

The
**Local Government
Boundary Commission**
for England

LGBCE (17)4th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 18 April 2017 at 1:30pm in Belgravia Suite, 29th Floor Millbank Tower, Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP

Commissioners Present

Professor Colin Mellors (Chair)
Sir Tony Redmond (Deputy Chair)
Dr Peter Knight CBE, DL
Alison Lowton
Peter Maddison

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
Lucy Dunkeyson	Review Manager
Emily Starkie	Review Officer (item 3)
Dan Carlsson-Hyslop	Review Officer (item 7)
Laura Taylor	Review Officer (item 8)
Alex Tudge	Review Officer (item 19)
Dean Faccini	Business Support Officer (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 21 March 2017

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

Matters Arising

Clarification was sought about how minutes record changes that are sometimes made at Commission meetings to the draft and final recommendations as presented to them in the officer reports. It was clarified that the minutes would record "for the reasons highlighted in the team's report" when this occurred. Where the Commission itself moved away from officer recommendations presented to them, this is already mentioned in the minutes and a fuller explanation is provided in the revised recommendations that are subsequently published.

1. Operational Report - LGBCE (17)34

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

Highlights of the report included:

- Following the Chair's and Chief Executive's meeting with Copeland District Council on 7 April, the Commission agreed to add Copeland to the review programme.
- An update on the potential East Kent merger was given. It now seems unlikely that this merger will proceed.
- The Secretary of State is considering the proposed merger of Taunton Deane and West Somerset.
- A decision by the Secretary of State on the proposed two-Dorset unitary authority model might be made in the summer.
- A summary of amendments to the review timetable was noted.
- The Commission's meeting with the Speaker's Committee has been rescheduled for Wednesday 26 April.
- The Chief Executive had given a talk to some staff at the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on 'Leadership'.

In addition to the operational report, the Chief Executive was asked about the potential impact of the recently-announced general election on the review programme. He advised that the Commission would need to be mindful of the rules relating to purdah and that the Review and Programme Manager was assessing the review timetable in relation to purdah. Further details would be circulated when available.

Changes made to the review timetable as a result of the general election would be reported in the May Operational Report.

2. Torbay Council Size – LGBCE (17)35

It had been agreed to review Torbay Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 27 per cent of wards had variances greater

than 10 per cent with one ward, Shiphay-With-The-Willows, having a variance of 31 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 37 members (including the elected Mayor).

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 one from 37 to 36 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 36 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 36 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

3. Cornwall Council Size – LGBCE (17)36

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 5 per cent of divisions being over 20 per cent. Redruth North has a variance of 37 per cent and Liskeard North has a variance of 56 per cent.

At the request of the Council, and taking into account the wish of members to undertake a substantial review of governance arrangements as part of its devolution deal, the Commission had agreed at the outset of the review to allow an extension to the usual timetable for this part of the review with the result that the new arrangements will not come into effect until the 2021 elections.

The current size of the Council is 123 members.

Information had been received relating to some aspects of future governance and representational arrangements, including submissions from Cornwall Council, Cornwall Council Conservative Group, Cornwall Council Liberal Democrat Group, and Independent Councillor G King. Each of the submissions received had proposed a different council size, ranging from 85 members to 113 members.

Having considered all the evidence received, it was noted that all of the submissions proposed a reduction in the size of the council and LGBCE officers were also agreed that there was a strong case for moving to a reduced council size. However, despite the extensive material presented, it was not felt that any individual submission provided sufficient persuasive evidence to justify a single option over the others, although it was considered that the range 85-95 put forward by the Cornwall Association of Local Councils (CALC) had merit and was cited in more than one of the submissions. Commissioners also noted the more specific comments made by CALC about the advantages of a higher number in this range as well as the desirability of 'fit' with existing community networks.

LGBCE officers judged that, taken as a whole, the available evidence, especially that of a geographical and community based nature alongside the opportunity for further developing thinking about future governance, pointed towards a council size of 87 as being the most appropriate size and was the number that offered the best fit with existing community networks.

The Commission considered all the available evidence in detail and agreed that a council size of 87 members appeared the most appropriate. However, since this particular number had not been specifically put forward, there would be benefit in inviting further comment from the council and stakeholders before being confirmed.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that they were minded to recommend a council size of 87 but that a consultation should be carried out on that number.

4. Mid Suffolk Council Size – LGBCE (17)37

It had been agreed to review Mid Suffolk due to electoral imbalance. 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.

