

LGBCE (17)10 Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 17th October 2017 12.30pm, on 6th Floor,
Millbank Tower, Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP

Commissioners Present

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

LGBCE Officers Present:

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| Jolyon Jackson CBE | Chief Executive |
| Lynn Ingram | Director of Finance & Resources |
| Marcus Bowell | Director of Strategy & Communications |
| Alison Evison | Review & Programme Manager |
| Richard Buck | Review Manager |
| Jo Porter | Review Manager |
| Lucy Dunkeyson | Review Manager |
| Paul Kingsley | Review Officer (item 2) |
| Dan Carlsson-Hyslop | Review Officer (item 3) |
| David Owen | Review Officer (item 4) |
| Alex Hinds | Review Officer (item 5) |
| David Owen | Review Officer (item 6) |
| Laura Taylor | Review Officer (item 7) |
| Angela Hendry | Office Manager & HR Lead (minutes) |

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

The Commission formally welcomed Johanna Porter back from maternity leave.

Declarations of interest

The Chair declared an interest in item 5 (Scarborough Draft Recommendations) and took no part in the discussions about that item.

Alison Lowton declared an interest in item 6 (Rotherham Final Recommendations) and took no part in the discussions about that item.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 19th September 2017

The minutes were agreed as a correct record, and were signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Actions from the previous Commission meeting

The Chief Executive gave an update on the progress against actions that had been identified from previous Commission meetings.

- Good example of council size submissions to be available on the LGBCE website – ongoing
- Average elector to councillor ratio for equivalent types of authorities be included on the cover report for all council size papers – Complete
- Schedule of periodic review of whether policies are working – Complete
- EIA of whole review process – Alison Lowton to update under item 13.

1. Operational Report - LGBCE (17)114

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

The Commission noted that further information is being requested from the Mayor and Labour Group on Copeland council size which will delay the review programme by one month. These changes are reflected in the six-month review activity appendix.

Rugby (Warwickshire) - further discussions taking place with the Leader and hoping to have clarity in the coming week.

Bassetlaw (Nottinghamshire) - do not wish to go ahead with a requested review.

Thanet (Kent) – had a full council meeting and has requested a review. The Commission agreed to include it in its programme for 2019 elections.

Rochdale – nothing further to update.

The Chief Executive updated on possible mergers and unitaries.

- East Suffolk currently being considered by the Secretary of State.
- West Suffolk trying to align timelines with East Suffolk, awaiting further update.
- Taunton Deane and West Somerset with SofS
- Dorset – With SofS

- Buckinghamshire no further update

The Commission ratified the proposal in the report to appoint Alison Lowton and Peter Maddison as Lead Commissioners for the majority of reviews pending the appointment of new Commissioners. Sir Tony Redmond is also being allocated some reviews.

The Chief Executive updated on forthcoming meetings with DCLG and London Councils Chief Executives.

2. King's Lynn & West Norfolk Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (17)115

The review of King's Lynn & West Norfolk had commenced on 20 June 2017. According to the latest available electoral figures, one ward, Brancaster, had a variance of over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on 20 June 2017, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 54.

In preparing the draft recommendation, the team had taken into consideration the submissions it had received in relation to the statutory criteria. The Draft Recommendations proposed a pattern of two three-, 16 two-, and 17 single-member 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.

As a result of this further consideration and, on the basis of the evidence, the Commission agreed to move away from its original opinion on council size and, instead, agreed a council size of 55 as this provided for a better pattern of boundaries across the local authority.

The Commission agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough as presented.

3. Nottingham Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (17)116

The review of Nottingham had commenced in May 2017. According to the latest available electoral figures, 20 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with one ward, Wollaton East & Lenton Abbey, being over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on 16 May 2017, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 55 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 14 three-, 4 two-, and 5 single-member 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 as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Nottingham as presented.

4. Richmondshire Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (17)117

The review of Richmondshire District Council had commenced on 16 May 2017. According to the latest available electoral figures, 25 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent. One ward, Hornby Castle had a variance of 29 per cent.

At its meeting on 16 May 2017, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 24 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 1 three-, 5 two-, and 11 single-member 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 as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Richmondshire District Council as presented.

5. Scarborough Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (17)118

The Deputy Chair, Sir Tony Redmond, chaired this item.

The review of Scarborough Borough Council had commenced on 16 May 2017. According to the latest available electoral figures, 32 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with 4 per cent of wards being over 20 per cent. One ward, Hertford, has a variance of 22 per cent.

At its meeting on 16 May 2017, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 45.

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

As a result of this further consideration and, on the basis of the evidence, the Commission agreed to move away from its original opinion on council size and, instead, agreed a council size of 46. This provided for better electoral equality and a more coherent warding pattern particularly in Scarborough town.

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 8 three-, 10 two-, and 2 single-member wards in total.

The Commission agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Scarborough Borough Council as presented.

6. Rotherham Final Recommendations – LGBCE (17)119

The review of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council had commenced on 21 February 2017. According to the latest available electoral figures, one ward had a variance greater than 10 per cent with Wath ward being over 12 per cent.

At its meeting on 21 February 2017, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 59 and had subsequently, on 20 June 2017, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 33 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all of the submissions into account, for the reasons highlighted in the team's report, it was felt that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations in some aspects and these changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission for consideration.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 9 three and 16 two member 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 Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council as presented.

