The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England

# LGBCE (14) 5th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 20th May 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
Alison Lowton
Sir Tony Redmond
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE
Professor Paul Wiles CB

LGBCE Officers Present:

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| Alan Cogbill | Chief Executive |
| Archie Gall | Director of Reviews |
| Lynn Ingram | Director of Finance |
| Marcus Bowell | Communications Manager |
| Tim Bowden | Review Manager |
| Richard Buck | Review Manager |
| Sarah Vallotton | Business & Committee Services Manager |
| Alex Hinds | Review Officer |
| Dean Faccini | Business Assistant (minutes) |

## Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

## Declarations of interest

Professor Colin Mellors and Alison Lowton both declared an interest in the City of York review. Neither took any part in the discussion of that item.

Professor Paul Wiles declared an interest in the Sheffield City review and took no part in the discussion of that item.

# Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 8th April 2014

Subject to a minor typing correction, the minutes were agreed as a correct record.

## Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

## 1. Operational Report - LGBCE (14)55

The Commission noted the contents of the Operational Report for May 2014.

## 2. Colchester Council Size Post Consultation - LGBCE (14)56

It had been agreed to review Colchester Borough Council at the request of the authority. The review had commenced in February 2014. According to the latest electoral figures, 26 per cent of wards have variances of greater than 10 per cent.

The Commission had held meetings with local authority leaders and officers both to explain the review process and to seek information about electorate forecasts and the basis of the proposed council size. The current size of the Council is 60 members.

At its meeting in February 2014, the Commission considered all the evidence it had received on council size. Given the change proposed, the Commission had decided to consult on the issue of council size. The Commission sought views on a change in council size to 51 members. The consultation ended on 14 April 2014.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted it was minded to support a council size of 51 members.

**Agreed**
The Commission agreed that a council size of 51 be used as the basis to proceed to consultation on warding arrangements and preparation of draft recommendations.

## 3. Sheffield Council Size Post Consultation - LGBCE (14)57

It had been agreed to review Sheffield City Council due to electoral imbalance. The review had commenced in February 2014. According to the latest electoral figures, one ward has a variance of over 30 per cent.

The Commission had held meetings with local authority leaders and officers both to explain the review process and to seek information about electorate forecasts and the basis of the proposed council size. The current size of the Council is 84 members.

At its meeting in February 2014, the Commission considered all the evidence it had received on council size. It decided to consult on retaining the existing council size to 84 members. The consultation ended on 14 April 2014.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted it was minded to support a council size of 84 members.

**Agreed**
The Commission agreed that a council size of 84 be used as the basis to proceed to consultation on warding arrangements and preparation of draft recommendations.

## 4. Aylesbury Vale Final Recommendations - LGBCE (14)58

The review of Aylesbury Vale Council had commenced in April 2013. According to the latest electoral figures, 33 percent of wards have variances of greater than 10 per cent with one ward (Bierton) being over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on July 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a Council size of 59. It had agreed its Draft Recommendations, based on this number, at its meeting in November 2013.

Following publication, 49 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 and adopt a three-member Wendover & Halton ward, rather than splitting Wendover and Halton into different wards. The Commission also recommended a three-member Aston Clinton & Stoke Mandeville ward. These changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission. The Commission also recommended that the ward of Newton Longville be renamed Great Brickhill & Newton Longville.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of eight three-member wards, 10 two-member wards, and 15 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 Aylesbury Vale Council as presented.

## 5. York Final Recommendations - LGBCE (14)59

The review of City of York Council had commenced on July 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, one ward (Fulford) has a variance of over 30 per cent.

At its meeting in October 2012, the Commission had been minded to agree a Council size of 47. It had agreed its Draft Recommendations, based on this number, at its meeting in April 2013. In December 2013, the Commission had been alerted to an inconsistency in the polling district data provided by the Council and, at its meeting in January 2014, had decided to consult on further draft recommendations to resolve the issues arising from the incorrect data.

Following publication, 9 submissions had been received commenting on the Further Draft Recommendations. These had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all of the submissions into account it had been decided that the Further Draft Recommendations be confirmed as final without amendment.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 10 three-member wards, six two-member wards, 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 Further Draft Recommendations. It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented.

**Agreed**
Final Recommendations for City of York Council as presented.

## 6. Lichfield Draft Recommendations – Amendment - LGBCE (14)60

The Commission was invited to formally agree the team's proposed amendments to the Lichfield Draft Recommendations.

The draft recommendations for Lichfield District Council were agreed at its meeting on 8 April 2014. However, during preparation of the map for the draft recommendations, the team noted errors in the coterminosity of the proposed district wards with the Staffordshire electoral divisions in two areas. The team sought the agreement of the Chair and Deputy Chair and Lead Commissioner to the proposed changes in advance of this meeting to ensure that the review timetable was not too greatly affected.

**Agreed**
Draft Recommendations for Lichfield District Council as presented.

## 7. Chair's Report

The Chair informed the Commission that he and the Chief Executive had recently met Brandon Lewis, MP.

## 8. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive reported that the Speaker's Committee had approved the Corporate Plan 2014-15 to 2018-19, and the Main Supply Estimate 2014-15, and had issued their report to the House to say so.

The Chief Executive touched upon the work currently being carried out on reviewing the electoral data from ONS. The Commission would soon be identifying which local authorities met the criteria and might, therefore, be added to the 2014/15 and 2015/16 programmes.

