

The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England

LGBCE (14)10th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 21 October 2014, at 9.30am, 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
Professor Paul Wiles CB

LGBCE Officers Present:

Alan Cogbill	Chief Executive
Jolyon Jackson CBE	Chief Executive Designate
Lynn Ingram	Finance Director
Archie Gall	Director of Reviews
Marcus Bowell	Communications Manager
Tim Bowden	Business Development/Review Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Sarah Vallotton	Business & Committee Services Manager
Mark Cooper	Review Officer (item 7)
Paul Kingsley	Review Officer (item 8)
Karen Cleverly	Business Support Officer (minutes)
Alison Evison	Review & Programme Manager (KIT Day)

Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Dr Colin Sinclair CBE whose appointment as a Commissioner ends on 4 November 2014.

On behalf of the Commission the Chair formally thanked Dr Sinclair for his service over the past four years.

The Chair also noted that the Director of Reviews was due to retire and that this would be his final Commission meeting. The Chair expressed his thanks and appreciation on behalf of all current and former members of staff and Commissioners.

Declarations of interest

The Finance Director declared an interest in Devon and took no part in the discussion of this item.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 16 September 2014

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

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

1. Operational Report - LGBCE (14)122

The Director of Reviews presented the Operational Report for October and drew the Commission's attention to an error that had been identified in the final recommendations for West Devon. These had an impact on the variances in two wards; however the variances were still within the acceptable range. The error had been picked up and the online document had been corrected less than a week after publication. The Commission was assured that arrangements had been put in place to prevent a recurrence of the error.

The Commission noted the action that had been taken and formally endorsed the modification.

The Commission then considered the proposed allocation of lead Commissioners to reviews. Because of a potential conflict of interest in Watford it was agreed that the proposed allocations for Watford and Warrington be swapped.

Agreed

With that amendment, the Commission agreed the following allocation of lead Commissioners to reviews:

- Welwyn Hatfield Alison Lowton
- Warrington Alison Lowton
- Exeter Peter Knight
- Watford Colin Mellors
- Hampshire Tony Redmond
- Lancashire Colin Mellors
- Leicestershire Peter Knight.

The Commission also noted the importance of ensuring that there were no delays in progressing the Doncaster Review, assuming that Final Recommendations were agreed at its next meeting, in order that the new arrangements would be laid in time for them to come into place by the next local elections.

2. Allocation of County Councillors – LGBCE (14)123

The Director of Reviews presented a report on the allocation of county councillors to constituent districts. This had been prompted by a request at the April 2014 Commission meeting for a policy paper on the subject.

Agreed

The Commission agreed the paper's recommendations as follows:

- In all reviews, the Commission would retain the right to modify its council size minded decision by plus or minus one or two councillors if, at draft or final recommendation stages, this would facilitate an outcome that better reflected its statutory criteria;
- The next version of the Commission's technical guidance would reflect the allocation issues discussed in the paper along with the Commission's intended approach;
- The levels of electoral variance in constituent districts at draft and final recommendation stages of County Reviews would be tracked and reported to the Commission in the Report on the Year if County reviews were undertaken in that year.

3. Nottinghamshire Council Size - LGBCE (14)124

It had been agreed to review Nottinghamshire County Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 33 percent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 67 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 67 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 67 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 67 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

4. Cambridgeshire Council Size - LGBCE (14)125

It had been agreed to review Cambridgeshire County Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures 32 percent of divisions had variances greater than 10 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 decrease by 6 from 69 to 63 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 63 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 63 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

5. Devon Council Size - LGBCE (14)125

It had been agreed to review Devon County Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 39 percent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 62 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 2 from 62 to 60 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 60 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 60 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

6. Kent Council Size - LGBCE (14)126

It had been agreed to review Kent County Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 31 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent, with Romney Marsh division being over 30 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 84 members which was outside the nearest neighbour range and would therefore lead the Commission to consider a reduction in size unless appropriate compelling evidence was available.

At this stage, the Commission did not consider it was in a position to recommend a council size given the limited evidence received from the authority.

Agreed

To defer a decision on this item to the next Commission meeting in order to allow time for further evidence to be sought.

7. Lichfield Final Recommendations - LGBCE (14)128

The review of Lichfield District Council had commenced on 13 August 2013. According to the latest available electoral figures, 35 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 12 November 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 47 and had subsequently, on 8 April 2014, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 29 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, 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 8 three, 9 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 as presented.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Lichfield District Council as presented.

8. Ashfield Final Recommendations - LGBCE (14)129

The review of Ashfield District Council had commenced on 9 April 2013. According to the latest available electoral figures, 40 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 9 July 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 35 and had subsequently, on 10 December 2013, agreed Draft Recommendations.

In light of submissions received following publication of the Draft Recommendations the Commission published Further Draft Recommendations, agreed on 17 June 2014, in three areas: Hucknall, Kirkby in Ashfield and Sutton in Ashfield. It did not amend its original draft recommendations in the remainder of the area.

