

LGBCE (17)9th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 19 September 2017, Belgravia Sky Loft 29th 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:

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
Emily Starkie	Review Officer (item 6)
David Owen	Review Officer (item 7)
Mark Cooper	Review Officer (item 8)
Laura Taylor	Review Officer (item 9)
Paul Kingsley	Review Officer (item 10)
Dan Carlsson-Hyslop	Review Officer (item 11 & 12)
Dean Faccini	Business Support Officer (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Declarations of interest

The Chair declared an interest in item 3 (Redcar & Cleveland Council Size) and took no part in the discussions about that item.

would seek an electoral review from the Commission in advance of its first election.

- West Suffolk (Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury) is expected to submit their merger proposal to the Secretary of State during late September. If their merger does not take place in time for 2019, it is unlikely that either council would request separate electoral reviews by the Commission.
- Taunton Deane and West Somerset is still being considered. Although there is indication of DCLG support there is opposition by a local MP. A formal decision is expected shortly
- West Devon and South Hams are undertaking a public consultation on their merger proposals.

Unitaries.

- Dorset have submitted a proposal to the Secretary of State.
- Buckinghamshire have submitted a proposal to the Secretary of State.

An error in the South Lakeland Order mapping was drawn to the attention of the Commission by LGBCE officers. The order had been withdrawn and replaced with a new order correctly showing the intended boundaries. This revised order was laid in Parliament on 13 September.

A letter in response to the complaint received on the Manchester electoral review, and a subsequent lesson-learnt paper, have been drafted by Peter Maddison. Both papers are to be circulated to Commissioners and the latter will be the subject of a full discussion at the October meeting.

The Chief Executive updated the Commission on a recent catch up meeting with DCLG.

2. Cornwall Council Size (2 of 2) - LGBCE (17)101

It had been agreed to review Cornwall Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 30 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent, with five per cent of divisions being over 20 per cent. Redruth North ward had a variance of 37 per cent, and Liskeard North ward had a variance of 56 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 123 members.

At its meeting on 18 April 2017, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 87 as the available evidence, particularly that of a geographical and community-based nature, pointed towards a council size of 87 as being the most appropriate size. However, as this number had not been specifically put forward at the initial council size consultation, the Commission agreed to invite further comment from the council and stakeholders.

In June 2017, the Commission began a public consultation on the council size for Cornwall Council. Along with the Council, the Commission consulted parish and town

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 59 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 59 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

4. Dartford Council Size - LGBCE (17)103

It had been agreed to review Dartford Borough Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 41 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with one ward, Bean and Darenth, having a variance of 17 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 44 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 decrease by two from 44 to 42 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 42 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 42 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

5. Windsor & Maidenhead Council Size - LGBCE (17)104

It had been agreed to review The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead at the request of the local authority. According to the latest available electoral figures, 22 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with two wards being over 20 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 57 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 decrease by 14 from 57 to 43 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 47 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 43 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

8. Mid Suffolk Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (17)107

The review of Mid Suffolk District Council had commenced on 18 April 2017. According to the latest available electoral figures, 37 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with 3 per cent of wards being over 30 per cent. One ward, Stowmarket North, has a variance of 32 per cent.

At its meeting on 18 April 2017, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 34 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 eight two-, and 18 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 Mid Suffolk District Council as presented.

9. Babergh Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (17)108

The review of Babergh Council had commenced on 18 April 2017 at the request of the authority. According to the latest available electoral figures, 11 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 18 April 2017, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 31. 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 32 as this allowed for a better allocation of councillors across the district.

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 two three-, six two-, and 14 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 Babergh Council as presented.

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 eight three-, seven two-, and five 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 as presented.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Test Valley Borough Council as presented.

12. Hull Final Recommendations - LGBCE (17)111

The review of Hull City Council had commenced on 23 August 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 17 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with one ward, Kings Park, having a variance of 43 per cent.

At its meeting on 23 August 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 57 and had subsequently, on 20 December 2016, agreed Draft Recommendations.

At its meeting on 18 April 2017, the Commission agreed to conduct a further round of consultation prior to agreeing its Final Recommendations following the persuasive evidence it received on warding patterns that had not previously been put forward during the initial consultation stage. The Further Draft Recommendations consultation commenced in June.

Following publication of the Further Draft Recommendations, 747 submissions had been received commenting on the Further 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 Further Draft Recommendations in some aspects and these changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission for consideration.

In particular, the team was of the view that there were exceptional circumstances to recommend a further three two-member wards in the west of the city. Whilst moving away from the usual three-member pattern, it was considered that maintaining three-member wards in this area was not compatible with meeting the Commission's statutory criteria.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 15 three-, and six two-member wards in total.

AOB

There were no other items.

Close of Business 15:50

Ed Mills 17/10/17