

## LGBCE (16)2nd Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 23 February 2016, at 09:30am, in meeting room 28<sup>th</sup> Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP

Commissioners Present  
Professor Colin Mellors (Chair)  
Alison Lowton  
Peter Maddison  
Sir Tony Redmond  
Professor Paul Wiles CB

### LGBCE Officers Present:

Jolyon Jackson CBE	Chief Executive
Lynn Ingram	Finance Director
Marcus Bowell	Director of Strategy and Communications
Tim Bowden	Review Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Jo Porter	Review Manager
Lucy Ward	Review Officer (item 3)
Emily Starkie	Review Officer (item 3)
Dean Faccini	Business Assistant
Alex Palacky	Office Manager

The Chair welcomed Alex Palacky to the Commission.

### Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

### Declarations of interest

The Chair declared an interest in item 2, Leeds City Council, and left the room for that item.

### Minutes of LGBCE meeting on 19 January 2016

Minor corrections were made to item 7, Cambridgeshire Final Recommendations, and item 8, Coterminality, Doughnut Wards and Accessibility.

## Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

### 1. Operational Report - LGBCE (15)13

The Chief Executive presented the Operational Report for February 2016 and the Commission noted its content.

The Commission had received a request from Surrey Heath for a small extension to their consultation date. The Commission agreed to this request.

The following lead commissioner allocations were made:

Alison Lowton	Tendring District Council
Peter Maddison	Harborough District Council
Paul Wiles	Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

The Review Manager was asked to allocate a Commissioner to cover the meeting with Tewksbury Borough Council on 21 March 2016.

The Chief Executive briefed the Commission on an update meeting with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on their work on Devolution.

The Chief Executive and the Review Manager updated the Commission on their meeting with the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

The Chief Executive gave an update on the Boundary Commission for England.

### 2. Leeds Council Size - LGBCE (16)14

*This item was chaired by Sir Tony Redmond.*

It had been agreed to review Leeds City Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 18 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with one ward, Headingley, being 49 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 99 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 99 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 99 members.

## Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 99 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

### 3. East Sussex County and District Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (16)15

It had been agreed to carry out an electoral review of East Sussex County Council as a coordinated process in conjunction with each of the five districts within the county. According to the latest available electoral figures, East Sussex County met the Commission's intervention criteria, and would have been subject to an electoral review before the next election in 2017. In addition, two of the districts - Wealden and Hastings - also met the criteria. Electorate growth trends for Lewes indicated that it would meet the review criteria within a few years.

The review commenced on 8 September 2015. According to the latest available electoral figures, East Sussex County and its five districts had imbalances of:

Local Authority	Type of Review	Imbalance	Governance	Previous Review
East Sussex County Council	Intervention	34%	Leader and Cabinet model	2004
Eastbourne Borough Council	Request	11%	Leader and Cabinet model	2001
Hastings Borough Council	Intervention	38%	Strong leader	2001
Lewes District Council	Request	29%	Leader and Cabinet model	2001
Rother District Council	Request	20%	Strong leader	2001
Wealden District Council	Intervention	26% (outlier 30%)	Leader and Cabinet model	2001

The current size of each of the Councils is:

East Sussex County	49 members
Eastbourne Borough Council	27 members
Hastings Borough Council	32 members
Lewes District Council	41 members
Rother District Council	38 members

Wealden District Council	55 members
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At its meeting on 8 September 2015, the Commission had been minded to agree council sizes for each of the following districts and the Draft Recommendations being considered had been prepared on the following council sizes.

East Sussex County	50 members
Eastbourne Borough Council	27 members
Hastings Borough Council	32 members
Lewes District Council	41 members
Rother District Council	38 members
Wealden District Council	45 members

In preparing the draft scheme, the team had taken into consideration both the submissions it had received and the statutory criteria. The Draft Recommendations proposed the following ward patterns.

East Sussex County	50 single-member divisions
Eastbourne Borough Council	Nine three-member wards
Hastings Borough Council	16 two-member wards
Lewes District Council	Four three-member, 12 two-member and five single-member wards.
Rother District Council	21 wards, made up of four single-member and 17 two-member wards
Wealden District Council	43 single-member and two two-member wards

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 with amendments in the following areas:

- A change to the boundary in the Rother District to the wards in the Battle area that provided for a clearer boundary, by following the railway line, and better levels of electoral equality.

