

LGBCE (18)8 Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 21 August, at 1:30pm in LGBCE Board Room, 1st Floor, Windsor House, 50 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0TL

Commissioners Present

Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)

Peter Maddison QPM

Andrew Scallan CBE

Steve Robinson

Amanda Nobbs OBE

LGBCE Officers Present:

Jolyon Jackson CBE

Marcus Bowell

Alison Evison

Richard Buck

Jo Porter

Mishka Mayers

Jonathan Ashby

Dean Faccini

Chief Executive

Director of Strategy & Communications

Review & Programme Manager

Review Manager

Review Manager

Review Officer (item 11)

Review Officer (item 12)

Business Support Officer

Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Susan Johnson and Lynn Ingram, Director of Finance & Resources.

Declarations of interest

Amanda Nobbs declared an interest in item 12 Runnymede Final Recommendations, and took no part in the discussions of that item.

Jolyon Jackson declared an interest in item 10 Wiltshire Council Size, and took no part in the discussions of that item.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 24 July 2018

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 following actions were reported on:

- Two actions would be moved into the 'Upping the game' work. They were:
 - Review Officer Desk Instructions to be assessed by the Audit & Risk Committee.
 - Mechanism for checking the accuracy of formulas and data in the electoral data spreadsheets.
- Updates on FOI requests and complaints received to the LGBCE are now included in the Operational Report.
- Availability of Commission papers would be discussed at a policy session.
- Maintaining a log of all wards over 10% was currently in progress.
- There had been no progress on the consideration of opportunities for IT funding from MHCLG. The Chair advised the Chief Executive that the cut-off date is mid-September.

1. Chair's Report

An update was given on Buckinghamshire.

The Chair thanked everyone who contributed, and led the sessions, at the recent Commissioner and staff strategy day.

2. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive sought agreement to move the actions recorded from the recent Commissioner and staff strategy day to the Commission meeting action points list. The Commission agreed.

The Director of Finance and the Review Manager would arrange a meeting with Susan Johnson to brief her on the work the Commission had completed on equalities and diversity.

A refresh of the Audit & Risk Committee and Commissioner Responsibilities paper was planned.

Those Commissioners who had joined the LGBCE within the last 12 months had received a feedback form on their induction to the Commission. Responses to the form would help the team improve its induction process for newly appointed Commissioners.

Following previous discussions on the definition of the “Board”, the Chair summarised the terminology that would be helpful to use when distinguishing between the Commission, the organisation (LGBCE), and staff respectively.

3. KPIs – LGBCE (18)92

The Commission received its first report on the newly-developed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which were developed during 2017/18. The Commission was advised that some of the data required fine-tuning and some of the KPIs (such as KPI 1) would not present a clear picture on performance until the team had collected a year’s worth of analysis.

The Chief Executive thanked Peter Maddison for his assistance in the development of the new KPIs and remarked that they had already provoked some interesting conversations at management level.

The Commission reviewed each KPI and had the following comments:

- The report had some presentational issues. Work was needed in making the report clearer to read and some of the language used could do with a revision in plain English.
- The directional arrows did not add any value to the report as they appeared to mirror the existing red, amber, green colour system.
- It wasn’t clear why the figure located to the right of each KPI score had been designated as the target score and, therefore the validity of the target.
- The Commission agreed that individual KPIs could be taken to Commission meetings for a ‘deep-dive’ review.

The KPIs, appropriately re-presented, would be brought back to the Commission at its meeting in December.

4. Business Plan – LGBCE (18)93

The Director of Strategy and Communications presented the 2018/19 Business Plan.

Key highlights of the plan were:

- Part One: Reviews 2018/19. The Commission is on track in its objective to complete 37 electoral reviews.
- Part Two: Organisational Development Plan. The Commission’s “Upping the Game” project had been added to the development plan.
- Part Three: Actions from strategy day. These actions will feed into the Commission’s Business Plan. There are a number of high-profile projects in progress. SharePoint in particular had been very challenging and time consuming.

The Commission fed back its comments. It noted:

- A number of projects had the target completion date of April 2019 but had not yet been started. Some of these projects were also quite large.

- Some projects had four people as the lead project owner. Sole ownership might be more efficient.

A further update on the Business Plan would be presented to the Commission at its meeting in December.

