

## LGBCE (14) 1st Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 21 January 2014, at 09:30am, in Rooms A & B, Layden House, 76-86 Turnmill Street, London, EC1M 5LG

### Commissioners Present

Max Caller CBE (Chair)

Professor Colin Mellors (Deputy Chair)

Dr Peter Knight CBE DL

Sir Tony Redmond

Professor Paul Wiles CB

Dr Colin Sinclair CBE

### LGBCE Officers Present:

Alan Cogbill

Archie Gall

Lynn Ingram

Marcus Howell

Alison Evison

Tim Bowden

Richard Buck

Alex Hinds

Paul Kingsley

Simon Keal

Nick Dunkeyson

William Morrison

Lucy Ward

Karen Cleverly

Dean Faccini

Chief Executive

Director of Reviews

Director of Finance

Communications Manager

Review & Programme Manager

Review Manager

Review Manager

Review Officer

Review Adviser

Review Officer

Review Officer

Review Officer

Review Officer

Business Support Officer

Business Assistant

## Apologies for Absence

The Business & Committee Services Manager had sent apologies.

## Declarations of interest

Max Caller, Chair, declared an interest in Suffolk Coastal and took no part in the discussion of that item.

Colin Mellors, Deputy Chair, declared an interest in York and took no part in the discussion of that item.

Sir Tony Redmond declared an interest in South Hams, and Knowsley and took no part in the discussion of those items.

## Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 10 December 2013

The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

## Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

### 1. Operational Report - LGBCE (14)01

The Director of Reviews presented the Operational Report for January 2014.

The Director of Reviews had agreed to extend the consultation on the Lichfield review by one month due to difficulties in confirming electorate figures.

The Commission had received an enquiry from Rugby District Council about the potential for a review to reduce council size. It was noted that a review had only just been completed and implemented at the elections in 2012. The Director of Reviews and the Review and Programme Manager would meet with Rugby Council to discuss the enquiry. The Director of Reviews will report back to the Commission at a future meeting.

### 2. York Electoral Review – LGBCE (14)02

At its December 2013 meeting, it was agreed that the Commission would receive a formal report on the incorrect polling district mapping data provided to the Commission by the Council that was used in preparing the Final Recommendations for York. The report would also provide the Commission with a number of options on how it should proceed.

The City of York Council had now confirmed the data and, at the Commission's request, undertaken audit of all polling district mapping data against the electoral register. The Council had confirmed that all other data was correct. It was reported that once the Commission had published final recommendations they had no power to amend them to correct errors of this type and thus there was no option but to republish draft recommendations in a corrected form

It was recommended by LGBCE officers that the Commission commence an eight week re-consultation on a set of revised Draft Recommendations, using the correct polling mapping data, revising the ward boundaries in the Halifax College area, but otherwise identical to those agreed in the previous Final Recommendations. The Chair and the Lead Commissioner would be consulted on the final press statement due to the unusual nature of this re-consultation. In due course the process would be examined to test whether it would have been possible to have identified this issue at an earlier stage in the proceedings.

### **Agreed**

Having considered the advice from LGBCE Officers, the Commission agreed to a re-consultation on a revised set of Draft Recommendations for York Council.

## **3. Suffolk Coastal Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (14)03**

*The Deputy Chair chaired the meeting for this item*

The review of Suffolk Coastal District Council had commenced in July 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 35 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with two wards being over 30 per cent. The Council had also requested a review.

At its meeting on 9 April 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a Council size of 43. However, on the basis of the evidence received including the district-wide schemes, the Draft Recommendations were prepared on a council size of 42 which produced a better pattern of wards.

In preparing the draft scheme, the team had taken into consideration all the submissions it had received and the statutory criteria. The Draft Recommendations prepared by the team proposed a pattern of two three-member wards, 13 two-member wards, and 10 single-member wards.

The Commission considered the recommendations in detail informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the submissions received. It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented with minor modifications to the boundary of Felixstowe North and minor parish ward changes to Felixstowe Walton and Felixstowe Allenby.

### **Agreed**

Draft Recommendations for Suffolk Coastal District Council as presented.

