulfil their responsibilities.</p>

To continue to work with Welsh Government on revisions to documentation relating to the partnership arrangements between public bodies and the Welsh Government.	The Commission collaborated with officials in the Sponsor Division to update the Framework Agreement, completing this early in the financial year.
To continue to support possible principal councils, where possible, in taking forward community reviews across Wales.	The Commission has achieved this objective through two main approaches. First, it has conducted Community Reviews for five principal councils: Vale of Glamorgan, Caerphilly, Ceredigion, Swansea, and Pembrokeshire. Second, it has offered expert advice and guidance to principal councils conducting their own reviews. This support includes feedback on policy and practice documents, advice on timelines, and formal responses to their consultations.

The Commission's Corporate Plan agreed in November 2019 sets out the corporate objectives. The Corporate Plan is reviewed at the start of each programme of electoral reviews. Each objective is set out below together with the actions taken by the Commission to meet them:

1. Ensuring principal area electoral arrangements are fit for purpose – Developing a programme of electoral reviews in line with Welsh Government policy objectives.
 - Developed and published programme of electoral reviews in 2016.
 - Commenced programme of electoral reviews in late 2016-17.
 - Programme of electoral reviews complied with Electoral Reviews Policy and Practice.
 - During 2018-19 the Commission produced an analysis of the effects of the extension of the electoral franchise to 16/17 year olds and all foreign nationals and has continued delivery of reviews with progress reports at every meeting.
 - Delivered the electoral review programme by the 2021 target date.

2. Ensuring community boundaries and electoral arrangements are fit for purpose - Work with principal councils to ensure Community boundaries and electoral arrangements are regularly reviewed and coordinated with the programme of electoral reviews.
 - Consulted on and published Community Reviews Guidance.
 - Contributed to the work of the Welsh Government's Independent Review Panel on the future role of community and town councils.
 - Commission has provided advice to principal councils regarding the conduct of community reviews as required.
 - The Commission agreed to undertake community reviews for five principal councils in 2022 and has made significant progress towards completing these during 2023-24.

3. Ensuring the boundaries of principal council areas are fit for purpose – As appropriate review principal area boundaries.
 - Commission has continued to keep principal council area boundaries under review.

4. Developing the effectiveness and efficiency of our business – Maintain a high level of Corporate Governance, constantly engage with stakeholders to create a reputation for excellence in all that we do and ensure that the skills of the staff are developed and maintained.
 - Reviewed Risk Register and budget monitoring at every meeting.
 - Internal Audit reports with good assurance ratings.
 - Good annual Audit Opinion from Internal Audit.
 - Engaged with all principal, town and community councils at the start of each electoral review.
 - Met with Welsh Government Minister for Housing and Local Government, Welsh Government sponsor division, the Welsh Local Government Association, the Association of Electoral Administrators and One Voice Wales.
 - The Commission’s electoral review portal demonstrates efficiency, excellence and engagement with stakeholders.
 - Staff training throughout the year including an Associate Diploma in People Management, Welsh Language beginners courses and mapping software training courses for new staff members
 - Maintained an automated switchboard system for answering Welsh speakers. However, the Commission also considered that number of Welsh speaking staff was not as high and the in-house Welsh language expertise not as strong as the Commission would have liked.

5. Ensuring that the Welsh Government’s principles in respect of sustainable development, equality and diversity and the Welsh language are embedded in our work.
 - Welsh Language embedded in every document produced by the Commission.
 - Commission fully compliant with Welsh Language Standards.
 - Monitoring environmental impact for inclusion in Welsh Government Public Sector Carbon reporting.
 - Commission staff have commenced Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment Training.
 - Although not subject to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, the Commission takes on board the spirit of the Act.
 - The Commission’s electoral reviews aim for equality of votes which results in equality in the community.
 - The Commission carries out a Welsh Language and Equality Impact Assessment on each final review report.

Review of Activities during 2023-24

During 2023-24 the Commission continued to undertake community reviews for several Welsh Principal Authorities, publishing draft proposals reports for The Vale of Glamorgan in September 2023, Caerphilly in October 2023 and Ceredigion in March 2024.

The Commission continued to provide a Secretariat to the Boundary Commission for Wales during 2023-24, for which the Commission received funding for expenditure directly from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The Commission completed the 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies, formulating and publishing their Final Recommendations report in June 2023. The 2023-24 funding relating to the Boundary Commission for Wales was £245,143 (2022-23; £508,369), as disclosed in Note 4 to the accounts on page 44.

The Commission undertook the necessary work to meet the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice from the Welsh Language Commissioner during the year and published its Welsh Language Annual Report for 2022-23 in November 2023.

The Commission discharged its corporate management obligations in accordance with its Framework Document, the Commissioners' Code of Best Practice, Complaints Procedure, Code of Practice on Public Access to Information and its Welsh Language Standard Policy.

Future Developments

During 2024-25 the Commission will continue development of their Policy and Practice for the next programme of electoral reviews which is expected to commence in January 2025.

The Commission will continue their community reviews undertaken for The Vale of Glamorgan, Ceredigion, Caerphilly, Pembrokeshire and Swansea principal authorities and is expected to complete these by the end of 2024-25.

There will also been significant focus on preparing to implement the Welsh Government's proposals to expand the Commission's functions to include undertaking the Senedd Boundaries Review as well as the transfer of functions of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and the establishment of an Electoral Management Board.

The Commission also have an on-going obligation to keep under review the areas of principal councils and to give consideration to any recommendations made by principal councils in respect of community area reviews undertaken by them and will continue to provide them with any advice and guidance they may require.

The Chief Executive will continue to assess the Commission's processes for producing the Governance Statement throughout the year. As part of the production of the Annual Report and Accounts a Governance Statement, supplemented by the Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, will be produced. Consideration of corporate risks is given at each Commission meeting.

The Commission's Secretariat also continues to provide a Secretariat to the Boundary Commission for Wales during years when no review work is being undertaken.

Financial Results

The net expenditure for the year amounted to £758,044 (2022-23; £609,465) and this has been transferred to the general reserve. Grant-in-Aid received from the Welsh Government amounted to £750,000 (2022-23; £597,933) and this has been credited direct to the general reserve.

Payment of Creditors

The Commission's payment policy is to pay all invoices within 30 days of receipt. This policy is in accordance with the requirements laid down in the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 and follows the Better Payment Practice Code issued by the Department of Trade and Industry. In 2023-24, the Commission received 251 invoices and paid 99% of these within 30 days and 93% within 10 days. One invoice was paid in more than 30 days due to a processing error (2022-23, received 286 invoices and paid 100% of these within 30 days and 93% within 10 days).

Environmental, Social and Community Issues

The Commission is actively pursuing policies that will seek to reduce the impact the Commission's operations have on the environment. Whilst the Commission will undertake a number of initiatives to reduce environmental impact, such as ensuring all members of staff receive sustainable development training, the main delivery will be achieved through the Commission's sustainable procurement policies. The Commission has developed a Sustainable Procurement Policy and Strategy and has achieved level three of the Sustainable Procurement Assessment Framework in the key areas.

The Welsh Government's strategic agenda is set out in the Programme for Government. It emphasises the outcomes that Welsh Government are working towards: healthy people living productive lives in a more prosperous and innovative economy; safer and more cohesive communities, with lower levels of poverty and greater equality; a resilient environment with more sustainable use of our natural resources and a society with a vital sense of its own culture and heritage. The Commission acknowledges and supports the commitment of the Welsh Government to develop more inclusive and cohesive communities across Wales and will endeavour to take account of that commitment in making any recommendations.

Long Term Expenditure Trends

The Commission's funding and expenditure is linked to programmes of electoral and community review work undertaken for principal councils in Wales. It is expected that the Commission's level of expenditure during 2024-25 will be more than the previous year due to implementing the Welsh Government's proposals to expand the Commission's functions to include undertaking the Senedd Boundaries Review as well as the transfer of functions of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and the establishment of an Electoral Management Board.

SHEREEN WILLIAMS

Accounting Officer

23 September 2024

ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

for the year ended 31 March 2024

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE REPORT

Commission Members, Chief Executive and Senior Staff

The Commission Members throughout 2023-24 were:

Beverley Smith	(Chair)
Michael Imperato	(Deputy Chair)
Frank Cuthbert	(Member)
Dianne Bevan	(Member)
Ginger Wiegand	(Member 1 June 2023 to 31 March 2024)

Independent Members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee:

Julie James (1 April 2023 to 31 August 2023)
Andrew Blackmore (1 January 2024 to 31 March 2024)
Kalwant Grewal (1 January 2024 to 31 March 2024)

Senior Managers throughout 2023-24 were:

Shereen Williams (Chief Executive and Accounting Officer)
Tom Jenkins (Head of Policy & Programmes)
David Burley (Head of Business)

The appointment of Beverley Smith as Chair is for a term of 4 years running from 1 February 2022 until 31 January 2026.

