

LGBCE (13) 11th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 12 November 2013, at 09:45am, in Rooms A & B,
Layden House, 76-86 Turnmill Street, London, EC1M 5LG

Commissioners Present

Max Caller (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 Bowell

Alison Evison

Tim Bowden

Richard Buck

Sarah Vallotton

Alex Hinds

Paul Kingsley

Mark Pascoe

Simon Keal

Dean Faccini

Chief Executive

Director of Reviews

Director of Finance

Communications Manager

Review & Programme Manager

Review Manager

Review Manager

Business & Committee Services Manager

Review Officer

Review Adviser

Review Officer

Review Officer

Business Assistant

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Declarations of interest

Sir Tony Redmond declared an interest in South Buckinghamshire and did not take part in the discussion relating to the review of that area.

Professor Colin Mellors declared an interest in York and did not take part in the discussion relating to the review of that area.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 8th October 2013

It was agreed that the minutes should include reference to discussion of the York review although no decision had been taken on this item. With the inclusion of that note, the minutes were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

1. Operational Report - LGBCE (13)151

The Director of Reviews presented the Operational Report for November. The report was noted.

2. York Council Final Recommendations – LGBCE (13)159

At the Commission's October 2013 meeting, and in the absence of the Chair, the Deputy Chair declared an interest in this item and took no part in the discussion. Dr Knight was invited to chair the discussion of this item. However, given the absence of the Chair and the non-participation of the Deputy Chair, the Commission was inquorate. Accordingly, formal consideration of the final recommendations would be made at a later date, informed by the discussion, when the Commission was quorate.

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

At its meeting in December 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 47 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 101 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 to an amendment that would see the northern part of the proposed Fulford & Heslington ward (focussed on the York University campus) incorporated into the a revised three-member Hull Road ward and these were proposed as the Final Recommendations for City of York Council.

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 Draft Recommendations. It supported the Final Recommendations as presented, subject to suggesting a small amendment to the boundary between the proposed Fulford & Heslington and Hull Road wards in the Walnut Close area.

Agreed

The Final Recommendations as presented, accompanied by the views expressed during the discussion in relation to a minor modification.

3. West Devon Council Size Post Consultation – LGBCE (13)164

It had been agreed to review West Devon Borough Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest electoral figures, 36% of wards currently exceeded the 10% variance threshold. One ward, Hatherleigh, had a variance of 31%.

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 31 members.

Following receipt of information about future governance and representational arrangements, it was recommended by LGBCE officers that there was sufficient evidence to support the council size remaining at 31 members.

At its meeting in September 2013 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 keeping the council size to 31 members. The consultation ended on 14 October 2013.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted 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 to proceed to consultation on warding arrangements and preparation of draft recommendations.

4. Lichfield Council Size Post Consultation – LGBCE (13)165

It had been agreed to review Lichfield District Council due to electoral imbalance. The review had commenced in October 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 35 per cent of wards had variances 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 56 members.

At its meeting in August 2013 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 council size of 56 members. The consultation ended on 14 October 2013.

In the light of the information received, notwithstanding the proposals made, LGBCE officers judged that available evidence pointed to carrying out a further limited consultation on a council size of 44 and 47 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted they were minded to support a council size of 47 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 47 be used as the basis to proceed to consultation on warding arrangements and preparation of draft recommendations.

5. Broxtowe Council Size Post Consultation – LGBCE (13)166

Subsequent to the meeting it was discovered that the Commission had not had access to all of the submissions. Accordingly, the item will be re-considered at the next meeting in December.

6. South Buckinghamshire Council Size Post Consultation – LGBCE (13)167

It had been agreed to review South Buckinghamshire Council at the request of the authority. The review had commenced in April 2013. Four of the wards (21%) had a

variance greater than 10% with the biggest outlier being Burnham Beeches ward, which had 20% fewer electors per councillor than the district average.

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 40 members.

At its meeting in August 2013 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 28 members. The consultation ended on 14 October 2013.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted it was minded to support a council size of 28 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 28 be used as the basis to proceed to consultation on warding arrangements and preparation of draft recommendations.

7. Doncaster Council Size Post Consultation – LGBCE (13)168

It had been agreed to review Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest electoral figures, 10% of its wards currently exceeded the 10% variance threshold. The review had been requested by the previous Mayor.

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 63 members.