The current size of the Council is 40 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 40 to 34 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 34 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 34 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

5. Babergh Council Size – LGBCE (17)38

It had been agreed to review Babergh District Council at the request of the local authority. According to the latest available electoral figures, 11 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 43 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 43 to 31 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 31 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 31 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

6. Hull Further Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (17)39

The review of Hull City Council had commenced on 20 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.

Following publication, 283 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations which included proposals for warding patterns not previously put forward to the Commission during the initial consultation. As this new evidence on warding patterns was persuasive and had an impact on a significant majority of the wards, LGBCE officers considered that there was sufficient evidence for the Commission to conduct a further round of consultation for the entire authority prior to agreeing final recommendations.

In preparing these proposals, the team had taken into consideration both the submissions it had received and the statutory criteria, as well as conducting a further visit to the city. The further Draft Recommendations proposed a pattern of 17 three-, and three two-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 further Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Further Draft Recommendations for Hull City Council as presented.

7. Surrey Heath Final Recommendations – LGBCE (17)40

The review of Surrey Heath Borough Council had commenced on 19 July 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 31 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 19 July 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 34 but at its meeting on 20 December 2016, agreed to an amendment to the Draft Recommendations that would see a council size of 35.

Following publication, 62 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, 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 some aspects and these changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission for consideration.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of seven three-, and seven two-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 to a period of further limited consultation focusing on the areas of Town, Old Dean and St Pauls before publishing the Final Recommendations.

Agreed

A period of further limited consultation focusing on the areas of Town, Old Dean and St Pauls.

8. Chair's Report

The Chair informed the Commission that the scheduled meeting with the Speaker's Committee had been rearranged for Wednesday 26 April.

9. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive had nothing further to add.

10. Finance Director's Report – LGBCE (17)41

The Finance Director presented the Financial Outturn for 2016/17.

Highlights of the report included:

- A relocation steering group had been formed to commence work on relocating the Commission by December 2018.
- The provisional outturn position had an anticipated underspend of £175k. A number of significant factors had caused the underspend to increase from the previously projected figure of £130k. Reasons included Commissioner and staffing recruitment, associated reduction in staffing costs and project expenditure.
- Efforts to ensure that our training budget had been spent were successful.

The next step will be to translate the outturn figures and other year-end adjustments into the draft Annual Report & Accounts. This would be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee on 16 May.

It was agreed to give further consideration to ensuring a greater consistency between Q3 forecasts and Q4 outturn.

11. Future Business – LGBCE (17)42

The Commission noted the Future Business document. The Chief Executive was asked to review this document in relation to the rules on purdah.

12. Business Plan update – LGBCE (17)43

The Director of Strategy and Communications updated the Commission on its Business Plan for 2016/17. This plan set out how the Commission will deliver its aims and focus its resources for the current financial year.

Highlights of the report included:

- The Commission had completed 21 out of 23 scheduled electoral reviews of authorities with high levels of electoral inequality. The planned electoral review of Taunton Deane District Council had been paused to await the outcome of the planned merger of the council with West Somerset District Council and the electoral review of Ashford Borough Council had been delayed to allow the council to complete a Community Governance Review.
- The Commission is on schedule with regards to completing the remainder of the review timetable.
- Five of the 11 non-review related projects had been completed. The remaining six projects would roll over into the 2017-18 financial year, something the Commission had anticipated.
- An update was given on the Commission's website project.

The Commission sought assurance from the Director of Strategy and Communications that new processes resulting from projects that had been completed were now being consistently implemented. The Chief Executive agreed to produce a report to the Commission on a quarterly basis.

13. Performance update – LGBCE (17)44

The Director of Strategy and Communications presented the 2016/17 KPI Report.

Highlights of the report included:

- **KPI 1 Electoral Imbalance** – has exceeded its target to reduce high levels of electoral inequality.
- **KPI 2 Requested Review** – eight authorities had requested reviews and these had been accepted to the review programme during the financial year. This had exceeded our target of achieving five requested electoral reviews.
- **KPI 3 Customer Satisfaction** – the average score is 72.5% which is just above the Commission's target of 70%. It is clear from reviewing the results that people's satisfaction with the outcome of a review influences their reported satisfaction with the process as a whole (over 90 per cent of those content with the outcome had expressed satisfaction with the process).
- **KPI 4 Orders Laid Before Anticipated Election** - 13 authorities have had orders laid, of which 100% have been before the election at which they were anticipated to be adopted. All other reviews are on track and should see their orders laid before the anticipated election.

It was also confirmed that a complete review of all KPIs would be carried out during the 2017-18 financial year.

AOB

The Office Manager and HR Lead was asked to send out electronic calendar appointments for 2018-2019 Commission meetings.

Close of Business 15:52

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