The appointment of Member Michael Imperato is for a term of 3 years from 1 March 2022 until 28 February 2025.

The appointment of Frank Cuthbert is for a term of 3 years from 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2025.

The appointment of Member Dianne Bevan is for a term of 4 years from 1 June 2022 until 30 May 2026.

The appointment of Member Ginger Wiegand is for a term of 1 year and 10 months from 1 June 2023 until 31 March 2025.

The appointment of the Independent Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Member, Julie James was extended for a further year until 31 August 2023.

The appointment of the Independent Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Member, Andrew Blackmore is for a term of 3 years from 1 January 2024 until 31 December 2026.

The appointment of the Independent Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Member, Kalwant Grewal is for a term of 3 years from 1 January 2024 until 31 December 2026.

Register of Interests

A register of any company directorships and other significant interests is maintained and held at the Commission's offices in Hastings House, Cardiff and is available for inspection

by the public on request. Alternatively, the register can be accessed from the Commission's web site at: <http://www.dbcc.gov.wales/publications/05-24/register-of-commissioners-interests-2024-25>. An annual reminder is sent regarding the need to update this information. Arrangements are also in place for both members and officers to declare interests in respect of decision making at the start of each Commission and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting.

Personal Data Management

The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales takes all reasonable measures to protect the personal data obtained from its stakeholders and employees during the course of its business activities. Data management controls include password protection on all databases holding personal and sensitive data, restricting access to data, holding manual data in locked cupboards and ensuring data handling protocols are in place.

Although personal data handled by the Commission is largely limited to that relating to the Commission's employees, information security obligations are treated seriously. Protecting Information training has been undertaken by all staff and all personal data files are kept in locked cabinets. The Commission operates its own ICT system and Commission members of staff were required to comply fully with the Commission's IT data security rules and procedures.

There were no data security incidents during 2023-24 (2022-23: no data security incidents).

Appointment of Auditors

The accounts of the Commission are audited by the Auditor General for Wales under Section 19 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013. Audit fees are disclosed in Note 3 to these accounts.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee met on four occasions during the year 2023-24. The Committee was chaired by Michael Imperato. Frank Cuthbert and Dianne Bevan served as members of the Committee and Julie James, Andrew Blackmore and Kalwant Grewal served as the Committee's independent members. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee's main duties are to consider the effectiveness of the Commission's overall internal control and risk management systems and to ensure adequate processes and mechanisms are in place for the assessment and management of risk. It considers the scope of audit coverage and adequacy of management responses to the audit recommendations and advises the Chief Executive on audit and compliance matters.

Financial Instruments

Details of Financial Instruments are given at Note 7 to the accounts on page 44.

Information

The Commission's Code of Practice on Public Access to Information requires all requests for information covered by the Freedom of Information (Fol) Act to be met within 15 working days. In 2023-24 there were 14 requests for information covered by the Fol Act, 100% of which were provided within 20 working days of receipt of the request. This compares to

2022-23 where there were 15 requests for information, 100% of which were provided within 20 working days of receipt of the request.

The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales has complied with the cost allocation and charging requirements set out in HM Treasury and Office of Public Sector Information guidance.

Ministerial Directions

As a Welsh Government Sponsored Body we are subject to non-statutory instruments, containing appropriate directions. No Ministerial Directions were issued to the Commission during 2023-24.

Gifts and Hospitality

A register of Gifts and Hospitality is maintained for members and staff. The Commission's Gifts and Hospitality Policy requires members and staff to declare offers of gifts of a value of £5 or above and hospitality of a value of £20 or above, whether accepted or declined and whether directly related to Commission business or not. The Gifts and Hospitality Register and declarations are considered at every Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting. During 2023-24 one offer of a gift was received and accepted by the Chief Executive which was two tickets for a UEFA National League football match worth £20 (2022-23: no offers of gifts or hospitality were received).

Complaints Procedure

The Commission has a Complaints Procedure whereby complaints may be made (by letter, e-mail or telephone) by contacting the Commission. The Commission's Complaints Policy is reviewed every 3 years and was last reviewed in June 2021. Information on how complaints are handled can be found within the Commission's Complaints Procedure document, which can be viewed on the Commission's web site (www.dbcc.gov.wales) or can be obtained from the Commission's offices at the following address:

The Chief Executive
DBCC
Ground Floor
Hastings House
Fitzalan Court
Cardiff CF24 0BL

The work of the Commission comes within the remit of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. All members of staff are required to attend training on complaints handling. The Commission received no complaints during 2023-24 (2022-23: no complaints received).

Welsh Language Standards

The Commission has appointed a Welsh speaking permanent staff member as Welsh Language Champion. They have an open remit to work with the Commission staff to raise and improve our use of the Welsh Language. The Commission issues annual reports giving details of how it has complied with the Welsh Language Standards as imposed in the Welsh Language Commissioner's 2016 Final Compliance Notice to the Commission. A

copy of the 2023-24 report will be supplied on request or may be accessed on the Commission's web site.

Statement of the Commission's and the Accounting Officer's Responsibilities

Under the Local Government (Democracy)(Wales) Act 2013, Welsh Ministers have directed the Commission to prepare for each financial year a statement of accounts in the form and on the basis determined by the Welsh Ministers. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Commission and of its income and expenditure, Statement of Financial Position and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual and in particular to:

- i) observe the accounts direction issued by the Welsh Ministers including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- ii) make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- iii) state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the financial statements;
- iv) prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis; and
- v) confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair balanced and understandable.

The Welsh Government has appointed the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer of the Commission. The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping of proper records and for safeguarding the Commission's assets, are as set out in the Accounting Officers' Memorandum and Managing Welsh Public Money published by the Welsh Government.

As the Commission's Accounting Officer, I have taken all the steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the Commission's auditors are aware of that information. So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware.

SHEREEN WILLIAMS

Accounting Officer

23 September 2024

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

2023/24

1. INTRODUCTION

The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (the Commission) is a statutory body that is sponsored by the Welsh Government and, as such the Commission is required to operate a robust system of corporate governance. The Commission is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently, and effectively. The relationship between the Commission and Welsh Government is defined in a Framework Document.

This Governance Statement is to provide evidence of how the Accounting Officer has managed and controlled the resources used in his or her organisation through the course of the year in line with the principles set out in HM Treasury's Corporate Governance Code¹.

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The governance framework comprises the committees, systems and processes, cultures and values, by which the Commission operates and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and reports to the community. It enables the Commission to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Commission's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The Commission's overall conclusion for 2023-24 is that the level of governance throughout the year has been sound. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee's annual self-assessment exercise for 2023-24 indicated that there was overall compliance with good practice.

3. GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

3.1 Welsh Government Framework Document, Operational Plan and Remit Letter

The respective roles of the Welsh Government as Sponsor Department and the Commission are set out in a Framework Document. The Framework Document sets

¹ http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/psr_governance_corporate.htm

out the broad framework within which the Commission operates and details the terms and conditions under which the Welsh Ministers provide Grant-in-Aid to the Commission. This includes the requirement for the Commission to produce an annual Operational Plan. The Commission are currently consulting with Welsh Government on a revised version of their Framework Document.

The Commission's annual Operational Plan is agreed between the Commission and the Welsh Government and sets out the main work of the Commission for the coming financial year and how this work will be financed. The Operational Plan is produced following the receipt of a Remit Letter from the Welsh Government Minister which sets out its policy aims, the notification of the allocated grant-in-aid to the Commission with related budgetary control and guidance on specific requirements in relation to business planning for the coming year.

3.2 Accounting Officer

The Welsh Government designates the Commission's Accounting Officer (normally the Chief Executive). The Accounting Officer's responsibilities are set out in the Welsh Government's publication Managing Welsh Public Money.

The Commission's Chief Executive, Shereen Williams, was designated as Accounting Officer by Welsh Government on 7 January 2019.

3.3 The Corporate Management Team

The Corporate Management Team meets monthly and normally comprises the Chief Executive, Head of Policy and Programmes, Head of Business and Finance Manager. Other officers are called on for their professional expertise as required.

3.4 Committee Structure

The legislation requires that the Commission shall consist of a 'chairing member' (Chair), a 'deputy to the chairing member' (Deputy Chair) and not more than three other members. During 2023-24 the Commission maintained a quorate of 3 members present at all meeting as stipulated in the Commission's Terms of Reference and thereby meeting the requirements of the legislation. In general, the Commission meets once per month but may meet more or less frequently depending on the flow of work.