#### 4. NW Leicestershire Final Recommendations – LGBCE (14)04

The review of North West Leicestershire District Council had commenced in December 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 5 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with one ward having a variance of 28 per cent. The Council had requested a single-member ward review.

At its meeting on 13 March 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a Council size of 38 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations.

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

Taking all of the submissions into account, there were a number of minor boundary changes, and name changes, made to the Draft Recommendations which were proposed as the Final Recommendations for North West Leicestershire District Council.

The team prepared a paper for Final Recommendations proposing a pattern of 38 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 North West Leicestershire District Council as presented.

#### 5. West Dorset Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (14)05

The review of West Dorset District Council had commenced in February 2013. According to the latest electoral figures, 36 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on August 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 43 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 all the submissions it had received and the statutory criteria. It decided to propose a warding pattern based on a council size of 42 as this figure provided a better allocation of members across the towns and rural areas and also provided a warding pattern that achieved a better balance between the statutory criteria. Therefore the

Draft Recommendations proposed a warding pattern of four three-member wards, 10 two-member wards and 10 single-member wards in total.

The Commission considered the recommendations in detail informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the submissions received. It agreed the Draft Recommendations subject to including the ward names of Bridport North and Bridport South.

**Agreed**

Draft Recommendations for West Dorset District Council as modified.

## 6. Cotswold Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (14)06

The review of Cotswold District Council had commenced in May 2013. According to the latest electoral figures, 11 per cent of wards currently exceeded the 10 per cent variance threshold. The Council had requested the Commission undertake a single-member ward review.

At its meeting on May 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 35 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 all the submissions it had received and the statutory criteria. On reflection of the evidence received, it was decided that a council size of 34 would see an improvement in electoral equality. The Draft Recommendations proposed a pattern of one two-member ward and 32 single-member wards in total. While this was a single-member ward review, it was considered that a uniform pattern of such wards would not be compatible with the Commission's statutory criteria.

The Commission considered the recommendations in detail informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the submissions received. It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

**Agreed**

Draft Recommendations for Cotswold District Council as presented.

## 7. Erewash Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (14)07

The review of Erewash Borough Council had commenced in May 2013. According to the latest electoral figures, 36 per cent of wards currently exceeded the 10 per cent variance threshold.

At its meeting in August 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 47 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 all the submissions it had received and the statutory criteria. The Draft Recommendations proposed a pattern of 10 two-member wards, and nine three-member wards in total.

The Commission considered the recommendations in detail informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the submissions received. It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

**Agreed**

Draft Recommendations for Erewash Borough Council as presented.

## 8. Wellingborough Final Recommendations – LGBCE (14)08

The review of Wellingborough council had commenced in June 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 44 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with Hemmingwell and North ward having variances of 22 per cent.

At its meeting on July 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 36 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 21 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations. These had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all of the submissions into account it had been judged that there was insufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations except in respect of minor amendments to boundaries of the wards of Croyland, Brickhill and Hatton. Additionally, the ward names of Gleneagles and Redhill were to be renamed Redwell and Rixon, and these were proposed as the Final Recommendations for Wellingborough council.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of seven three-member wards, six two-member wards, and three 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 Wellingborough council as presented.

## 9. South Hams Final Recommendations – LGBCE (14)09

The review of South Hams District Council had commenced in June 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 31 per cent of the wards have an electoral variance over 10 per cent.

At its meeting on July 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 31 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 58 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations. These had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all of the submissions into account it had been judged that there was insufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations except in respect of changes to the following ward names:

- Ashprington & Cornworthy ward to West Dart ward
- Aveton Gifford ward to Loddiswell & Aveton Gifford ward
- Bigbury & Modbury ward to Charterlands ward
- Dartmouth & Kingswear ward to Dartmouth & East Dart ward
- East Allington ward to Allington & Strete ward
- Halwell & Stoke Fleming ward to Blackawton & Stoke Fleming ward

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of two three-member wards, seven two-member wards, and 11 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 South Hams District Council as presented.

