

The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England

LGBCE (16)12th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 20 December 2016, at 11:30am, in Altitude Belgravia,
29th Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP

Commissioners Present

Professor Colin Mellors (Chair)
Sir Tony Redmond (Deputy Chair)
Dr Peter Knight CBE
Alison Lowton
Peter Maddison QPM

LGBCE Officers Present:

Jolyon Jackson CBE	Chief Executive
Lynn Ingram	Director of Finance
Marcus Bowell	Director of Strategy & Communications
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Lucy Dunkeyson	Review Manager
Laura Taylor	Review Officer (item6)
Dan Carlsson-Hyslop	Review Officer (item 5)
Emily Starkie	Review Officer (items 7,10)
Alex Hinds	Review Officer (item 9)
Carissa Edwards	Office Manager (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations made.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 15 November 2016

Amendments were made to Audit and Risk Committee Chair's Oral Report item and then were signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

1. Operational Report - LGBCE (16)134

The Chief Executive presented the Operational Report for December 2016 and the Commission noted its content.

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead - The Chair and Chief Executive attended a meeting in December and the Commission agreed to add this to the programme.

Torbay – subsequent to its inclusion in the programme, it had been identified that some of the figures shown in report had been transposed. However, one ward has a 29.4 per cent variance (only marginally below the intervention threshold) and, having been alerted to the error, the Council had indicated its desire to go ahead with the review. All other reviews have been checked and the inaccuracy only applied to this review.

The Commission has received a request for a review from Warwick District Council.

The Dartford meeting was scheduled for 16 January 2017, not 16 December 2016 as indicated in the report.

Mid Suffolk and Babergh have requested a delay to their review while they finalise the ongoing review of their governance arrangements. The Commission is currently scheduled to decide on council size at its February meeting. The proposed new timetable would delay this by two months to April 2017. The modification would not affect the financial year in which the review would be completed and the Commission agreed to the new schedule.

It was noted that the Croydon review would be delayed to February to allow for some clarifications.

Marcus Bowell indicated that, whilst we are currently two reviews behind schedule, these will be completed by the time of the meeting with the Speaker's Committee.

2. Hertsmere Council Size LGBCE (16)135

It had been agreed to review Hertsmere Borough Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 33.3 percent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 39 members.

Following receipt of information about future governance and representational arrangements, it was recommended by LGBCE officers that there was sufficient evidence to support that the council size remain at 39 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 39 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 39 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

3. Tewkesbury Council Size LGBCE (16)136

It had been agreed to review Tewkesbury Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 32 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 38 members.

Following receipt of information about future governance and representational arrangements, it was recommended by LGBCE officers that there was sufficient evidence to support that the council size remain at 38 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 38 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 38 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

4. Ashford Related Alteration - LGBCE (16)137

The Commission considered the content of the Ashford Related Alterations paper. It was minded to agree to the related alterations as, without these related alterations, the creation of parish wards with either few or no electors would be unavoidable.

As well as supporting this recommendation, the Commission agreed to postpone consideration of Draft Recommendations for Ashford Borough Council to allow the Council sufficient time to liaise with the County Council to request related alterations to electoral divisions in the area of Kingsnorth. As the Commission is conducting an electoral review of Ashford Borough Council there is no requirement for related alterations to the borough wards.

Agreed

The Commission agreed to the making of an Order implementing the related alteration.

- i. Agree to the make related alterations to the electoral arrangements of Kent County Council.
- ii. Make an electoral changes order coming into effect for the purposes of proceedings preliminary or relating to the election of borough and county councillors on the day after the Order is made. The Order should come into effect for all other purposes for the election of county councillors, on the ordinary day of election in 2017.

5. Hull City Council Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (16)139

The review of Hull City Council had commenced on 9 August 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 17 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with one ward being over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on 9 August 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 57 and the Draft Recommendations being considered had been prepared on the basis of such a council size.