In order to support the Commission in respect of issues of risk, financial propriety, internal control and governance and associated assurance an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee has been appointed. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee comprises three members of the Commission (not the Chair) and an appointed independent member. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is scheduled to meet at least three times a year. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee may convene additional meetings as they deem necessary. A representative of the Commission's Welsh Government sponsor division may attend Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings should they consider it necessary to do so.

The Corporate Management Team attend both Commission and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings. Other officers are called on for their professional expertise as required. Representatives of Internal and External Audit attend the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings.

3.5 The Commission

The Commission is responsible for the strategic direction and management of the organisation. The role of the Commissioners is to make key decisions on corporate policy and the formulation of the Corporate and Operational Plans. They also promote high standards of public finance, upholding the principles of regularity, propriety and value for money and ensure that the Commission's activities are conducted efficiently and effectively.

During 2023-24 the Commission prepared and monitored the Operational and Corporate Plans, reviewed the Risk Register and received updates on Welsh Language Standards. Focus of policy during the year was on conducting community reviews for The Vale of Glamorgan, Ceredigion, Caerphilly, Swansea and Pembrokeshire principal authorities. The Commission also completed the 2023 review of Welsh Parliamentary Constituencies, issuing Final Recommendations on 27 June 2023. The Commission continued planning for an expanded future work programme, responding to Welsh Government's consultation on their Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill and Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill.

The Commission met 8 times during 2023-24 to discharge its responsibilities. Commission Members attendance at these meetings is set out below:

Commission Meetings 2023 – 24		
	Meetings held during period of appointment	Meetings attended
B Smith (Chair) ¹	8	7
M Imperato (Deputy Chair) ²	8	7
F Cuthbert (Member)	8	8
D Bevan (Member)	8	8
G Wiegand (Member) ³	7	7

¹. B Smith did not attend the January 2024 meeting due to a prior commitment.

². M Imperato did not attend the May 2023 meeting due to a prior commitment.

³. G Wiegand was appointed 1 June 2023 and therefore did not attend the May 2023 meeting.

3.6 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

During 2023-24 the Committee scrutinised the Corporate Risk Register and risk management arrangements together with the Assurance Framework, internal controls and governance arrangements and provided assurance to the Commission that the systems, processes and behaviours that exemplify good governance and effective operation are in place. The Committee received all audit reports and monitored the progress of audit recommendations raised. They also reviewed their process for assessing the effectiveness of internal audit and made several changes to the effectiveness questionnaire.

The Commission's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee produce an Annual Report which provided positive feedback to the Accounting Officer on the completeness and reliability of the assurances obtained by the Commission on its risk management and internal controls.

The minutes of the Commission's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee are published on the Commission's website.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee met 4 times during 2023-24 to discharge its responsibilities. Committee Members' attendance at these meetings is set out below:

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Meetings 2023 – 24		
	Meetings held during period of appointment	Meetings attended
M Imperato (Chair)	4	4
F Cuthbert (Member)	4	4
D Bevan (Member)	4	4
J James (Independent Member) ¹	1	1
K Grewal (Independent Member) ²	1	1
A Blackmore (Independent Member) ³	1	1

¹. J James' appointment ended on 31 August 2023 and therefore she did not attend the October, November, 2023 and February 2024 meetings.

². K Grewal was appointed on 1 January 2024 and therefore he did not attend the July, October and November 2023 meetings

³. A Blackmore was appointed on 1 January 2024 and therefore he did not attend the July, October and November 2023 meetings

3.7 Challenges During the Year

During 2023-24 the Commission commenced community reviews for the principal authorities of The Vale of Glamorgan, Ceredigion, Caerphilly, Swansea and Pembrokeshire and completed the BCW review of Parliamentary Constituencies.

As stated in the Annual Report under Future Developments on page 7, the main challenge faced by the Commission during the year was planning and preparing for the current legislative programme which will repurpose the Commission to the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru and confer the functions of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, establishment of the Electoral Management Board for Wales and the duty to review of Senedd constituencies in 2024-25. In order to meet this challenge the LDBCW, assisted by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, have assessed and regularly reviewed the risks involved, appointed two additional independent ARAC members and will work with Welsh Government's Public Bodies Unit to appoint up to four additional board members.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

The Commission is committed to the regular identification and assessment of risk and has a Risk Management programme which is aimed at identifying, managing and monitoring all risks: Corporate; Operational; and those risks specific to undertaking review work, the administration of the pension scheme and the ICT system. The Commission aims to ensure that, in discharging its responsibilities to the Welsh Government, the likelihood of failing to deliver its Operational Plan and Strategic Objectives is minimised by means of anticipating and controlling known risks. The Chief Executive and senior management will establish and deliver the Risk Management Programme securing the recognition, assessment, regular review and mitigation of all risks. The Corporate Risks are presented to members in the form of a Corporate Risk Register, supported by a Risk Radar. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee considers the Risk Registers together with the Risk

Management policy at every meeting to provide assurance to the Commission's Risk Management process.

The Commission's risk management arrangements are aligned with the principles of HM Treasury's Orange Book (Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts). The Principles are:

- Risk management shall be an essential part of governance and leadership, and fundamental to how the organisation is directed, managed and controlled at all levels.
- Risk management shall be an integral part of all organisational activities to support decision-making in achieving objectives.
- Risk management shall be collaborative and informed by the best available information.
- Risk management processes shall be structured to include:
 - a. risk identification and assessment of risks to determine and prioritise how the risks should be managed;
 - b. the selection, design and implementation of risk treatment options that support achievement of intended outcomes and manage risks to an acceptable level;
 - c. the design and operation of integrated, insightful and informative risk monitoring; and
 - d. timely, accurate and useful risk reporting to enhance the quality of decision-making and to support management and oversight bodies in meeting their responsibilities.
- Risk management shall be continually improved through learning and experience.

The Commission complies with these principles by the consideration of its risk appetite and monitoring of existing risks identified together with consideration of its corporate objectives, operational plan, and work programme timetables and deadlines in order to identify additional emerging risks. During the reporting period the Commission reviewed its process for assessing risk appetite and adopted a system more in line with current government guidance.

The Commission reviews its Corporate and Review Work Programme risk registers at every meeting and updates the risks and mitigating actions as necessary. The Commission's Management Team review's the Commission' Operational, ICT and Pensions risk registers. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee receives reports on the Commission's risk management activity and risk management policy at every meeting.

During 2023/24 the main risks identified and managed by the Commission were:

Risk Identified
Commission fails to maintain good reputation and working relationship and communication with principal councils and senior stakeholders.
Lack of resources provided to carry out project management and implement the new functions due to be transferred to the Commission i.e. IRP, EMB and Senedd Boundary Reviews

The risk of failing to maintain good reputation and working relationship and communication with principal councils and senior stakeholders was mitigated by monthly meetings between Chair and Welsh Government, quarterly liaison meetings between Secretariat and Welsh Government, meetings with principal councils to discuss reviews prior to and during review, consultations with stakeholders on any new policies or major policy changes, post-review questionnaires allowing stakeholders an improved opportunity to put forward their views on whether the Commission had carried out its functions properly and fairly and postponement of deadlines for review consultations to allow principal authorities more time due to pandemic, dealing with all correspondence from principal authorities and stakeholders, efficiently liaising with Welsh Government and obtaining legal advice where necessary and commitment to consultation on Policy & Practice for new Review Programme included in letter to principal authority CEOs.

The risk of lack of resources provided to carry out project management and implement the new functions due to be transferred to the Commission (IRP, EMB and Senedd Boundary Reviews) was mitigated by: liaison and meetings with Welsh Government Sponsor, Public Bodies Unit and key stakeholders ensure risks and concerns are highlighted in the planning group (IRPW/LDBCW), establishing a Potential Future Work Programme risk register and regularly reviewing it, HR consultancy and advice to support the development of a new staff structure and identifying staff recruitment and Commissioner recruitment needs.

5. INTERNAL AUDIT

The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and governance arrangements is informed by the work of the Internal Auditors and their reporting to the Commission. This work is undertaken by appointed auditors who structure their work based on an annual audit programme. The terms of reference for internal audit require that work is conducted in accordance the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

As part of the Commission's corporate business cycle the Commission's Internal Auditors, TIAA Ltd., draws up an internal audit programme which is approved by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The audit process uses the standard PSIAS auditing guidelines and other best practices with the aim of identifying potential weaknesses in controls. Each of these potential weaknesses is then assessed jointly with the auditors to consider the likely risk and scale of impact, and the alternative controls and potential improvements within the resources of the Commission.

The Internal Audit Opinion on Internal Control 2023-24 has been produced by TIAA Ltd. with the objective of supporting the Annual Governance Statement by giving an opinion on the level of internal control based on the internal work outlined below. The Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion for 2023-24 states:

'TIAA is satisfied that, for the areas reviewed during the year, the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales has reasonable and effective risk management, control and governance processes in place'.