At its meeting in August 2013 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 of between 48 and 54 members. The consultation ended on October 2013

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted, including the late representations received from the Mayor and the Intervention Commissioners, it was minded to support a council size of 54 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 54 be used as the basis to proceed to consultation on warding arrangements and preparation of draft recommendations.

During its consideration, the Commission noted that, notwithstanding the Secretary of State's announcement in July 2013 that he intended to make an Order providing for Doncaster to move from elections by thirds to whole council elections, this order had not yet been made. Whilst it would be inappropriate to assume or anticipate any such change, it would be prudent to consider the possibility of any development in the period before the consultation began or during the period of consultation.

It was further agreed that if any development in respect of election cycles takes place in the period between the Commission meeting and the start of the consultation the precise wording of the consultation could be changed with the agreement of the Chair to reflect the new circumstances. Subsequently if, during the course of consultation, an Order was made to provide for whole council elections in Doncaster, then the Commission would draw this fact to the attention of interested parties.

8. Breckland Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (13)169

The review of Breckland District Council had commenced on August 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, two wards have variances of over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on March 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 50 and the Draft Recommendations being considered had been prepared on the basis of such a Council size.

In preparing the draft scheme, the team revised their warding pattern based on a council size of 49 as this provided for a better allocation of members across the district and a warding pattern which achieved a better balance between the statutory criteria. As such the Draft Recommendations proposed a pattern of four three-member wards, 14 two-member wards, and nine 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.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Breckland District Council as presented.

9. Corby Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (13)170

The review of Corby Borough Council had commenced in August 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 40 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10% from the average for the borough.

At its meeting on June 2013, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 29 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 both the submissions it had received and the statutory criteria. The Draft Recommendations proposed a pattern of six three-member wards, five two-member wards, and one single-member ward 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 subject to an amendment in relation to the Corby Rural West ward.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Corby Borough Council as presented subject to an amendment to the Rural West ward.

10. Braintree Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (13)171

The review of Braintree District Council had commenced on August 2013. According to the latest electoral figures, 23 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10% from the average for the district.

At its meeting in June 2013, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 50 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 both the submissions it had received and the statutory criteria. The team felt that, given the different suggestions received and the ability to draw on a combination of these, a revised council size number of 49 was more appropriate. This represented a reduction of one member from the council size of 50 previously agreed by the Commission. The team believed that a revised council size of 49 provided a scheme that would best reflect the statutory criteria. As such, the Draft Recommendations proposed a pattern of three three-member wards, 17 two-member wards, and six 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 as presented, subject to a ward name change.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Braintree District Council as presented, subject to a ward name change.

11. Aylesbury Vale Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (13)172

The review of Aylesbury Vale Council had commenced on October 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 12 of the council's 36 wards (33%) currently have a variance of (+/-) 10%, while one ward (Bierton) has a variance of -37%.

At its meeting on July 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a Council size of 59 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 both the submissions it had received and the statutory criteria. The Draft Recommendations proposed a pattern of eight three-member wards, 10 two-member wards, and 15 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 as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Aylesbury Vale as presented.

12. Telford & Wrekin Final Recommendations - LGBCE (13)173

The review of Telford & Wrekin Borough Council had commenced on June 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 39 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on May 2013, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 54 and had subsequently, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 31 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 not been judged that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations, except in respect of minor amendments to the boundaries of eight wards, and the change of the name of Madeley ward to Madeley and Sutton Hill ward. These were proposed as the Final Recommendations for Telford & Wrekin Borough Council.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of six three-member wards, thirteen two-member wards, and ten single-member wards.

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 Telford & Wrekin Borough Council as presented.

13. Shepway Final Recommendations - LGBCE (13)174

At its meeting on May 2013, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 30 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 33 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 not been judged that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations except in respect of minor amendments to a number of ward names. The ward of Folkestone Park would be named Folkestone Park & Broadmead, Sandgate would be named Sandgate & West Folkestone, Folkestone East would be named East Folkestone and Cheriton & Morehall would be named Cheriton. These were proposed as the Final Recommendations for Shepway District Council.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of five three-member, seven two-member, and one single-member ward.

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 Shepway District Council as presented.

14. Selby Final Recommendations - LGBCE (13)175

The review of Selby District Council had commenced on April 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, three wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on May 2013, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 31 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 34 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 not been judged that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations except in respect of minor amendments to the boundary between the wards of Appleton Roebuck & Church Fenton and Tadcaster and these were proposed as the Final Recommendations for Selby District Council.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of four three-member wards, four two-member wards, and 11 single-member wards.

