

LGBCE (14)12th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 16 December 2014, at 10.30am, 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

Observer and Technical Adviser

LGBCE Officers Present:

Alan Cogbill	Chief Executive
Jolyon Jackson CBE	Chief Executive Designate
Lynn Ingram	Finance Director
Tim Bowden	Business Development/Review Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Sarah Vallotton	Business & Committee Services Manager
Emily Starkie	Review Officer (item 3)
Karen Cleverly	Business Support Officer (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Marcus Bowell, Communications Manager.

The Chair noted that the Chief Executive, Alan Cogbill, would retire at the end of December 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

Karen Cleverly, Business Support Officer, declared an interest in item 2, Gloucester Draft Recommendations.

Professor Paul Wiles observed the Commission meeting in a Technical Advisory capacity pending his formal reappointment to the Commission. He took no part in any decisions made at the meeting.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 18 November 2014

A small clarification was made to Declarations of Interest. With that amendment, the minutes were agreed, and would be signed by the Chair as soon as possible.

Matters Arising

The Review Manager advised the Commission that there had been an error in the mapping for Cherwell Draft Recommendations discussed at the last Commission meeting. He confirmed, however, that the figures and all materials published online had been correct and that the error was not material to the decisions taken by the Commission. He asked the Commission to agree minor changes to the maps.

The Commission requested that a paper outlining how the error had been made, despite the formal checking process, together with any lessons to be learned, be brought to the next meeting.

Agreed

- Minor changes to maps for Cherwell Draft Recommendations.
- A report on lessons learned would be brought to the Commission in January 2015.

1. Operational Report - LGBCE (14)148

The Chief Executive Designate presented the Operational Report for December. The format of the report had undergone further changes and Commissioners were asked to comment on the revised format.

A number of changes to the programme had been agreed following requests by the local authorities concerned; Nottingham would be extended by 3 weeks, Kent by 2 weeks and South Lakeland by 2 months. Exeter would be brought forward.

As part of the Baker Tilly process review follow-up, the pilot project around the clustering of reviews in East Sussex was nearly complete.

Ongoing work on GIS had been included in the development of the IT strategy.

Commissioners were supportive of the new format. The content of the report was noted.

2. Gloucester Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (14)149

The review of Gloucester City Council had commenced on 15 July 2014. According to the latest available electoral figures, two wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with one ward, Quedgeley Fieldcourt, varying by 48 per cent.

At its meeting on 15 July 2014, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 39 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 seven three-, eight two- and two single-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.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Gloucester City Council as presented.

3. Peterborough Final Recommendations - LGBCE (14)150

The review of Peterborough City Council had commenced on 10 September 2013. According to the latest available electoral figures 33 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with one ward, Orton with Hampton, being over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on 10 December 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 60 and had subsequently, on 17 June 2014, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 220 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 18 three, 2 two and 2 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 Peterborough City Council as presented.

4. Woking Final Recommendations - LGBCE (14)151

The review of Woking Borough Council had commenced on 10 September 2013. According to the latest available electoral figures, 35 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent. The Council also requested that the Commission undertake a review.

At its meeting on 10 December 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 30 and had subsequently, on 17 June 2014, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 514 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 uniform pattern of 10 three-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 Woking Borough Council as presented.

5. Rugby Related Alterations - LGBCE (14)152

The team recommended that the Commission agree to make an Electoral Change Order implementing related alterations to district wards as requested by the Council.

Officers assured the Commission that such modification would not adversely impact on, nor constrain, the review of Warwickshire that was currently being undertaken.

Agreed

The Commission agreed to make the necessary Electoral Change Order.

6. Chair's Report

The Chair reported on progress with regard to the re-appointment of Professor Paul Wiles to the Commission. He had been given a timeline for this re-appointment and he would continue to work with the Secretary of State to expedite this.

He also outlined the proposed schedule for the next round of appointments to the Commission and how these might align with the forthcoming general election.