Mid-Year Audit Report 2023-24

Audit Area	Date Released	Weakness Identified			Assurance Level
		Urgent priority	Important priority	Routine priority	
Payroll	November 23	-	-	1	Substantial
Governance – Strategic Control	November 23	-	-	-	Substantial
Welsh Language Standards	November 23		1	2	Reasonable

Year End Audit Report 2023-24

Audit Area	Date Released	Weakness Identified			Assurance Level
		Urgent priority	Important priority	Routine priority	
Risk Management	January 24	-	-	-	Substantial
HR Management	January 24	-	-	2	Substantial

The mid-year audit provided Substantial assurance ratings for Payroll and Governance with one audit recommendation being raised. The mid-year audit of Welsh Language Standards received a Reasonable assurance rating with three audit recommendations being raised.

The year-end audit provided Substantial assurance ratings for Risk Management and HR Management with two audit recommendations being raised.

These findings provide assurance that the LDBCW's arrangements are reducing its exposure to risk. The Committee noted the thoroughness of the audit work, practicality of recommendations and the open and positive response of LDBCW management.

The Follow Up audit report for 2023-24 provided a positive response for the implementation of prior year's recommendations with 3 out of 5 outstanding recommendations having been implemented and the remaining 2 recommendations being progressed towards implementation.

6. EXTERNAL AUDIT

The Auditor General for Wales is the Commission's statutory auditor who audit the Commission's annual financial accounts in line with established practice.

The Audit conclusions for the 2022-23 financial year were reviewed at the October 2023 meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. An unqualified opinion was given on the 2022-23 Accounts and 1 audit recommendation was raised which were accepted by the Commission. The recommendation was:

- Management should request an Accounts Direction from Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to clarify the required accounting treatment of Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales carried forward monies at year end.

7. BOARD EFFECTIVENESS

7.1 Induction, Development, Training and Performance Appraisal

New Commissioners and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee members are provided with an induction session which covers how the Commission's review work is conducted, the relationship between the LDBCW and Parliamentary BCW and how the joint secretariat for the two bodies operates and the Commission's financial arrangements. As part of the Commissioners and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee members induction training is provided in respect of the process of carrying out an electoral review. An induction pack for independent Audit and Risk Assurance Committee members who are not Commission members is also provided.

Commissioners are encouraged to build links with members of other bodies that have interests in common with the Commission. There is a well-established arrangement of annual meetings between the various UK Boundary Commissions and there are also periodic meetings between the Commission Members and the Welsh Local Government Association, One Voice Wales and other stakeholder bodies. The Commission will also consider providing training opportunities for specific areas of expertise that have been identified to be of benefit to the Commission.

The Commission Chair's performance is appraised annually by the Deputy Director of the Commission's Welsh Government Sponsor Division. Commission Members' performance is appraised annually by the Commission Chair. For 2023-24 the Chair concluded that the performance of all Commission Members was fully satisfactory.

7.2 Board Information

- Terms of Reference for Commission meetings have been adopted.
- A Work Plan for Commission meetings has been adopted.
- A standard format for reports has been adopted. This ensures consistency and requires consideration of issues such as risks and legal implications;
- Authors of reports are encouraged to draw on available and reliable sources of information such as Welsh Government, principal authorities, other Boundary Commissions, government departments etc.;
- A standard format for meeting agendas and minutes has been adopted. Standard agenda items to include, declarations of interest, issues arising, risk management, budget report and a calendar of events. The minutes of the Commission meetings are published and available on the Commission's website;
- Commission members have continued to use laptop computers for storing and viewing meeting papers and other documents relevant to their duties which has continued to reduce stationery costs associated with printing and copying meeting papers.

7.3 Board Performance Evaluation

The Commission Board evaluation for 2022-23 was undertaken in June 2023 and the outcome was considered at a workshop organised by the Chair. Overall, the findings of the evaluation were positive during 2022-23 and concluded that the vast majority of the indicators of effectiveness and compliance with good practice had been met.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee carried out their annual self-assessment review of its effectiveness by members completing the revised questionnaire during January 2024. Overall, the findings of these evaluations were positive during 2023-24 and concluded that the vast majority of the indicators of effectiveness and compliance with good practice had been met. Areas identified for improvement are captured in action plans and addressed during the following year. In respect of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee evaluation there were no previous year's action points to be addressed. The evaluation of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee did not raise any action points.

8. CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Commission's arrangements comply with the principles of the Corporate Governance Code in all material respects.

9. QUALITY OF REPORTING TO THE BOARD

Following the standardisation of the format of reports and a system of checking the information contained in the reports, the Commission now finds the quality of data acceptable and will strive for further improvements in standardised review reporting to the Board.

10. MEETINGS WITH SPONSOR DEPARTMENT

The Commission Chair and Chief Executive hold regular meetings with the Commission's Welsh Government Sponsor Division and there is frequent contact between members of the Secretariat and members of the Sponsor Division on operational issues. In addition, the Commission's Secretariat hold liaison meetings with representatives of the Commission's Welsh Government Sponsor Division to discuss progress on review work, corporate governance issues and any other issues arising regarding the operation of the Commission.

11. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

A performance management system is in place to ensure that members of staff understand what they are doing and why, and how their work links with what the Commission is trying to achieve. Using the Clear Review software all managers are required to set objectives for their staff which are then reviewed throughout the year and updated as necessary. This includes a full career and job-related development and training plan to aid the development of staff.

The performance of Commission members is assessed by the Commission Chair annually and the performance of the Commission in undertaking its duties is monitored at Commission meetings.

12. ICT DATA SECURITY

The Commission receives ICT Security reports from their ICT support officers provided by Qualifications Wales. These reports are considered at each Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting. During the reporting period the Commission undertook their annual Cyber Security audit. The Commission also completed and passed IASME Level 1.

13. WHISTLEBLOWING AND FRAUD

The Commission operates Whistleblowing and Fraud Policies which are made available to staff through the Commission's intranet and Commission Members as part of the induction packs issued to them following appointment. The Commission's Whistleblowing arrangements, together with a report of any instances of whistleblowing and fraud, are considered at every Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting. There were no instances of whistleblowing or suspected fraud during 2023-24 (2022-23 – no whistleblowing incidents).

SIGNED _____ DATE 23 September 2024
Beverley Smith
Chair

SIGNED _____ DATE 23 September 2024
Shereen Williams
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Remuneration and Staff Report

Service Contracts

The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 requires Civil Service appointments to be made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The Recruitment Principles published by the Civil Service Commission specify the circumstances when appointments may be made otherwise.

Unless otherwise stated below, the officials covered by this report hold appointments which are open-ended. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in the individual receiving compensation as set out in the Civil Service Compensation Scheme.

Further information about the work of the Civil Service Commission can be found at www.civilservicecommission.org.uk

Remuneration Policy

Powers to make remuneration to Commission Members are set out in Section 2 Provision 4 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013. This function was transferred to the National Assembly for Wales under SI 1999 Transfer of Functions Order No 672. Increases to the remuneration of Chairs and Members of WGSBs are authorised by the First Minister.

The Commission also has responsibility for paying the remuneration for Boundary Commission for Wales (BCW) members at daily rates set by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and approved by HM Treasury. The cost of this remuneration is met from the funding provided by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities described on page 6 and disclosed in the staff costs table on page 28.

Annual increases in salary are applied in accordance with those agreed for staff of the Welsh Government and no performance bonuses are applicable.

The information contained within this report is subject to audit with the exception of the figures regarding staff composition and sickness absence.

Remuneration (including salary) and pension entitlements

The following sections provide details of the remuneration and pension interests of the most senior management and board members of the Commission.

Commission Members' Remuneration (subject to audit)

	2023-24	2022-23
Name	Fees £'000	Fees £'000
Beverley Smith (Chair LDBCW)	8	8
Michael Imperato (Deputy Chair LDBCW)	4	3
Frank Cuthbert (Member LDBCW)	5	3
Dianne Bevan (Member LDBCW)	5	3
Ginger Weigand (Member LDBCW)	2	-
Julie James (Independent Audit Committee Member – LDBCW)	1	1
Andrew Blackmore (Independent Audit Committee Member – LDBCW)	1	-
Kalwant Grewal (Independent Audit Committee Member – LDBCW)	1	-
Huw V Thomas (Member – BCW)	1	4

Sam Hartley (Member – BCW)	2	5
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The Commission members' remuneration related entirely to fees for services rendered during the year. Pension contributions are not payable.

The Speaker of the House of Commons is the ex-officio Chairman of the BCW. The BCW Deputy Chair, who presides over the meetings, is a High Court Judge: Mrs Justice Jefford DBE. The post of BCW Deputy Chair is unpaid with only expenses being covered.