Following publication, a total of 36 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, it had been judged that there was insufficient evidence to change the further Draft Recommendations, and therefore, they were proposed as the Final Recommendations for Ashfield District Council.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 2 three, 8 two, and 13 single-member wards in total.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Ashfield as presented.

9. Proposed New Style Recommendations Reports - LGBCE (14)130

The Chief Executive Designate introduced the report. A new format for Recommendations reports had been devised. The aims were:

- to make clearer the basis of the decisions being made by the Commission set against the statutory criteria
- to provide greater clarity for readers
- to set out simply key information, including the dates of key decisions
- to make the reports more consistent in style and efficient in their preparation.

The Commission noted and approved the proposed new style of the two Recommendations reports.

Agreed

It was agreed that the new format be used for all future Final and Draft Recommendations reports.

10. Quarterly Review Programme Update - LGBCE (14)131

The Review Manager presented the report and gave a brief update as there had been some changes since the programme had been agreed in August 2014.

Commissioners queried the apparent reduction in workload. The Review Manager explained that there was possible scope to bring some work forward, depending on the outcome of a review of officers' workload which was currently being carried out. This would be concluded before the November Commission meeting and the programme might be further revised to ensure the most effective distribution of work between Review Officers.

There was general agreement that Commissioners should, wherever possible, be allocated reviews in areas which were close to their home location to achieve value for money and reduce extra costs relating to travel, accommodation, etc.

Agreed

The Commission noted the report and agreed the proposed amendments to the timetable.

11. Chair's Report

The Chair reported on his recent meeting with Sir Bob Kerslake which included the wide-ranging review of governance arrangements in Birmingham.

The Chair and the Communications Manager had met with Rosie Winterton MP to brief her on the Doncaster electoral review.

The Chair and the Chief Executive Designate would be meeting Kris Hopkins MP on 22 October 2014.

12. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive reported that the re-appointment of Paul Wiles was proceeding but that it might not be completed before the end of Paul's current term so that there might be a short gap in his tenure. Separately, DCLG had decided to undertake a fresh recruitment process for the additional new Commissioner for which there had already been agreement in principle.

The Chief Executive would be attending Speakers Committee in November with the Chair and the Chief Executive Designate. Current information about the progress of

the Deregulation Bill suggested that it would receive Royal Assent in January 2015 but changes would not come into force until May 2015. Until then, existing procedures would continue with regard to reporting.

A meeting with the National Audit Office had agreed a prospective workplan for the VFM report they would need to make to the Speaker's Committee, to aid its examination of LGBCE's draft plan and estimate. A further meeting was due to take place to develop the workplan for the end of year audit of accounts.

The Chief Executive noted that the new LGBCE corporate plan from April 2015, and financial estimate for 2015-16, would need to be submitted to Parliament in January 2015 in order to meet the required deadlines for approval.

The Chief Executive Designate reported that he had met the Chief Executive and Finance Director of the Electoral Commission. Quarterly meetings would be established to exchange information. This would be particularly important once the LGBCE Chair was no longer a Commissioner of the Electoral Commission.

13. Finance Director's Relocation Update

The Finance Director reported that members of the project team had met the Government Property Unit (GPU). Strutt and Parker had been appointed as property consultants.

The team had visited Millbank Tower in order to inspect its suitability as a possible location. Two further possible Government Properties had been identified in central London and the property consultant had been asked to investigate these further.

In order to ensure a move by May 2015 it would be necessary for the Commission to agree on a property by the end of this calendar year at the latest.

The business case for relocating within London would be taken to the Speaker's Committee on 4 November.

The IT strategy, currently in the final stages of development, would be considered at the November Steering Group meeting.

A project to capture documents currently stored in the basement of Layden House electronically was in progress.

The Steering Group would consider options for the delivery of back office services at its meeting that afternoon.

14. Quarterly Risk Report and New & Emerging Risks – LGBCE (14)132

The Commission identified two new risks:

- Business continuity during the transition phase of the office move.
- The risk of the Commission becoming inquorate due to potential delays in the re-appointment of Paul Wiles and the appointment of a new Commissioner.

Agreed

That these risks be added to the risk register for consideration and treatment.

15. Finance & Performance Report – 1st and 2nd Quarters – LGBCE (14)133

The Finance Director reported a projected £13,000 underspend. If the various investment projects identified were carried through this year, it might well be taken up by expenditure on the office move, IT strategy and back office services contract.

The Commission was pleased that the potential underspend had been identified so early and that options were available to make good use of the budget available. They remained concerned that full use of the staff development and training allocation was made.

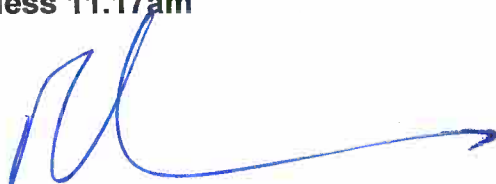
16. Future Business – LGBCE (14)134

A report on the process review would be considered at the November policy session.

AOB

There were no other items.

Close of Business 11.17am



CHAIK