In preparing the draft scheme, the team had taken into consideration both the submissions it had received and the statutory criteria. Unusually, and reflecting the strong physical barrier caused by the River Hull, officers were recommending moving away from a wholly three-member pattern in this instance in two areas of the city. The Draft Recommendations proposed a mixed pattern of 17 three-member wards, and 3 two-member wards in total, none of which cross the River Hull.

The Commission considered the recommendations in detail informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the advice of officers and the submissions received.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Hull City Council as presented.

6. Surrey Heath Borough Council Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (16)140

The review of Surrey Heath Borough Council had commenced on 26 July 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 25 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with one ward, St. Michaels, having over 23 per cent more electors than average.

At its meeting on 19 July 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 34. However, when drawing up a pattern of wards, it was considered that a size of 35 would provide for a better allocation of councillors and the Draft Recommendations being considered had been prepared on the basis of such a council size.

In preparing the draft scheme, the team had taken into consideration both the submissions it had received and the statutory criteria. The Draft Recommendations proposed a pattern of seven three-councillor wards and seven two-councillor wards in total.

The Commission considered the recommendations in detail informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the advice of officers and the submissions received.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations, subject to a fuller description in the report of the strong evidence in relation to the Bisley and West End areas to explain both the precise warding patterns and the 14 per cent variance being proposed.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Surrey Heath Borough Council as modified above.

7. Torridge District Council Final Recommendations – LGBCE (16)141

The review of Torridge District Council had commenced on 19 April 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 39 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with one ward, Westward Ho!, having 27 per cent more electors than average.

At its meeting on 19 April 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 36 and had subsequently, 9 August 2016, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 19 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

It was noted that the Commission had not received any schemes from the Council during the initial warding pattern consultation. Accordingly, the draft recommendations had been drawn up by LGBCE officers and were largely based on existing wards, parishes, and the need to balance our statutory criteria. They recommended a mixed pattern of three single-member, nine two-member, and five three-member wards.

Following the publication of Draft Recommendations, the Council had only provided a submission with little or no evidence to support their scheme which also included two four-councillor wards, which the Commission could not consider as they did not provide for effective and convenient local government.

The Commission was disappointed that the Council had not taken the opportunity to be more involved in the review.

Taking all of the submissions into account, it had been judged that there was insufficient evidence to change the Draft Recommendations, and therefore, they were proposed as the Final Recommendations for Torridge District Council.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of five three-councillor wards, ten two-councillor wards, and one single-councillor ward in total.

The Commission considered the Final Recommendations in detail, informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the lack of submissions/evidenced schemes received following publication of the Draft Recommendations. It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Torridge as presented.

8. Teignbridge District Council Final Recommendations – LGBCE (16)142

The review of Teignbridge District Council had commenced on 19 April 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 28 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 9 August 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 46. However, when drawing up a pattern of wards, it was considered that a size of 47 would provide for a better allocation of councillors between the urban and rural areas. The Commission subsequently, on 9 August 2016, agreed Draft Recommendations based on a council size of 47.

Following publication, 32 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

The Teignbridge District Council submitted a neutral submission that neither supported nor opposed the draft recommendations. It was also noted that the Council also had not made a submission to the previous round of consultations. The Commission was disappointed that the Council had not taken the opportunity to be more involved in the review.

Taking all of the submissions into account, it had been judged that there was insufficient evidence to change the Draft Recommendations, and therefore, they were proposed as the Final Recommendations for Teignbridge District Council.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of five three-councillor wards, thirteen two-councillor wards, and six one-councillor wards in total.

The Commission considered the Final Recommendations in detail, informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the submissions received following publication of the Draft Recommendations.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Teignbridge District Council as presented.

9. Council of the Isles of Scilly Final Recommendations- LGBCE (16)143

The review of Council of the Isles of Scilly had commenced on 20 September 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, all of the wards had variances greater than 10 per cent. Two wards, Bryher and St. Agnes have a variance of -54 percent and -57 per cent respectively. The Council had also requested the review.

At its meeting on 20 September 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 16 and had agreed Draft Recommendations based on this figure.