Senior Managers' Salary and Pension Entitlements (subject to audit)

Single total figure of remuneration						
Official	Salary (£'000) ¹		Pension Benefits (to nearest £1,000) ²		Total (£'000)	
	2023-24	2022-23	2023-24	2022-23 ³	2023-24	2022-23
Mrs S Williams (Chief Executive)	80-85	70-75	32,000	27,000	110-115	100-105
Mr D T Jenkins (Head of Policy & Programmes)	65-70	60-65	26,000	24,000	90-95	85-90
Mr D Burley (Head of Business)	60-65	50-55	43,000	75,000	100-105	125-130

¹ There were no payments made in respect of bonuses and Benefits in Kind.

² The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) plus (the real increase in any lump sum) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increases exclude increases due to inflation or any increase or decreases due to a transfer of pension rights.

³ The pension benefits of any members affected by the public service pensions remedy which were reported on in 2022-23 on the basis of **alpha** membership for the period between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 are reported in 2023-24 on the basis of PCSPS membership for the same period.

The value of pension benefits is calculated by MyCSP, the organisation responsible for administering the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme on behalf of the Civil Service. The Commission has no influence over the calculation or the reported amount. This is not an amount which has been paid to an officer by the organisation during the year; it is a calculation which uses information from the pension benefit table. These figures can be influenced by many factors e.g. changes in an officer's salary, whether or not they choose to make additional contributions to the pension scheme from their pay and other valuation factors affecting the pension scheme as a whole.

Number of Senior Managers

The Commission employed 3 senior managers during 2023-24 (2022-23: 3 senior managers), a Chief Executive, Head of Policy and Programmes and a Head of Business. The Commission's Chief Executive is deemed to be the equivalent of the Welsh Government's Grade 6 and the Commission's Head of Policy and Programmes and Head of Business are deemed to be the equivalent of the Welsh Government's Grade 7.

Salary

'Salary' includes gross salary and overtime. One staff member received a 5% Recruitment and Retention allowance and one staff member received a 7.5% Additional Responsibility allowance during 2023-24. During 2023-24 every member of staff received a one-off non-consolidated Cost of Living payment made to all UK Civil Service employees of £1,500 as agreed by the UK and Welsh Governments. No other payments were made in respect of performance pay or bonuses. This report is based on accrued payments made by the Commission and thus recorded in these accounts.

Fair Pay Disclosure (subject to audit)

Reporting bodies are required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest paid director in their organisation and the median remuneration of the organisation's workforce.

The banded remuneration of the highest-paid director in the financial year 2023/24 was £80-£85,000 (2022/23 = £70-£75,000). This was 1.98 times (2022-23: 1.83 times the median remuneration of the Commissions workforce, which was £41,675 (2022-23: £39,690).

Total Pay and Benefits		
	2023/24	2022/23
25th percentile remuneration	£29,285	£26,900
25th percentile pay ratio	2.82	2.70
50th percentile remuneration	£41,675	£39,690
50th percentile pay ratio	1.98	1.83
75th percentile remuneration	£44,020	£41,427
75th percentile pay ratio	1.87	1.75

Salary Component of Total Pay and Benefits		
	2023/24	2022/23
25th percentile remuneration	£29,285	£26,900
25th percentile pay ratio	2.82	2.70
50th percentile remuneration	£41,675	£39,690
50th percentile pay ratio	1.98	1.83
75th percentile remuneration	£41,675	£39,690
75th percentile pay ratio	1.98	1.83

In 2023/24, no employee received remuneration in excess of the highest-paid director (2022/23 = no employee).

Remuneration ranged from £26,901 to £82,500 (2022/23: £25,620 to £72,500). Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance-related pay and benefits in kind. It does not include severance payments, temporary payments, employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

The percentage change from the previous financial year in respect of highest paid director was 13.8% (2022/23: 7.4%). The average percentage change from the previous financial year in respect of employees taken as a whole was 6.9% (2022/23: 7.9%).

Tax Assurance for Off-Payroll Employees

All of the Commission's directly employed staff and board members are paid through the Commission's payroll system and subject to the appropriate tax and National Insurance contributions. All staff on inward secondment to the Commission from other government departments remain on the payroll system of their parent departments. During 2023-24 the Commission did not make any off-payroll payments.

Pension Benefits (subject to audit)

Name	Accrued pension at pension age as at 31/03/24 and related lump sum	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age	CETV at 31/3/24	CETV at 31/3/23 ¹	Real increase in CETV	Employer contributions to partnership pension accounts
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Mrs S Williams Chief Executive	10 - 15	0 - 2.5	162	125	16	-
Mr D T Jenkins Head of Policy & Programmes	10 - 15	0 - 2.5	146	116	12	-
Mr D Burley Head of Business	25 - 30 plus lump sum of 65 - 70	0 - 2.5 plus lump sum of 2.5 - 5	623	534	40	-

¹ . The pension benefits of any members affected by the public service pensions remedy which were reported on in 2022-23 on the basis of **alpha** membership for the period between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 are reported in 2023-24 on the basis of PCSPS membership for the same period.

Civil Service Pensions

Pension benefits are provided through the Civil Service pension arrangements. From 1 April 2015 a new pension scheme for civil servants was introduced – the Civil Servants and Others Pension Scheme or **alpha**, which provides benefits on a career average basis with a normal pension age equal to the member's State Pension Age (or 65 if higher). From that date all newly appointed civil servants and the majority of those already in service joined **alpha**. Prior to that date, civil servants participated in the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS). The PCSPS has four sections: 3 providing benefits on a final salary basis (**classic**, **premium** or **classic plus**) with a normal pension age of 60; and one providing benefits on a whole career basis (**nuvos**) with a normal pension age of 65.

These statutory arrangements are unfunded with the cost of benefits met by monies voted by Parliament each year. Pensions payable under **classic**, **premium**, **classic plus**, **nuvos** and **alpha** are increased annually in line with Pensions Increase legislation. Existing members of the PCSPS who were within 10 years of their normal pension age on 1 April 2012 remained in the PCSPS after 1 April 2015. Those who were between 10 years and 13 years and 5 months from their normal pension age on 1 April 2012 switched into **alpha** sometime between 1 June 2015 and 1 February 2022.

Because the Government plans to remove discrimination identified by the courts in the way that the 2015 pension reforms were introduced for some members, it is expected that, in due course, eligible members with relevant service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 may be entitled to different pension benefits in relation to that period (and this may affect the Cash Equivalent Transfer Values shown in this report – see above). All members who switch to **alpha** have their PCSPS benefits 'banked', with those with earlier benefits in one of the final salary sections of the PCSPS having those benefits based on their final salary when they leave **alpha**. (The pension figures quoted for officials show pension earned in PCSPS or **alpha** – as appropriate. Where the official has benefits in both the PCSPS and **alpha** the figure quoted is the combined value of their benefits in the two schemes.) Members joining from October 2002 may opt for either the appropriate defined

benefit arrangement or a defined contribution (money purchase) pension with an employer contribution (**partnership** pension account).

Employee contributions are salary-related and range between 4.6% and 8.05% for members of **classic**, **premium**, **classic plus**, **nuvos** and **alpha**. Benefits in **classic** accrue at the rate of 1/80th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. In addition, a lump sum equivalent to three years initial pension is payable on retirement. For **premium**, benefits accrue at the rate of 1/60th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. Unlike **classic**, there is no automatic lump sum. **classic plus** is essentially a hybrid with benefits for service before 1 October 2002 calculated broadly as per **classic** and benefits for service from October 2002 worked out as in **premium**. In **nuvos** a member builds up a pension based on his pensionable earnings during their period of scheme membership. At the end of the scheme year (31 March) the member's earned pension account is credited with 2.3% of their pensionable earnings in that scheme year and the accrued pension is uprated in line with Pensions Increase legislation. Benefits in **alpha** build up in a similar way to **nuvos**, except that the accrual rate is 2.32%. In all cases members may opt to give up (commute) pension for a lump sum up to the limits set by the Finance Act 2004. The **partnership** pension account is an occupational defined contribution pension arrangement which is part of the Legal & General Mastertrust. The employer makes a basic contribution of between 8% and 14.75% (depending on the age of the member). The employee does not have to contribute, but where they do make contributions, the employer will match these up to a limit of 3% of pensionable salary (in addition to the employer's basic contribution). Employers also contribute a further 0.5% of pensionable salary to cover the cost of centrally-provided risk benefit cover (death in service and ill health retirement). The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach pension age, or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the scheme if they are already at or over pension age. Pension age is 60 for members of **classic**, **premium** and **classic plus**, 65 for members of **nuvos**, and the higher of 65 or State Pension Age for members of **alpha**. (The pension figures quoted for officials show pension earned in PCSPS or **alpha** – as appropriate. Where the official has benefits in both the PCSPS and **alpha** the figure quoted is the combined value of their benefits in the two schemes, but note that part of that pension may be payable from different ages.) Further details about the Civil Service pension arrangements can be found at the website www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk

Cash Equivalent Transfer Values

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies.