7. Tewkesbury Final Recommendations – LGBCE (17)120

The review of Tewkesbury Borough Council had commenced on 20 December 2016. According to the December 2015 electoral figures, 32 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent. However, the most current figures show the Council to have 27 per cent of wards with a variance of greater than 10 per cent. One ward Badgeworth has a variance of 25 per cent.

At its meeting on 20 December 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 38 and had subsequently, on 20 June 2017, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 14 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all of the submissions into account, for the reasons highlighted in the team's report, it was felt that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations in some aspects and these changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission for consideration.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 3 three-, 12 two-, and 5 single-member 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 for Tewkesbury Borough Council as presented.

8. Manchester – Lessons Learned – LGBCE (17)121

The Commission thanked Peter Maddison for his thorough review of the stage 3 complaint from resident groups in Manchester.

Marcus Bowell advised the Commission that the information, recommendations and activities contained within the Commission paper were based largely on the recommendations of the review report and informed the Commission's ongoing process review.

Observations reflected three broad themes:

- Targeting people more effectively
- Getting messaging clearer
- Monitoring dissemination and coverage

Marcus Bowell updated the Commission on the actions taken so far and the activities the team are currently working on to bring about improvements in the future.

There was a query about the possibility of using socio-economic data to check consultation materials are reaching the organisations who represent minority groupings. It was noted that the messages across publicity material and other documents needs to be simple and consistent. It was noted that the Commission needs to be mindful to achieve appropriate ensure there is a good balance between electronic and hard copy material when targeting groups.

The Commission noted the possibility of obtaining third-party assurance around the consultation process and this would be considered further..

There was a discussion about how the Commission might best ensure the cascading of information by and to groups, especially those with a presence in communities.

9. Roles of Commissioners and Staff – update – LGBCE (17)122

The Commission noted the report and considered how far the intended framework was being implemented consistently. It was suggested that there might still be an issue about checklist of dates and this would be followed up..

The Commissioners noted that information is a lot more consistent than previously.

The matter would be reviewed again in 3 months when it would include the fuller framework that had been initially considered and approved..

10. Chair's Report

On behalf of the Commission and staff, the Chair thanked Peter Knight for his exceptional contributions whilst a member of the Commission and for his support as Commissioner. Dr Knight's term was due to end before the next Commission meeting.

Peter Knight noted the support of the Commission staff, including during the tours for reviews.

11. Chief Executive's Report

The Commission noted the report on the Status of the Commission and agreed the recommendations as set out in the report. The position would be reviewed at the December meeting.

12. Director of Finance and Resources Report

The Commission noted the KPIs and Financial Projections joint report.

Quarter 2 Performance Indicators

The Director of Finance and Resources updated on the KPIs as set out in the report.

It was noted that work has been done to find out more information around the negative responses. The Commission expressed its thanks to Alex Trudge for his work on the topic..

In terms of budget, there is a current unallocated budget of £46k plus a further underspend against allocated budget of £50k. There are some uncertainties this year around a possible move so the Commission agreed that it was prudent to retain this pending relocation plans. The delayed appointment of new commissioners has impacted on planned spend. There is a training plan in place and it was noted that there will be a full induction for new Commissioners once appointed.

The Commission expressed thanks to all the staff who had put together this amalgamated report.

FOI Publication Scheme Update

The Director of Finance and Resources updated new publication scheme setting out when the team would be publishing various packs and minutes on the website towards our transparency agenda.

13. Audit & Risk

Alison Lowton reported on discussions from the Audit & Risk Committee meeting which took place in the morning.

- New terms of reference were agreed
- Reviewed the revised risk register
- Had first report from new Internal Audit on H&S, IT health security and risk management. H&S was only limited insurance based on red flags at the time of the audit but these red flags have now been dealt with.
- IT health check and risk management were satisfactory, however there was an issue of security around users using personal email accounts.
- The Director of Finance and Resources has developed a process on how we review if policies are working.
- Considered a revised Health & Safety policy
- Looked at the Equality impact assessments on reviews.
- Considered reports on business activities including a report with a breakdown on review costs and also a report on new KPIs

14. Relocation Steering Group meeting

The Commission noted the minutes from the Steering group. The minutes would be clarified with regard to views about the potential for staying in Millbank Tower should this become a possibility.

The Chief Executive updated on progress since the Steering Group meeting. The Government Property Agency has approached us regarding office space in Windsor House (Victoria). A meeting had been scheduled with the Cabinet Office unit responsible for public bodies relocation and, once this meeting has taken place, we will be in a better position to update on possible courses of action. The Chief Executive will report back to the Chair and Deputy Chair following that meeting.

It was noted that the Commission has specific requirements, including adequate meeting facilities.

13. Future Business – LGBCE (17)126

The Commission noted the Future Business paper.

14. AOB

During the meeting there had been a discussion about how preferences for largely single member patterns, though falling short of a formal request for a single-member review, should be considered in the context of the 'effective and convenient' criterion. Whilst, it would not be appropriate to change the approach part-way through an individual review, it was agreed to consider this at a future discussion with a view, possibly, of clarifying/augmenting existing technical guidance.

There was a discussion about the need to ensure that the rationale for highlighting areas for particular consideration in officer cover papers were explained and were consistently presented in the digital mapping made available to Commissioners as well as at the meeting. The Chief Executive to report back to the next meeting.

Close of Business 4:30pm

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.