



Llywodraeth Cymru
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Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC)

Information on the role and functions of the Democracy and
Boundary Commission Cymru.

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Introduction

The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales has been renamed to the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru.

The Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru will be responsible for a wider range of functions than the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales and the change of name reflects this expanded role.

It has been renamed and repurposed through the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Act 2024. This reflects the broader role the Commission will have as a result of changes in legislation (included in both the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Act 2024 and the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act 2024).

Additional functions

The Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Act 2024

(<https://www.gov.walesnull>) expanded the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru functions to include responsibility for undertaking Senedd constituency boundary reviews ahead of the 2026 and 2030 Senedd elections, and on a regular basis thereafter.

The Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act 2024 expands the functions of the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru to include:

- the creation and maintenance of an Electoral Management Board for devolved elections
- responsibility for determining the remuneration framework for members of the principal councils, town and community councillors, fire and rescue

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authorities, national park authorities and corporate joint committees across Wales

It also makes a number of changes to the way the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru will carry out its functions including changing the period within which community and electoral reviews must be carried out, changes to the governance arrangements and the levels of openness and transparency within the arrangements.

Membership

The Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru is made up of a Chair, a Deputy Chair and up to a maximum of 7 members.

While this is an increase of 4 members in comparison to the number of members which were on the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru, it is important to take into account the full set of changes. In April 2025 the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru will become responsible for determining the remuneration for members of the local government family. This function is currently undertaken by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (the Panel).

The Panel currently consists of a Chair, a Deputy Chair and up to 4 members. When taken together the membership of the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru and the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales totalled 11 members. Once the IRPW is dissolved there will be an overall decrease in the number of members supporting the full range of functions the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru have responsibility for.

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (the Panel) is responsible for determining the level of payments to elected members of councils, corporate joint committees, national park authorities and fire and rescue authorities in Wales.

The Panel was established in 2008 and is independent of central and local government.

The Panel will be dissolved with effect from 1st April 2025, when its functions will transfer to the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru. It will result in more streamlined working with local authorities and provide greater transparency on remuneration.

As the Panel approached its 10 year anniversary, the then Minister for Housing and Local Government commissioned an independent review. The review was undertaken between April and June 2021. It considered whether the Panel continued to represent value for money and if any changes may be required to their functions and operations in light of experience since its inception.

The final report highlighted a number of areas where improvements could be made and included a number of recommendations for change.

The transfer of the remuneration function

The work of both the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales and the Panel is rooted in the same principal, which is that at the heart of democracy, every person is equal and should have an equal opportunity to effect change through the democratic system and be supported and represented

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within that system. This is fundamental to the political and societal structures within Wales.

Having considered the full range of independent public bodies in Wales, the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales was the body which is the best fit as it has a similar agenda to that of the Panel.

To determine the appropriate arrangements and levels of remuneration for elected members, the Panel must gather evidence to understand the workload of elected members and how the nature of the workload changes depending on a range of factors. This includes the demographics of the electorate in a council area, the socio-economic circumstances of the wards and the extent to which the population is transient.

The Commission sets the ratio of elected members to electors. It does this by attempting to ensure the ratio of elected members to electors is as near the same for all areas within a county/county borough area.

The functions of the Panel will be transferred to the Commission, with exception of the Panel remit on Chief Executive pay. Currently, the Panel can make recommendations in respect of any proposal to change the salary of the chief executive of a county or county borough council.

Councils are democratically elected bodies, it is their democratic responsibility in terms of establishing but also being accountable for chief executive pay. This means that we are restoring this to the democratic responsibility of the local councils.

This will not result in a reduction in the quality of the service. In many ways it will benefit from the broader focus of the Commission and provide a more holistic view of the interaction between elected member roles, boundary issues and remuneration.

The Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru will have the ability to make determinations for resettlement payments in respect of Councillors. However, the new body will be determining this payment in a framework that will be designed by Welsh Ministers.

Senedd member remuneration

It was asked if the functions of the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru should include remuneration for Senedd Members and why the review did not include the Senedd Remuneration Board. The 10 year review, which formed part of the rationale for change was specific to the Panel, which looks at the remuneration of local government elected members only.

One body responsible for the pay to Councillors and Senedd Members

This is a matter which was raised during the passage of the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Act and the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act. It was recognised that this is a matter for the Senedd, and that further work would be required to identify whether there is a need to change the current arrangements for determining Senedd members remuneration. Any further work would inform future arrangements.

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