The figures include the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement which the member has transferred to the Civil Service pension arrangements. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their buying additional pension benefits at their own cost. CETVs are worked out in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 and do not take account of any actual or potential reduction to benefits resulting from Lifetime Allowance Tax which may be due when pension benefits are taken.

Real increase in CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV that is funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.

Pension liabilities

The Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) and alpha are unfunded multi-employer defined benefit schemes but the Commission is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities. The scheme actuary valued the scheme as at 31 March 2020. You can find details in the resource accounts of the Cabinet Office: ([Civil Superannuation Annual Report and Account 2022-23](#))

Payment is made to the Paymaster General of such sums as may be appropriate as representing accruing liabilities of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme. Further details are included in the Staff report on page 24 and note 1.13 to the accounts.

For 2023-24, employers' contributions of £148,095 (2022- 23: £109,527) were payable to the PCSPS at one of four rates in the range 26.6% to 30.3% (2022-23: 26.6% to 30.3%) of pensionable pay, based on salary bands. The Scheme Actuary reviews employer contributions usually every four years following a full scheme valuation. The salary bands and contribution rates were revised for 2019-20 and will remain unchanged until 2024-25. The pay bands and contribution rates reflect benefits as they are accrued, not when the costs are actually incurred, and reflect the past experience of the scheme.

Employees can opt to open a partnership pension account, a stakeholder pension with an employer contribution. Employer contributions are age related and range from 8.0% to 14.75% of pensionable pay. Employers also match employee contributions up to 3% of pensionable pay. For 2023-24, there were no employers' contributions to the partnership pension account (2022-23: £1,708).

No persons retired on ill health grounds during the year

Compensation for loss of office

No payments were made in respect of loss of office or termination during 2023-24 (and no payments were made during 2022-23).

Staff Numbers and Related Costs (*subject to audit*)

	2023-24 Permanently employed staff £	2023-24 Commission Members £	2023-24 Total £
Wages and salaries	561,248	25,793	587,041
Social security costs	55,984	221	56,205
Pension costs	148,095	-	148,095
Total Net Costs	765,327	26,014	791,341

Average number of persons employed

The average number of full-time equivalent persons employed during the year by these categories was as follows:

No.	No.	No.
-----	-----	-----

Directly Employed	12.3	7.9	20.2
Total Staff	12.3	7.9	20.2

Comparatives:

	2022-23 Permanently employed staff	2022-23 Commission Members	2022-23 Total
	£	£	£
Wages and salaries	414,389	42,202	456,591
Social security costs	44,817	2,657	47,474
Pension costs	111,341	-	111,341
	<u>570,547</u>	<u>44,859</u>	<u>615,406</u>

Average number of persons employed

The average number of full-time equivalent persons employed during the year by these categories was as follows:

	No.	No.	No.
Directly Employed	9.6	9.6	19.2
Total Staff	<u>9.6</u>	<u>9.6</u>	<u>19.2</u>

The above costs include £167,300 (2022-23; £305,648) in respect of staff resources and £2,275 (2022-23; £24,408) in respect of members' remuneration expended on behalf of the Boundary Commission for Wales. The decrease in costs compared to the previous year were due to the decrease in work undertaken for the 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies in Wales which was completed during the reporting period.

Employee Policy

The Commission maintains a core of directly employed staff consisting of the Chief Executive, Head of Policy and Programmes, Head of Business, Finance Manager, Communications and Engagement Manager, two Review Officers and two Business Support Officers. Directly employed staff have salary bands and terms and conditions of service analogous with Welsh Government staff of corresponding grades. During 2022-23 one member of staff was seconded to Welsh Government with their salary costs reimbursed to the Commission.

The Commission has an extensive range of policies which reflect current legislation, and aim to secure retention and motivation. These policies are reviewed regularly. All policies are equality checked before implementation. The Commission was first accredited with Investors In People standard in 2009. This was subject to a follow up review during 2023-24 which concluded that the Commission should retain IIP accreditation.

Staff Composition

The table below shows full time equivalent and headcount staff numbers for 2023-24 as at 31 March 2024.

Pay Band	Male				Female			
	FTE	%	Headcount	%	FTE	%	Headcount	%
Commission Member ^{1 2}	6	67	6	67	3	33	3	33
Chief Executive	0	0	0	0	1	100	1	100
Head of Business/	2	100	2	100	0	0	0	0

Head of Policy and Programmes								
Review Manager	4	80	4	80	1	20	1	20
Review Officer	1	37	1	33	1.7	63	2	67
Administrative Support	1	50	1	50	1	50	1	50
Total	14	65	14	64	7.7	35	8	36
Prior year total	11	56	11	55	8.7	44	9	45
Variance	+3	+9	+3	+9	-1	-9	-1	-9

¹ Includes 3 Parliamentary BCW Members.

² Headcount figures are used for FTE Commission Member numbers.

Equal Opportunities

The Commission is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity in its employment practices and aims to ensure that no potential or actual employee receives more or less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital or parental status, nationality, political belief, race, religion or sexual orientation. The Commission ensures that appropriate facilities are available for disabled employees.

Sickness Absence

During 2023-24 six of the Commission's permanent staff were absent on sick leave for a total of 33 days (2022-23 – two of the Commission's permanent staff were absent on sick leave for a total of 33 days).

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

The Commission operates a Staff Health and Safety policy and Manual Handling policy and has an independent fire risk assessment and health and safety review carried out annually. The Commission also is accredited by the Small Workplace Health Award with the Bronze award.

SHEREEN WILLIAMS

Accounting Officer

23 September 2024

The Certificate and report of the Auditor General for Wales to the Senedd

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales for the year ended 31 March 2024 under Paragraph 19 of Part 2 of the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru etc. Act 2013.

The financial statements comprise the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Cash Flows, Statement of Changes in Tax Payers' Equity and related notes, including the material accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards as interpreted and adapted by HM Treasury's Financial Reporting Manual.

In my opinion, in all material respects, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales' affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of its net operating expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with UK adopted international accounting standards as interpreted and adapted by HM Treasury's Financial Reporting Manual.
- have been properly prepared in accordance with Welsh Ministers' directions issued under the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru etc. Act 2013.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects, the income and expenditure recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Senedd and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing in the UK (ISAs (UK)) and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements of Public Sector Entities in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my certificate.

My staff and I are independent of the body in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinions.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that the use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the body's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

The going concern basis of accounting for Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual, which require entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and my auditor's report thereon. The Accounting Officer is responsible for the other information in the annual report. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my report, I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion, the part of the Remuneration and Staff Report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with Welsh Ministers' directions made under the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru etc. Act 2013.

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of my audit:

- the parts of the Accountability Report subject to audit have been properly prepared in accordance with Welsh Ministers' directions made under the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru etc. Act 2013.; and
- the information given in the Foreword, Performance Report and Accountability Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and is in accordance with the applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the body and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Foreword, Performance Report and Accountability Report.

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit.
- proper accounting records have not been kept or returns adequate for my audit have not been received from branches not visited by my team;
- the financial statements and the audited part of the Accountability Report are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns;
- information specified by Welsh Ministers regarding remuneration and other transactions is not disclosed;
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual are not made or parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or

- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with HM Treasury's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer is responsible for:

- maintaining proper accounting records;
- the preparation of the financial statements and Annual Report in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view;
- ensuring that the Annual Report and financial statements as a whole are fair, balanced and understandable;
- ensuring the regularity of financial transactions;
- internal controls as the Accounting Officer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error;
- assessing Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales' ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru etc. Act 2013.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud.

My procedures included the following:

- Enquiring of management, Internal Audit and those charged with governance, including obtaining and reviewing supporting documentation relating to Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales' policies and procedures concerned with:
 - identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations and whether they were aware of any instances of non-compliance;
 - detecting and responding to the risks of fraud and whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud; and
 - the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations.
- Considering as an audit team how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the posting of unusual journals;
- Obtaining an understanding of Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales' framework of authority as well as other legal and regulatory frameworks that the Local

Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales operates in, focusing on those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on the financial statements or that had a fundamental effect on the operations of Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales; and

- Obtaining an understanding of related party relationships.

In addition to the above, my procedures to respond to identified risks included the following:

- reviewing the financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with relevant laws and regulations discussed above;
- enquiring of management, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and legal advisors about actual and potential litigation and claims;
- reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance and the Commission; and
- in addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

I also communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential fraud risks to all audit team members and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

The extent to which my procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is affected by the inherent difficulty in detecting irregularities, the effectiveness of the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales' controls, and the nature, timing and extent of the audit procedures performed.