## 9. Annual Report and Accounts 2013-2014 – First Draft - LGBCE (14)61

The Finance Director presented the draft Final Annual Report & Accounts for 2013/14.

Key topics covered:

- The NAO had almost concluded its audit and had attended the Audit Committee the previous day when they indicated that the accounts were likely to be unqualified.

- The Audit Committee had considered the accounts at its meeting the previous day when small amendments to the report's format had been agreed. These amendments would be included in the final report which would be presented to the Commission at its meeting in June.
- The budget variance was £191K underspent, compared to a projected outturn variance of £177K. The difference resulted from a reduction in mapping costs and the adjustment for untaken annual leave.

A final version of the report would be submitted to the NAO which would then issue an audit completion certificate.

It was noted that NAO would need to respond in time for the Audit Committee to have sight of the audit completion report, by e-mail, and its distribution in June Commission papers. The final version of the report would be presented to the Commission for formal sign off at the June meeting.

The Commission thanked the Finance Director for all her work and noted the adopted the draft Final Annual Report & Accounts for 2013/14. These would be formally approved for signature at the Commission meeting in June.

## 10. New and Emerging Risks

The Commission identified the following risks:

- Relocation and Back Office Project: The project's own risk register should be reflected in the Corporate Risk Register.
- Parliament may have fewer sitting dates in the run up to the general election next year. This might have implications for the Commission's ability to lay orders in time for elections in 2015.

## 11. Report of Audit Committee Meeting (oral)

The Chair of the Audit Committee reported on the Audit Committee meeting that had taken place the previous day.

Key topics that had been covered were:

- A review of the Commission's performance against the NAO's checklist
- A review of the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference
- The draft Annual Report
- A Risk Update
- The internal Audit end of year Report
- A review of the internal audit recommendations.

**Agreed**
To invite the Independent External Adviser to relevant future Commission policy sessions and strategic planning events.

## 12. Future Business - LGBCE (14)62

The content of the Future Business paper was noted.

The Director of Reviews asked Review Managers to contact Lead Commissioners and book review meetings as soon as possible given the large number of Reviews scheduled for the June meeting.

**Agreed**
That the schedule of Future Business should include key dates other than meetings, such as LGA Conference, meetings with MPs, in order to provide all commissioners with a better overview of commission business.

## 13. Further steps on process review (oral)

The workshop took forward and discussed the recommendations arising from the Baker Tilly Report.

Timeline

- The goal is to implement transformational changes to the review programme for the beginning of 2016 subject to approval by the Commission at the relevant time
- In order to assess what changes might be implemented work was commissioned to identify what efficiencies would be made undertaking review work in a different way – i.e. use of geocoding and undertaking reviews on a regional basis
- Any transformational changes to how the Commission undertakes reviews are likely to require consultation with local government. In order to meet the deadline of implementing transformational changes by 2016 then this consultation is likely to be required during summer 2015.
- Moving to a model where the Commission formulates the recommendations using community proxy data and/or undertaking reviews on a regional 'one-pass' basis will need testing for feasibility and consultation with local government.
- The first steps are to take forward the immediate actions below and then to assess how these could filter into the medium and long-terms goals

Immediate actions

Report Content: Draft Recommendations:

- Simplify content for publication report.
- Remove political references from reports when discussing the Commission's recommendations to avoid the assumption that we supported a particular political viewpoint. Commission's draft recommendations to be based on the evidence received.

- Consider different templates setting out recommendations in a tabular way with context of statutory criteria.
- List respondents rather than referencing in report.
- Commissioner report sets out reasoning behind recommendations.
- In the longer term to use community data to support proposals.

Target completion date – July 2014 Commission meeting

Clustering & Regional:

- Explore taking a pilot forward as part of the 2015-2016 review programme to carry out a clustered review in agreement with appropriate local authorities including how LAs might be selected.
- Identify potential authorities and conduct initial discussions, i.e. at LGA Conference or County LGA meeting.
- Explore pros and cons on whether any pilot would be a PER or FER and report to the Commission as a report.
- Draw Minister's attention to a proposal to support the request to specify election days and discuss the implementation of a clustered review at a single election.

Target completion date – July & August 2014

Geocoding

- Report to Commission on a specific proposals.
- Commission a piece of work on geocoding in order to establish:
    - What data exists, including community proxy data.
    - How the Commission could use this data in formulating its recommendations.
    - What requirements the Commission would need in using the data.
    - Identify what external advice would be required to assist in completing this area of work.

Target completion date – July 2014 Commission Policy Workshop

Medium/long-term goals

Clustering & Regional:

- Report to the Commission on how success and efficiencies in the pilot will be measured when agreeing to proceed.
- Give consideration to future operating models – i.e. how a clustered/regional model could be implemented as part of the 2016 review programme.

Performance management:

- Develop measurable targets for how long different stages of the review work takes.
- Investigate improving time-recording accuracy.
- Ensure that all work on performance management is embedded with work on unit costing.

Segmented review work

- Explore how review activity could be segmented, i.e. data gathering & validation, diarising, digitised mapping as a candidate function for specialisation.

What happens next?

- Officers will need to consider how best to manage this process and take forward actions identified and report to the next Commission meeting on the timeline.
- Officers will consider how these projects will dovetail with the CIPFA recommendations and the project on relocation & back-office services
- Project updates will be provided to the Commission as part of the operational update.

## AOB

There were no other items.

**Close of Business 10:45**

CHAIR
18/7/14