5. Future Business – LGBCE (18)94

The Commission noted this document.

6. Operational Report - LGBCE (18)95

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

In addition to the report, the Chief Executive provided an update on staffing. A new Review Assistant had been appointed to replace David Parton and a vacancy for the position of Review Officer would be advertised following Mishka Mayer's decision to leave the Commission.

7. Brent Council Size – LGBCE (18)96

It had been agreed to review Brent Council as part of the Periodic Electoral Review Programme of the London Boroughs. According to the latest available electoral figures, 47 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with 5 per cent of wards being over 20 per cent. One ward, Tokyngton, had a variance of 28 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 63 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 six from 63 to 57 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 57 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 57 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

8. Ealing Council Size – LGBCE (18)97

It had been agreed to review Ealing Council as part of the Periodic Electoral Review Programme of the London Boroughs. According to the latest available electoral

figures, 9 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent. One ward, East Acton, had a variance of 19 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 69 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 69 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 69 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 69 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

9. Hillingdon Council Size – LGBCE (18)98

It had been agreed to review Hillingdon Council as part of the Periodic Electoral Review Programme of the London Boroughs. According to the latest available electoral figures, 23 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with nine per cent of wards being over 20 per cent. Botwell ward had a variance of 24 per cent and Drayton ward had a variance of 22 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 65 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 12 from 65 to 53 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 53 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 53 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

10. Wiltshire Council Size – LGBCE (18)99

The Chief Executive left the room and took no part in the discussion on this item.

It had been agreed to review Wiltshire Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 27 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent, with 3 per cent of divisions being over 20 per cent. One division, Durrington & Larkhall, had a variance of over 30 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 98 members.

At its meeting in April 2018, the Commission considered two submissions on council size. One was a proposal from the Council to increase the number of members from 98 to 99 members and the other from the Liberal Democrat group to reduce councillor numbers to 86 or 85. The Commission decided that further information was required and the lead Commissioner and team met with representatives of the Council and Liberal Democrat Group on 15 May 2018. Following this, both submitted further information in support of their proposed council sizes.

The Commission concluded that the Council had made a more persuasive case for its proposed number in the context of the Area Boards and their importance to the Council's decision-making process. However, whilst accepting the broad thrust of the Council's arguments, the Commission was of the view that a case had not been made to justify an increase in council size from its current size.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 98 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 98 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

11. Isle of Wight Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (18)100

It had been agreed to review the Isle of Wight council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 36 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent, with 3 per cent of divisions being over 20 per cent.

At its meeting on 24 April 2018, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 40 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. In doing so, they had noted that a council size of 39 would provide for a better divisional pattern as this would produce good levels of electoral equality and follow the existing strong boundaries across the authority. Accordingly, the Draft Recommendations proposed a pattern of one two-member, and 38 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 Isle of Wight as presented.

12. Runnymede Final Recommendations – LGBCE (18)101

Amanda Nobbs left the room and took no part in the discussion on this item.

The review of Runnymede Borough Council had commenced on 21 November 2017. According to the latest available electoral figures, 29 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with Englefield Green East ward having a variance of 45 per cent.

At its meeting on 21 November 2017, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 42 and had subsequently, on 24 April 2018, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 118 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, and 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 the Egham area and also adopt a two-councillor ward for Englefield Green East as this would better reflect community identity. These changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission for consideration and would result in a revised council size of 41 members.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of one two-member and 13 three-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 Runnymede Borough Council as presented.

13. Future Work Programme – 2019/2020 Intervention reviews based on December 2017 data – LGBCE (18)102

This report recommended to the Commission the ten authorities that should be included in the review programme for 2019/20 that meet the intervention criteria on the basis of the December 2017 data. It also updated and consolidated the five-year programme.

The Commission considered the report and found the forward plan to be very useful. It asked whether it was possible, if necessary, to defer two London Boroughs to

accommodate two county councils under the 'one-pass' review process. The Commission was aware that a number of county councils, who had shown a willingness to be reviewed, had not received a review for quite some time. The Chief Executive agreed to look at this option and report back to the Commission.

The Commission agreed to the Future Work Programme pending the outcome of replacing two London boroughs with two county councils.

AOB

There were no other items.

Close of Business 16:54