A further description of the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my auditor's report.

Other auditor's responsibilities

I obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Senedd and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.

Adrian Crompton
Auditor General for Wales
30 September 2024

1 Capital Quarter
Tyndall Street
Cardiff, CF10 4BZ

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE NET EXPENDITURE for the year ended 31 March 2024

	Notes	2024 £	2023 £
Income	4	<u>(422,183)</u>	<u>(558,305)</u>
Total Operating Income		<u>(422,183)</u>	<u>(558,305)</u>
COSTS			
Staff costs	2	791,341	615,407
Other operating expenditure	3	<u>388,886</u>	<u>552,363</u>
Total Operating Expenditure		<u>1,180,227</u>	<u>1,167,770</u>
Net Operating Expenditure		<u><u>758,044</u></u>	<u><u>609,465</u></u>
Finance Costs		1,283	874
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the Year		<u><u>759,327</u></u>	<u><u>610,339</u></u>

All activities are classed as continuing

The notes on pages 39 to 46 form part of these accounts.

LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
as at 31 March 2024

	Notes	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2023 £
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, Plant and Equipment	5	34,567	46,557
Right of Use Assets	6	25,615	47,271
Total non-current assets		60,182	93,828
CURRENT ASSETS			
Trade and other receivables	8	37,948	26,009
Cash and cash equivalents	9	48,287	21,868
Total current assets		86,235	47,877
Total assets		146,417	141,705
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	10	(75,748)	(34,046)
Right of Use Lease Liability		(25,889)	(47,552)
Total current liabilities		(101,637)	(81,598)
Total assets less current liabilities		44,780	60,107
NON CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Provisions	15	-	(6,000)
Total non current liabilities		-	(6,000)
ASSETS LESS LIABILITIES		44,780	54,107
FINANCED BY:			
General reserves		44,780	54,107
		44,780	54,107

The notes on pages 39 to 46 form part of these accounts

The Accounting Officer authorised these financial statements for issue on 23 September 2024.

SHEREEN WILLIAMS
Accounting Officer
23 September 2024

LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS for the year ended 31 March 2024

	Notes	2024	2023
		£	£
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net operating costs		(758,044)	(609,465)
Adjustments for:			
Decrease / (Increase) in trade and other receivables		(11,939)	9,240
Depreciation	5	20,678	40,786
Depreciation on Right of Use Assets	6	67,548	62,454
Increase / (Decrease) in trade payables		41,702	(31,821)
Increase / (Decrease) in trade provisions		(6,000)	-
(Profit) / Loss on disposal of fixed assets		-	660
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(646,055)	(528,146)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	5	(8,688)	(19,697)
Net cash outflow from investing activities		(8,688)	(19,697)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Grant in Aid from the Welsh Government		750,000	597,933
Right of Use lease payment		(68,838)	(63,047)
		681,162	534,886
Net financing			
Net increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	9	26,419	(12,956)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period	9	21,868	34,824
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period		48,287	21,868

The notes on pages 39 to 46 form part of these accounts

LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN TAX PAYERS' EQUITY for the year ended 31 March 2024

	General Reserve £
Balance at 31 March 2022	66,513
Balance at 1 April 2022	<u>66,513</u>
Changes in tax payers' equity 2022-23	
Grant in Aid from Welsh Government	597,933
Comprehensive Expenditure for the year	(610,339)
Balance at 31 March 2023	<u>54,107</u>
Changes in taxpayers' equity for 2023-24	
Grant in Aid from Welsh Government	750,000
Comprehensive Expenditure for the year	(759,327)
Balance at 31 March 2024	<u>44,780</u>

The notes on pages 39 to 46 form part of these accounts

LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

for the year ended 31 March 2024

1. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the 2023-24 Government Financial Reporting Manual (IFRS based FReM) issued by HM Treasury. The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales are described below. These have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts.

1.1 Accounts Direction

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Accounts Direction issued by the Welsh Ministers under the Local Government (Democracy)(Wales) Act 2013.

1.2 Accounting Convention

The accounts are prepared under the historical cost convention modified to account for the revaluation of property, plant and equipment, intangible assets and inventories.

1.3 Administration and Programme Expenditure

The Commission's funding received from both the Welsh Government and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is classed as funding for programme expenditure by both Departments. All income and expenditure figures shown on the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure are therefore deemed to be programme income and expenditure.

1.4 Valuation of Non-Current Assets

Non-current assets are capitalised at the cost of acquisition and installation where that cost exceeds £500. Property, Plant and Equipment are carried at fair value. Depreciated historic cost is used as a proxy for fair value for all classes of assets, as all have either short useful lives, low value, or both. All property plant and equipment are essentially grouped into one of two classes, IT assets or Fixtures, Furniture and Equipment (F+E). Where a number of identical significant items, with individual values below the capitalisation threshold, are purchased as a group and their aggregate value is above the capitalisation threshold then the Commission deems them to be capital assets.

Intangible assets such as computer software costs are capitalised at the cost of acquisition where that cost exceeds £1,000. Annual renewal fees for cloud based software are accounted for as revenue expenditure and are therefore charged in full when goods and services have been received.

1.5 **Right of Use Assets**

Leases are capitalised where the Commission receives the economic benefit of the use of that asset. Assets are capitalised at the value of the total payments over the course of the lease. Leases with a resultant value of less than £10,000 are not capitalised and are treated as operating leases. Property is depreciated to its residual value over the period of the lease on the basis of between 5 and 11 years.

1.6 **Depreciation**

Depreciation of non-current assets is calculated to write off their cost or valuation over their estimated useful lives. All non-current assets are depreciated over five or ten years depending on the estimated useful life of the asset. A full year's depreciation is charged in the year of acquisition and none in the year of disposal.

1.7 **Provisions**

A provision is recognised in the Statement of Financial Position when the Commission has a legal or constructive obligation as a result of a past event and it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation.

1.8 **Employee benefits**

The cost of providing employee benefits is accounted for in the period in which the benefits are earned by employees. Annual leave is provided for over the period that the leave accrues. This accounting policy was introduced in 2009-10 in line with the requirement of IAS19, Employee Benefits.

1.9 **Funding**

The Commission receives Grant-in-Aid from the Welsh Government to fund its general revenue and capital activities. In accordance with the FReM this Grant-in-Aid is regarded as financing and is credited to the General Reserve on receipt.

1.10 **Income**

Receivables other than Grant-in-Aid from the Welsh Government are regarded as income rather than funding. The main source of income received is from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to meet the cost of maintaining a Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales Secretariat in Cardiff. During 2023-24 The Commission also received income from several Welsh principal authorities for conducting community reviews on their behalf and also a small amount of income for undertaking work on behalf of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

1.11 **Inventories**

The Commission does not hold any stock of material value.

1.12 **Value Added Tax (VAT)**

All expenditure is charged inclusive of VAT as the Commission is not registered for VAT and therefore unable to recover recoverable VAT.

1.13 Pensions

Payment is made to the Paymaster General of such sums as may be appropriate as representing accruing liabilities of the Civil Service Pension in respect of pensions and other similar benefits for persons employed by the Commission and in respect of the administrative expenses attributable to the liabilities and their discharge. Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of the Civil Service Pension scheme. Further details are contained within the Remuneration Report.

1.14 Management of Financial Risk

The Commission has no borrowings and relies primarily on Welsh Government grants for its cash requirements. It also has no significant deposits and all significant assets and liabilities are denominated in sterling, so it is not exposed to interest rate risk or currency risk.

1.15 Impact of Standards not yet effective

Commission Members have considered the impact of Standards and Interpretations which have been issued but are not yet effective and which have not been adopted early by the Commission. Members anticipate that the adoption of these Standards and Interpretations in future periods will have no material impact on the financial statements of the Commission.

1.16 Financial Instruments

The Commission does not have any significant financial instruments. Short term instruments can include cash, trade debtors and trade creditors. Where applicable, the current value is the same as the fair value at the year end.

1.16.1 Trade and other receivables

Trade and other receivables do not carry any interest and are stated at their nominal value as reduced by appropriate allowances for estimated irrecoverable amounts.

1.16.2 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash in hand, short term deposits and other short term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to a known amount of cash and are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value.

1.16.3 Trade and other payables

Trade and other payables are not interest bearing and are stated at their nominal value.

1.16.4 Borrowings

There are no interest-bearing loans or overdrafts.

1.16.5 Impairment

The carrying value of the Commission's assets are reviewed at each balance sheet

date to determine whether there is any indication of impairment. If such an indication exists, the assets recoverable amount is estimated. The recoverable amount of an asset is the greater of its net selling price and value in use.

Financial Assets and Financial liabilities which arise from contracts for the purchase or sale of non-financial items are recognised when performance occurs, i.e. when receipt or delivery of the goods or services is made.