Following publication, 30 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

In doing so, the Commission noted that it was able to deviate from Guidance to create the 12-member ward of St Mary's given the exceptional geographical nature of the authority

Taking all of the submissions into account, it had been judged that there was insufficient evidence to change the Draft Recommendations and, therefore, they were proposed as the Final Recommendations for Council of the Isles of Scilly.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of four single-member wards, and one twelve-member ward in total, all reflecting the exceptional geography of the authority..

The Commission considered the Final Recommendations in detail, informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the submissions received following publication of the Draft Recommendations.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented subject to amplification in some areas of the report to highlight the basis of its decisions.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Council for the Isles of Scilly as modified according to the discussion taken by the Commission.

10. Cornwall Council Update – LGBCE (16)144

The Commission was provided with a further update as requested.

Cornwall Council had written to Commission indicating that they are looking at council sizes of 85, 96, and 107 members and would be holding a series of workshops to explore these options. Separately, a submission had been received from the Conservative Group, proposing a size of between 70 and 90.

The Commission considered the material and thanked the team for the update.

As part of the material submitted, the Council indicated that they would welcome dialogue with the Commission before final submission in March and the Commission welcomed this suggestion. As part of it, the Lead Commissioner and the review team would offer to meet the Council in late January.

Agreed

A further meeting with the Council would be arranged.

11. Update on Southampton University Warding Pattern Tool – LGBCE(16) 145

The working group has concluded that, whilst interesting, the Commission should not pursue the AZ tool on the basis that the tool does not adequately address the Commission's requirements. Instead, it will continue to alternatives to the AZ Tool to ascertain whether it is possible to develop a tool that will produce helpful warding patterns for staff to utilise at the start of a review.

One suggestion should be to look at work being undertaken by a statistical researcher at the House of Commons Library who has produced a tool that allows users to create parliamentary constituencies from the raw data provided by the Boundary Commission of England. (The website can be found here for reference - <http://constituencyboundaries.uk/>)

12. Chair's Report (oral)

There had been a meeting of the advisory appointment panel for new commissioner appointments. There had been a strong field of applications and interviews were now likely to take place in February. be held in late January 2017.

A meeting had been held with Rotherham group leaders as agreed at November's Commission Meeting. Council size would be considered at February's Commission meeting.

13. Chief Executive's Report (Oral)

The Chief Executive advised that from January 2017, future Commission Meetings will start with lunch at 12:30pm, Pre-Meeting will begin at 13:00, and the Commission meeting itself will begin at 13:15 on those days when there are no other workshops or meetings being held.

14. Finance Director's Report (Oral)

Q3 monitoring will be submitted at the January Commission meeting. A Statement Of Account is being prepared for NAO interim audit in February.

Lynn Ingram notified the Commission of our new internal auditors. Four candidates had been interviewed and Gateway chosen as new internal auditors 1 April. However, they will attend the February Audit Committee to propose draft plans for the next few years.

15. Chair of Audit Committee: Record of Signing of Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting of 15 November 2016.

The Commission agreed to remove this item from the agenda going forward. Henceforth, whilst the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee will, as now, present a brief oral report at the following Commission meeting, minutes will be presented to Commission only after A & RC have formally approved them.

16. Corporate Governance Framework: For Commissioner Approval

The Finance Director pointed out that paragraph 3.2 which refers to order signing to has been moved to the Chief Executive section of the paper.

The FD also pointed out that paragraph 3.8 refers only to the Finance Director post. This has been changed to all director-level posts and the Chief Executive will consult the Commission before appointment at this level.

The Commission agreed to change paragraph 2.1 to “Together, the Commissioners ensure that the Commission discharges its functions as set out in the Act and associated legislation.”

The Finance Director asked that the Commission approve the Framework based on these changes. This was agreed.

17. Future Business – LGBCE (16)148

No additional comments.

AOB

There were no other items.

Close of Business 14:05

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Kelly", with a horizontal line underneath.