### **Agreed**

Draft Recommendations for East Sussex County Council as presented subject to the modification in Rother District.

#### 4. Sevenoaks Related Alteration - LGBCE (16)16

The Commission considered the content of the Sevenoaks Related Alterations paper. It was minded to agree to the related alteration as the changes proposed would have no adverse effect on electoral equality, nor would they effect any of the divisions with regards to the countywide review. The changes were also supported by all of the seven electors affected by the alteration.

##### **Agreed**

The Commission agreed to the making of an Order implementing the related alteration.

#### 5. Electoral Cycles and Ward Patterns – LGBCE (16)17

The Review Manager invited the Commission to agree the policy on Electoral Cycles and Ward Patterns. Although no changes had been made to the policy, the paper was intended to clarify the Commission's position on electoral cycles and ward patterns following legal advice that had been sought by the team.

The Commission endorsed the policy subject to a small amendment to paragraph 9.

#### 6. Warrington Review: Lessons Learned – LGBCE (16)18

A paper outlining the lessons learned from the Warrington review was presented by the Director of Strategy and Communications and the Review Manager. The Commission was asked to agree to the recommendations in the paper.

The Director of Strategy and Communications outlined the prayer tabled against the draft order and the subsequent debate by the Delegated Legislation Committee of the Commons which met on 1 February 2016. The Commission had been represented by Gary Streeter MP at the Speaker's Committee.

The Review Manager indicated a number of issues from the case and put forward a number of proposals that might assist going forward:

- A refresher course on the Commission's powers with regards to parishes would be attended by all Review Officers.
- The Review Officer would always notify the Lead Commissioner of any parish warding issues.
- A review would take place of the consultation materials issued to parish and town councils during consultation.
- The review programme would take account of any risks associated with the parliamentary scrutiny process.

The Commission considered the paper and had the following observations:

- It is important that parish warding issues are reported to the Lead Commissioner at review briefings.

- We need to be clear in reports and recommendations why decisions have been made and why we have been unable to implement some consultation proposals.
- The importance of good communications with local authorities throughout the review process.

### **Agreed**

The Commission agreed to the recommendations outlined in the paper.

## **7. Devolution Update – LGBCE (16)19**

The Director of Strategy and Communications gave an update to the Commission on Devolution.

The Director of Strategy and Communications was thanked for helpful update and it was agreed to revisit the issue at the next policy workshop.

## **8. Chair's Report**

The Chair briefed the Commission on a number of external meetings he had attended with MPs. They included:

- a meeting with the Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell, MP for Sutton Coldfield
- a meeting with the Rt Hon Gary Streeter, MP for South West Devon
- a meeting with the Rt Hon Gavin Barwell, MP for Croydon Central.

The Chair updated the Commission with regard to the re-appointment of a Commissioner and the appointment of a Deputy Chair. The Chair had spoken to Paul Rowsel at the DCLG regarding the matter.

The Chair also noted that a more standardise process for Commissioner appraisals had been discussed at the Commission pre-meet.

## **9. Chief Executive's Report**

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Commission's policy when declaring an interest during a Commission meeting would be for the individual to leave the room for that item.

The Chief Executive was expecting the report on the senior salary pay review reward review. Its recommendations would routinely be applied to Commissioner fees from 1 April 2016.

## 10. Finance Director's Report

The Finance Director gave an update on a staff tribunal involving a former member of staff.

The Finance Director advised the Commission that a one-off spend of £18k would be made this financial year for the purchase and installation of Windows 10 to all office laptops. The decision to upgrade the existing Microsoft operating system was taken after consultation with our IT partner, Wavex, who deemed the current RDS setup using Windows 7 as unstable. The target date for the implementation of Windows 10 would be at the end of March 2016.

The Commission noted the Finance Director's report.

## 11. Chair of Audit & Risk Committee - Record of Signing of Minutes of Audit & Risk Committee Meeting of 16 November 2015 – LGBCE (16)20

The minutes were signed by the Audit Committee Chair.

## 12. Audit & Risk Committee – Chair's Report

The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee gave a brief update on its most recent meeting which had taken place on 22 February.