## **10. North Somerset Final Recommendations – LGBCE (14)10**

The review of North Somerset had commenced in May 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 36 per cent had an electoral variance of greater than 10 per cent, with Gordano ward having a variance of 32 per cent and Portishead East ward having a variance of 68 per cent.

At its meeting on August 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 50 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 119 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations. These had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all of the submissions into account, it was felt that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the draft recommendations in respect to the proposed boundaries changes in the rural areas of Pill & Easton-in-Gordano, Backwell and

Flax Bourton, and Wrington. Doing so would significantly alter the boundaries of 10 out of the 35 wards proposed in the Commission's draft recommendations. It was therefore recommended by the team that a further limited consultation on the rural areas of the district is carried out before the Commission publishes its Final Recommendations.

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 to a period of further limited consultation for the rural areas of North Somerset, subject to a modification to one of the proposals presented.

### **Agreed**

A period of further limited consultation for the rural areas of North Somerset, subject to a modification to one of the proposals presented.

## **11. Quarterly Review Programme Review – LGBCE (14)11**

Changes to the Quarterly Review Programme were presented to the Commission.

- The North Somerset and York reviews would now be published in the next financial year.
- Professor Paul Wiles and Dr Peter Knight have swapped Dorset and Tewkesbury reviews.
- The Commission was invited to accept Knowsley Council into the 2014/15 review programme.

### **Agreed**

The Commission accepted Knowsley Council into the 2014/15 review programme. A Lead Commissioner would be appointed in due course.

## **12. Chair's Report**

The Chair had written to the Chair of the Speaker's Committee and to Gary Streeter MP to advise them that, whilst LGBCE would continue to look at opportunities for closer working with BCE (including the potential to develop shared corporate and support service), it would be difficult to envisage formal merger given the different scale and patterns of workload in the two bodies and the considerable disruption to both that would result.

The Chair was about to write to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on behalf of all the UK Boundary Commissions. The letter advises of a request from the South African Municipal Demarcation Board which had expressed a keenness to explore opportunities in developing relations between the Commissions of Commonwealth-based nations.

Following Commissioners' earlier discussions, the Chair had agreed a draft of the revised job description for the next Chief Executive, and it would be evaluated. Once

this had been done he would circulate it to the Commission, together with the timetable and panel for the recruitment.

### 13. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive reported the further delays in finalising Commissioner appointments. If this was not resolved by the next Commission meeting, it would need to take stock how best to cover the workload with a reduced number of Commissioners.

The Chief Executive touched on the Speaker's Committee Budget Sub-Committee meeting due to take place on 4<sup>th</sup> February. The Commons Scrutiny Unit had shown interest in the Commission's supplementary estimate, which reflected a switch of resource to meet considerable investment in IT.

The NAO had sent a first draft of its VfM report which was being evaluated prior to a response being sent from management.

The Chief Executive noted the recent Williams Commission report which saw proposals to reduce the number of local authorities in Wales.

### 14. Appointment of Internal Auditor - LGBCE (14)12

The Director of Finance presented a paper which proposed the re-appointment of Baker Tilly as internal auditors from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. This appointment had previously been endorsed by the Audit Committee.

#### **Agreed**

The Commission approved the re-appointment of Baker Tilly as internal auditors.

### 15. New and Emerging Risks

The Commission had nothing to report.

### 16. Finance & Performance Report 3rd Quarter & budget re-forecast - LGBCE (14)13

The Director of Finance presented the Financial Projections for Quarter 3. Included in the presentation was:

- An update on the unit cost project.

- Confirmation of a slight increase in the projected underspend. This did not factor in the proposed increase to the final staff pay award or the procurement of a new plotter printer.

**Agreed**

That the Audit Committee leads on the unit cost project and updates the Commission when necessary.

**17. Future Business – LGBCE (13)192**

The content of the Future Business paper was noted.

**AOB**

There were no other items.

**18. Update on the Process Review including Presentation by Baker Tilly - LGBCE (14)15**

The Review & Programme Manager presented an update on the Business Re-engineering project. This was followed by a short presentation by Baker Tilly, recently appointed to lead the project following a competitive tender exercise.

The Commission noted the contents of the report and endorsed the project.

**Close of Business 13:28**