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 Selby District Council as presented.

15. Daventry Parish Council Report - LGBCE (13)176

The Daventry Parish Council Report was presented to the Commission.

Agreed

That an Amendment Order would not be prepared in order to modify the year of elections for Daventry Parish Council.

16. Report on Council Size & Shortened Review Process - LGBCE (13)177

The Commission noted the report.

Agreed

That there would not normally be formal consultations on council size for reviews in the 2014/15 programme.

17. Quarterly Review Programme Review - LGBCE (13)178

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

Agreed

- The changes as set out in the Quarterly Review Programme.

- That dates of new electoral reviews be communicated to Commissioners and invites sent to their diaries as soon as they have been assigned.
- Changes to the review programme are made clearly in order to highlight any significant changes or missed dates.
- A 'buddying' programme to be devised as part of the new Commissioner's induction.

18. Related Alterations – Sevenoaks DC - LGBCE (13)179

A request from Sevenoaks District Council to alter the boundaries of district wards which would have no material impact on electoral variances had been received.

Agreed

That an Order should be made in accordance with the District Council's request.

19. Evaluation of Post-Election surveys - LGBCE (13)180

A report on the evaluation of post-election surveys was presented to the Commission. It recommended that telephone surveys following the implementation of electoral reviews should take place periodically rather than annually, due to the high cost and limited value of the survey.

Agreed

That a paper setting out alternative proposals for evaluating the effects of electoral changes be presented to the Commission when possible prior to any decision being taken on the matter.

20. Council Meeting Presentation Materials - LGBCE (13)181

A paper on Council Meeting Presentation Materials was presented to the Commission.

Agreed

- That Commissioners would provide feedback on the presentation materials to the Communications Manager.
- That consideration be given to how staff could receive 'accredited' training in delivering presentations at council meetings.
- Until accreditation issues had been resolved, all presentations to Full Council or equivalent meetings of Members would be undertaken by Commissioners

21. Chair's Report

The Chair reported his recent meeting with Rosie Winterton MP for Doncaster.

22. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive gave his report in a private session, although most matters were not confidential.

- He noted; A project to confirm savings opportunities over the next few years to sustain 'business as usual' at current planned levels within a budget in line with government spending review expectations;
- A project to consider over the next 6 to 9 months what alternative arrangements for premises and services might be needed in future.

Both would be led by the Finance Director and would be subject to periodic reports to the Commission to be included in Future Business.

- (a) Review implementation was well on course, with three orders made recently and ten before Parliament.
- (b) The NAO, in agreement with the Chief Executive, had put to the Speaker's Committee possible proposals for this year's VfM study. The lead proposal was a study of LGBCEs acquisition of support services under the LGA contract. It was hoped that the Speaker's Committee would agree the proposal on 24 November. The timetable would then be tight, requiring NAO to complete field work and produce a draft report by Christmas, to be discussed and agreed for submission in February. This has been raised with the NAO at Audit Committee.
- (c) The Speaker's Committee would this year revert to two stages of examination of the draft corporate plan and budget estimate, first by a Budget Sub-Committee and later by the full Committee. It would be desirable for LGBCE to adopt the same approach. This would entail submitting drafts by early December, to allow the Treasury and Scrutiny Unit to brief the Sub-Committee for a meeting early in the New Year.
- (d) The Chief Executive took the Commissioners' views on the continuing discussions with the PCS to seek to resolve the pay dispute.

23. New and Emerging Risks

The Chair remarked on a conversation he had had with External Independent Adviser to the Audit Committee. She felt that some risks in particular relating to unknowns post 2015 were not currently reflected in the risk register. Commissioners

were asked to reflect upon such uncertainties and think how they might be incorporated into the register.

24. Report of Audit Committee Meeting

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

Key topics covered were:

- Audit report from Baker Tilly on stakeholder engagement and staff leavers/sickness.
- A review of the risk register with suggestions for improvement from the Business and Committee Services Manager and the Finance Director
- A useful report from the Finance Director on reducing grants.
- The procurement process to appoint internal auditors for the next three years beginning from the start of the next financial year. Interviews would take place on 25 Nov 2013.

25. Future Business – LGBCE (13)150

The content of the Future Business paper was noted.

AOB

There were no other items.

Close of Business 13:50