

## **REVIEW OF COMMUNITY ARRANGEMENTS**

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

The Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 governs community reviews. Under this Act, the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (the Commission) has a general duty to monitor arrangements for local government arrangements across Wales. Each principal council is responsible for monitoring the communities within its area and, when necessary, reviewing their electoral arrangements to determine if changes are needed.

These changes are implemented through community boundary reviews and community electoral reviews. A community boundary review conducted by the principal council under Section 25 of the Act is enacted by an Order from the Commission. Conversely, a community electoral review conducted under Section 31 of the Act is enacted by an Order from the principal council.

Principal councils have a duty under the terms of the Act to publish a report and submit the report to the Commission on their community arrangements every ten years. Flintshire's last review was published in 2014 and implemented for the 2017 local elections.

The statutory process for conducting any community review is largely consistent across both types of reviews. The primary differences lie in the outcome of the review and its implementation. While the Council is authorised to issue orders to implement changes to electoral arrangements within communities, any changes to community boundaries must be recommended to the Commission, which serves as the implementing authority.

As there are no scheduled local elections until May 2027, this is a good opportunity to conduct the reviews, with the aim of introducing any changes in time for those elections.

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

## **2.0 Background Information**

### **What is a Community?**

For the purposes of this review, a 'community' is a local government unit that lies below county council or county borough level (the 'principal council'). Community areas cover the whole of Wales. The Flintshire area is divided into 34 communities, with an elected community or town council serving each. In this context the legal status of the councils is the same whatever it is called, i.e. they are all classed as 'community councils'. Communities in turn can be divided into wards for electoral purposes but this is not inevitable, and not all communities in Flintshire are divided into wards.

### **What is the Role of the Council?**

As a principal council Flintshire County Council has a statutory duty, under the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 to monitor the communities within the county, and the electoral arrangements of those communities. It must also carry out 'community reviews' when the Act requires, or when it considers appropriate. In carrying out these duties the Council must still seek to ensure effective and convenient local government.

## What is a Community Review?

There are two different types of community review that may be carried out by principal councils, which are subject to different sections of the Act

### a) Review of community boundaries (under section 25 of the Act)

A review of community boundaries should ensure that communities continue to reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government. For example, over time communities may expand with new housing developments. This can lead to boundaries becoming anomalous, for example if new housing is built across boundaries resulting in confusion over which community a housing estate falls into. A community review offers an opportunity to the principal council to put in place strong, clearly defined boundaries tied to ground features, and to remove any anomalous boundaries that exist. Community boundary changes may involve altering the boundary of an existing community, dissolving an existing community, or creating a new community. The Council's recommendations are submitted to the Commission, which issues the order to implement the changes.

### b) Review of the electoral arrangements (under section 31 of the Act)

This process involves examining the electoral arrangements within a specific community, which includes evaluating the wards and the number of councillors. During such a review, the Council may consider the following aspects:

- The number of council members representing the community.
- The division into wards (if applicable) for the election of councillors.
- The number and boundaries of any wards.
- The number of councillors to be elected for each ward.
- The name of each ward.

To undertake this type of review the Council needs to consider some guiding principles around the size of Community Councils.

Good practice suggests that the minimum number of Councillors for any Town or Community should be no less than 7 and no more than 25. In Flintshire, no Town or Community Council area exceeds a projected electorate of more than 13,300 electors. The suggested maximum allocation is no more than 20. To a certain extent each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities. That said, historically many Town and Community Councils have found difficulty in attracting sufficient candidates to stand for election. This has led to uncontested elections and/or a need to co-opt members to fill vacancies.

The table below sets out the Town/Community Council size ratio of councillors to electors to be used as a flexible guide:

<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Suggested Councillor Allocation</b>	<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Suggested Councillor Allocation</b>
0 -299	7	2000 – 3999	13
300 – 499	8	4000 – 5999	14
500 – 749	9	6000 – 8999	15
750 – 999	10	9000 – 11,999	16
1000 – 1499	11	12,000 +	17 - 20
1500 – 1999	12		Figure1.

The principal council is itself entitled to implement intended changes that are described in its final report in a section 31 electoral arrangements review.

### **3.0 Aim of the Review**

The aim is to undertake a community review as part of Flintshire County Council's statutory duty and will be guided by Sections 25 and 31 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013.

The aim of a review of community boundaries under Section 25 should ensure that communities continue to reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government.

If changes to community boundaries are recommended following the review under Section 25, then additional modifications that result from these boundary changes can be suggested as part of Section 31. These additional modifications include:

- **Community council changes:** This could involve dissolving an existing community council, creating a new one, or adding or removing communities from a shared community council.
- **Associated changes to electoral arrangements:** This pertains to adjustments in the electoral setup of the communities under review or the principal area. For a community, this means changes in the number of community council members and any ward divisions for elections. For the principal area, it involves similar adjustments at the principal council level.

The aim of the review is to ensure that community boundaries accurately represent the identities and interests of the communities within the Council's jurisdiction. Additionally, it prioritises making these boundaries as conducive as possible to efficient and convenient local government.

Changes to community boundaries often lead to shifts in the populations of the affected areas. For instance, if a new housing development results in an area being incorporated into a new community due to its location or road connections, that area will be removed from its previous community. Consequently, both the expanded and reduced communities may experience changes to their community council and/or electoral arrangements, especially if the boundary change alters the number of local government electors in each community.