1.17 Right of Use Lease Liabilities

Leases are capitalised where the Commission receives the economic benefit of the use of that asset. The associated liability is recognised in the financial statements at the total of the payments over the course of the lease discounted at the Commission's underlying interest rate.

1.18 Operating Leases

Operating lease costs are charged to the operating cost statement in the year during which the costs are incurred.

2. STAFF COSTS

Staff costs for the year amounted to £791,341 (2022-23; £615,406) and were comprised of £587,041 (2022-23; £456,591) in salaries and wages, £56,205 (2022-23; £47,474) in social security costs and £148,095 (2022-23; £111,341) in pension costs. A more detailed breakdown of these costs is provided in the Remuneration Report on page 29.

3. OTHER OPERATING EXPENDITURE

	2024 £	2023 £
Running Costs		
Travel and Subsistence Staff	5,159	1,499
Travel and Subsistence Commission Members	3,849	4,603
Course Fees and Staff Training	7,577	9,320
Auditor General for Wales – annual audit fee	13,703	10,500
Internal Audit Fees	9,948	9,889
Media and Advertising	23,357	27,712
Translation	28,415	49,289
Printing, postage, stationery and HR	13,886	14,535
Telephone and contracts	854	810
Accommodation costs	27,251	22,809
Legal and professional	53,905	75,135
Non-capital computer costs	94,629	204,353
Other	2,470	3,530
Rentals under operating leases	15,657	15,139
Non Cash Item:		
Depreciation	20,678	40,786
Depreciation on Right of Use Assets	67,548	62,454
Total	388,886	552,363

The above costs include £98,763 (2022-23; £185,279) in respect of other operating expenditure expended on behalf of the Boundary Commission for Wales. The decreased cost compared to the previous year was due to a significant decrease in work undertaken for the 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies in Wales following the completion of the review during the reporting period.

4. INCOME

	2024 £	2023 £
DLUHC Boundary Commission Wales	245,143	508,369
Reimbursed seconded staff costs	59,046	40,761
Community Review Costs	108,088	-
IRP Costs	9,721	-
Trade Receivables	-	8,774
Welsh Procurement Card rebate	185	401
	<u>422,183</u>	<u>588,305</u>

Grant-in-Aid is financing income and is credited directly to reserves. During 2023-24 the Commission received £245,143 in respect of funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to meet the cost of maintaining a Boundary Commission for Wales Secretariat in Cardiff (2022-23, £508,369). The decreased costs compared to the previous year were due to a significant decrease in work undertaken for the 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies in Wales leading up to the completion of the review. In addition to this the Commission received a rebate of £185 relating to the usage of Welsh Procurement Cards (2022-23, £401). In addition to this, the commission also received £108,087 from five principal authorities for conducting community reviews of their areas.

5. PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

	Information Technology £	Furniture & Fittings £	Total £
Cost or Valuation			
At 1 April 2023	170,913	83,847	254,760
Additions	8,688	-	8,688
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31 March 2024	<u>179,601</u>	<u>83,847</u>	<u>263,448</u>
Depreciation			
At 1 April 2023	127,470	80,733	208,203
Provided during the year	19,272	1,406	20,678
Eliminated on disposal	-	-	-
At 31 March 2024	<u>146,742</u>	<u>82,139</u>	<u>228,881</u>
Carrying Value at 31 March 2024	32,859	1,708	34,567
Carrying Value at 31 March 2023	43,444	3,114	46,557

	Information Technology £	Furniture & Fittings £	Total £
Cost or Valuation			
At 1 April 2022	158,318	83,609	241,927
Additions	19,459	238	19,697
Disposals	<u>(6,864)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(6,864)</u>
At 31 March 2023	<u><u>170,913</u></u>	<u><u>83,847</u></u>	<u><u>254,760</u></u>
Depreciation			
At 1 April 2022	98,348	75,272	173,620
Provided during the year	35,325	5,461	40,786
Eliminated on disposal	<u>(6,204)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(6,204)</u>
At 31 March 2023	<u><u>127,469</u></u>	<u><u>80,733</u></u>	<u><u>208,202</u></u>
Carrying Value at 31 March 2023	43,444	3,114	46,557
Carrying Value at 31 March 2022	59,970	8,337	68,307

All Assets are owned by the Commission.

6. RIGHT OF USE ASSETS

	Buildings £	Total £
Cost or Valuation		
At 1 April 2023	109,725	109,725
Additions	<u>45,982</u>	<u>45,982</u>
At 31 March 2024	<u><u>155,617</u></u>	<u><u>155,617</u></u>
Depreciation		
At 1 April 2023	(62,454)	(62,454)
Charge for the year	<u>(67,548)</u>	<u>(67,548)</u>
At 31 March 2024	<u><u>(130,002)</u></u>	<u><u>(130,002)</u></u>
Carrying Value at 31 March 2024	25,615	25,615
Carrying Value at 31 March 2023	47,271	47,271

7. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

As the cash requirements of the Commission are met through Grant-in-Aid provided by the Welsh Government, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non-public sector body. The majority of financial instruments relate to contracts to buy non-financial items in line with the Commission's expected purchase and usage requirements and the Commission is therefore exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk. IFRS 9 Financial Instruments is applied, as interpreted and adapted for the public sector. The principal impact of IFRS 9 adoption will be to change the calculation basis for bad debt provisions, changing from an incurred loss basis to a lifetime expected credit loss (ECL) basis. The Commission considered and assessed the new requirements of IFRS 9 and noted that there would be no impact on these accounts.

8. TRADE RECEIVABLES AND OTHER CURRENT ASSETS

	2024 £	2023 £
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Prepayments and accrued income	37,948	26,009
Total	<u>37,948</u>	<u>26,009</u>

9. CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

	2024 £	2023 £
Balance at 1 April	21,868	34,824
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances	26,419	(12,956)
Commercial banks and cash in hand	<u>48,287</u>	21,868
Balance at 31 March	<u>48,287</u>	<u>21,868</u>

10. TRADE PAYABLES AND OTHER CURRENT LIABILITIES

	2024 £	2023 £
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade payables	1,261	2,463
Accruals	52,438	14,411
Holiday pay accrual	22,049	17,172
	<u>75,748</u>	<u>34,046</u>

11. SPECIAL PAYMENTS AND LOSSES

The Commission recorded no losses during 2023-24 (2022-23: losses of £660).

12. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

The Welsh Government is regarded as a related party. During the year, the Commission had material transactions with the Welsh Government amounting to £68,952 in respect of reclaimed salary costs for staff on outward secondment to Welsh Government and work undertaken for the Independent Remuneration Panel (2022-23, £40,761 material transactions). Grant-in-Aid received during the year amounted to £750,000 (2022-23, £597,933). At the end of the reporting period there was no outstanding balance with Welsh Government (2022-23: no outstanding balances).

The Secretariat of the Commission also acts as Secretariat to the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales (BCW). The BCW is a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is regarded as a related party. During the year, the Commission has had no material transactions with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022-23, no material transactions). During 2023-24 the Commission received £245,143 funding from the

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022-23, £508,369). At the end of the reporting period there were no outstanding balances with Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022-23: no outstanding balances).

The Commission has not undertaken any transactions with entities in which members and key managerial staff hold an interest.

13. ANALYSIS OF NET EXPENDITURE BY SEGMENT

The Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure reflects the segments that the operating results of the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales are reported to the Commission. The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales does not have separately identified segments and reports financial information to its Board as disclosed in Notes 2, 3 and 4.

14. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES AND ASSETS

There were no contingent liabilities or assets at the end of 2023-24 (2022-23: No contingent liabilities).

15. PROVISIONS FOR LIABILITIES AND CHARGES

	Accommodation move £	Total £
Balance at 1 April 2023	6,000	6,000
Provided in Year	-	-
Provisions not required written back	-	-
Provisions utilised in the year	6,000	6,000
Balance at 31 March 2024	-	-

Discounting is applied where material. As only an estimated figure for dilapidations can be given at this time no discounting has been applied.

Provisions are made for the removal and relocation of a PSBA link to return the office accommodation back to its original condition, at the end of the lease term. This obligations may vary as a result of future information and events which may result in changes to the amounts which have been included, on the basis of the best estimate, at the end of the reporting period.

16. EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING PERIOD

The Accounting Officer authorised these financial statements for issue on 23 September 2024. There were no significant post balance sheet events after the reporting period to disclose, which affect 2023-24. At the date of signing these accounts the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Act 2024 received royal assent which changed the name of the Commission to The Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru. Moving forward into 2024-25 onwards the Commission will take on responsibility for the functions of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, the establishment of the Electoral Management Board for Wales and the duty to review of Senedd constituencies in 2024-25.