Highlights included:

- The Committee discussed the first Draft Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report to the Commission. The report would be based around business process review, the finance manual, and the role of the Commission.
- The NAO VfM report was discussed with the issue of proportionality being a main talking point given the LGBCE's size.
- The Risk Policy and Risk Register was reviewed and was noted that the register was a much better document now that it was regularly updated.
- The Annual Report & Accounts Process 2015/16 was reviewed.
- The Committee looked at how KPIs should be updated for the Non-financial Key Performance Indicators for 2016-2017.
- The Internal Audit Progress Report 2015-16 was presented by the Internal Auditors. No concerns were reported.
- The Audit Plan for 2016-17 was discussed.
- The Audit Committee commended the revised Data Management Policies on Information Management and Security.
- The Business Continuity Plan received a number of amendments but the document was well received by the Committee.
- The Audit Committee discussed how this year's Purdah period could be a potential risk to the review programme.

The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee also confirmed to the Chair that the committee had discussed the recruitment process with regards to appointing a new Independent Member.

The Chair thanked the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee.

### 13. NAO VFM Report on Back Office & Relocation – LGBCE (16)21

The National Audit Office (NAO) presented their draft report on the Value for money review 2015-16: Benefits realised from the back office and relocation project.

The current status of the report is:

- The Chief Executive and the Finance Director had both given feedback on the draft report with comments focusing on the report's tone. Both were now content that the report was factually correct and better balanced.
- The next step would be for the Comptroller and Auditor General to sign off the report which would be the final stage before being released for consideration at the Speaker's Committee on 23 March 2016.

The main messages from the report were:

- Overall the back office project has been well managed and had successfully delivered its objectives. The NAO felt this was impressive given the size of the LGBCE.
- The report's highlights included financial positives such as the amount of money saved by bringing more back-office services in house and non-financial savings such as having greater control of its services.
- The report noted the slight overspend on the implementation costs.
- The report also raised the further savings that might have been secured by relocation to outside of London. The report asked the Commission to be more aware of this fact for next time whilst acknowledging the functional reasons the Commission took for not doing moving at this time.

The Chair asked the Audit & Risk Committee Chair for his observations as the Audit & Risk Committee discussed the report at their meeting yesterday. The Audit & Risk Committee Chair made the following comments:

- He agreed with many of the recommendations found in the report but wanted to reiterate the sound business reasons on the decision for not relocating to outside of London.
- He acknowledged the costs of implementation did exceed the initial budget but felt this was justified in order to allow the team to remain flexible in achieving its objectives.
- The savings made from the back-office services is a big plus and that became really apparent when the project group carried out their own review of the project.
- He noted the relatively short lease at Millbank Tower and that, given the advice provided by the NAO in its report, it would be worth considering the

next move again very soon, including a thorough examination of all the options available.

- The acknowledgement from the NAO that the project was well managed confirmed the strong performance of the project team performed in delivering its objectives.
- The tone of the report had been discussed by the Audit & Risk Committee but they respected the outcome of the review and the recommendations made in the report.

The Chair referred to paragraph 2.9 from the report which looked at the relocation element to the project and suggested that the phrasing might be seen to imply that the decision not to move out of London was simply one of preference when, in fact, careful consideration had been given to this option. However, functional considerations had pointed to a London base, specifically: 1) ease of access to local authorities, and 2) that electoral reviews required significant liaison with parliament and MPs. It was important to emphasise that not only was there a business continuity factor for remaining in London but a functionality factor too.

The NAO finally added that there would be a five year period before the next VfM study takes place.

The Chair thanked the NAO for their work.

#### 14. Corporate Plan 2016/17 – LGBCE (16)22

The Director of Strategy and Communications presented the Draft Corporate Plan and asked the Commission to agree to its submission to the Speaker's Committee on 23 March 2016.

The Commission fed back their comments on the Draft Corporate Plan and, subject to minor amendments, endorsed the plan for submission to the Speaker's Committee.

Separately, it was agreed to consider a workshop later in the year to discuss corporate planning for the Commission more generally.

#### 15. Agreement of Commission meeting dates for 2017 – LGBCE (16)23

The Commission approved the proposed dates for Commission meeting dates for 2017.

It was agreed that meetings would start at a later time of 11:15am from June 2016.

## 16. Future Business – LGBCE (15)24

The Commission noted the Future Business document.

### AOB

The team would make a recommendation on a new mapping solution to the Commission at the next meeting.

**Close of Business 13:06**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "C. Melly", with a horizontal line underneath.