It is not intended to undertake a general review of the boundaries of each community but rather to review the boundaries of specific communities where a possible reason for change has been highlighted. As part of the Council's duty to monitor its communities we asked community councils in 2023 and May 2025 if there were any issues they would like to bring to our attention in relation to the current boundaries. There were limited issues that were brought to our attention at the time, but as part of initial consultation we will consider areas that were raised.

### **4.0 What will be considered under the Review?**

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

The review will ensure that effective and convenient local government is best achieved through community arrangements that are internally coherent. This means that communities should have reasonable internal road links and reflect patterns of settlement and communication. The goal is to ensure that all electors can participate in the community's affairs and activities without needing to travel through a neighbouring community. In conducting a community boundaries review, the Council will consider the Council size compared to the overall size of the wards/communities in its area. See figure 1.

The Act does outline specific matters that must be considered when recommending changes to the electoral arrangements of a community.

1. The review must determine whether the community should be divided into wards for community council elections. In this context, the Commission must assess if the number or distribution of local government electors makes a single election of community councillors impractical or inconvenient. Additionally, it must consider whether any specific area of the community should have separate representation on the community council.
2. If it is decided against dividing the community council into wards, it must determine the appropriate number of councillors for the community. In doing so, the review will be required to consider the "number and distribution" of local government electors within the community, as well as any anticipated changes in these figures over the next ten years.
3. If the review decides to divide a community into wards, it must establish the ward boundaries and determine the number of community councillors for each ward. In making these decisions, the importance of setting easily identifiable boundaries, the potential disruption of local ties by specific ward boundaries, and any anticipated changes in the number or distribution of local government electors within the community over the next ten years must be considered.
4. When considering these matters, any discrepancy between the number of registered electors and the population in the community that is eligible to vote must also be taken into account.

Considering the relevant factors outlined in the 2013 Act, any proposals will evaluate the current number of local government electors in the area under review, official population estimates for the area, and projections of the electorate.

## **5.0 Who will undertake the review?**

Under Sections 25 and 31 of The Act, the principal council, will undertake the review, in accordance with the guidelines defined within The Act. On completion of the review, Flintshire will submit its final report to the Commission, mandatory consultees, Ordnance Survey and Welsh Ministers.

## **6.0 Review process**

The statutory process that a principal council must adhere to when conducting a community review is, in large part, the same for both section 25 boundaries review and section 31 electoral review. The relevant legal rules for the two types of review differ only in relation to the outcome, and the implementation of the outcome, of the review. Section 35 of the Act requires that a principal council carrying out a community review must take four essential steps:

- Initial publicity
- Initial investigation and consultation
- Draft proposals (and consultation on those proposals)
- Final recommendations

### Stage 1

Data and information gathering regarding electorate statistics, projected electorate forecasts, ward boundary information/maps.

### Stage 2

The Council will ask all interested parties to consider the current community boundaries and submit their views on any changes which may be appropriate or necessary in order to create communities that provide for effective and convenient local government.

### Stage 3

The Council will consider all submissions received during the first stage and produce a draft proposals report containing any proposals for change to the existing community boundaries.

### Stage 4

Consultation will then commence on the draft proposals with all stakeholders listed below.

### Stage 5

All views and representations will be included in a Final report which will be presented to Full Council.

### Stage 6

All final decisions and agreements from Full Council will be published.

### Stage 7

The Order of the Section 31 review will be made 6 weeks after publication of the final report. Recommendations of the Section 25 review will be submitted to the Commission.

## **7.0 Participating in the review**

Comments and views may be submitted to Flintshire at two stages of the review: during the initial investigation stage and when it consults on its draft proposals. Consideration will be given to all comments and views submitted by 11:59 pm on the specified deadline. Whilst personal details of individual public participants will not be disclosed, submissions from representative bodies and elected officials will be included in reports.

Encouragement is given to town and community councils, elected representatives, interested parties, and the general public to participate in the review process by submitting representations and suggestions. Submissions based on relevant evidence and facts are valued.

Proposals from both supporters and opponents are invited to submit their views, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of local opinions. Those who object to any proposals are also encouraged to provide alternative suggestions, supported by evidence.

It is emphasised that proposals will be solely focused on community arrangements and will not address Senedd or Parliamentary constituencies, school catchment areas, or services provided by the principal council. Additionally, no consideration will be given to any local political implications of its proposals and recommendations, such as the potential impact on individual councillors or political parties.

## 8.0 Community and community ward names

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

## 9.0 Timetable

Stage	What Happens	Timescales	Date
Commencement	Terms of Reference agreed at full Council		2 July 2025
Preliminary stage: Initial publicity and first consultation	Publish Terms of Reference and start initial publicity	12 weeks	7 July – 30 September 2025
<b>Public consultation ends</b>			<b>30 September 2025</b>
Representations considered and draft proposals prepared	Consideration of submissions received – Draft recommendations are prepared	8 weeks	September / October / November 2025
Approval of draft Proposals	Draft Proposals to be considered by Council and approved for further consultation		20 November 2025
Second consultation	Publish the report in accordance with the requirements of the Act Invite comments from the compulsory consultees and other relevant stakeholders	7 weeks	December 2025 / January 2026
<b>Second public consultation ends</b>			<b>16 January 2026</b>
Final report presented to full Council	Representations considered and included in final report. Council decides final proposals		2 March 2026
Final proposals published	Publication of the Final Report (1) Make the Order for the Section 31 review (6 weeks after publication of the Final Report) (2) Submit the recommendations of the Section 25 Review to the Commission		April and May 2026
<b>Orders come into effect</b>	<b>Next Local Government Elections</b>		<b>May 2027</b>

## 10.0 Supporting Information

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