The Chair indicated that he had recently been invited by the Secretary of State to be one of the three Commissioners who would take over some responsibilities from Tower Hamlets Council for an interim period. Before responding to this invitation, he had sought formal guidance from the LGBCE Chief Executive, and others, about any perceived or potential conflicts with his role as Chair of LGBCE. He noted that he would be resigning his role on the Electoral Commission where it was felt that there would be such a conflict. The advice that he had been given was that it was not felt that there was such a conflict in respect of LGBCE although care would continue to be exercised to distinguish the two roles.

The Commission noted that the invitation reflected the Chair's extensive experience as a senior officer in several London local authorities, rather than his role with LGBCE, and shared the view that such an appointment ought not to give rise to any potential conflict of interest. They were content for the Chair to accept the appointment.

The Chair expressed his appreciation of their support and undertook to indicate if it was ever felt that there might be a conflict and to withdraw from any Commission discussions in the unlikely event that this situation arose.

7. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive Designate reported that he intended to submit the draft Corporate Plan and budget estimates to the Speaker's Committee in advance of the Christmas break, in order to receive an early response.

8. Finance Director's Relocation & Back Office Project Update

The Finance Director reminded the Commission that savings of approximately £123,000 were anticipated because of the new back office contract arrangements. This had been reported at the November Commission meeting.

She gave an update about further progress: The contract for payroll and HR services was in the process of being agreed (anticipated savings of approximately £24,000 per year). Procurement of the new IT provider was underway with an appointment expected in early January. The IT consultant would meet Commissioners to discuss their specific IT needs later in the day. Savings of £42,000 were anticipated in IT.

The in-house finance solution with monthly specialist support would deliver savings of around £57,000 per year. An extra 0.5 FTE post in the Business Team would be created. Finally, it was expected that the lease for the new office in Millbank Tower would be signed in January 2015 for occupation in early April 2015.

The Chair congratulated the team on the good progress made and emphasised the need to manage the project through to a successful conclusion. The capacity and resilience of the organisation to manage the transition (particularly with regard to the finance arrangements) would need to be monitored carefully.

9. New & Emerging Risks and Risk Register Update – LGBCE (14)153

The Business & Committee Services Manager reported on two recent meetings of the Risk Management Working Group. The risk register had been re-scored and the group had checked that the controls in place were up to date and effective.

A number of issues had recently been raised as risks by the Commission and Audit Committee. Some of these were already being managed as risks but were not specifically mentioned on the risk register. An issue log was now attached to the risk register to address this.

The key risks were reported to be:

- Equalities and diversity: a working group had been set up and fortnightly meetings would be scheduled for 2015.
- Risk of the Commission being iniquorate: a report would be presented to the January 2015 Commission meeting to consider amending the Commission's Terms of Reference.
- Succession planning: the Chief Executive Designate would be carrying out further work in this area.

Agreed

The risk register would be brought to all future Commission meetings to ensure that Commissioners were fully briefed on risks.

- The Commission identified one issue relating to the potential for operational errors to increase during the office relocation and outsourcing of back office services. This would be added to the issues log.

10. Corporate Plan – Final Approval – LGBCE (14)154

The Commission noted the content of the draft Corporate Plan.

There were a few small amendments still to be made, which would be completed before finalisation.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair would sign off the final version.

11. Review of Corporate Governance Framework and Delegation of Powers – LGBCE (14)155

The Commission reviewed the document which had undergone some minor amendments. This included the removal of financial information which was now included in the body of the report and in the finance manual. A number of appendices had also been removed, and replaced with links to policy documents.

Agreed

The Corporate Governance Framework and Delegation of Powers document, as presented.

12. Future Business – LGBCE (14)156

It was noted that the Commission meeting dates for the Kent and Cambridgeshire reviews were incorrect and would be amended.

The following reports would be added to the agenda for January 2015:

- Report from the Equalities Working Group
- Lessons learned from the Cherwell review
- Review of Birmingham CC.
- Report on Commission's quorum
- Law Commission report

AOB

There were no other items.

Close of Business 12:05



MAX CALLIER CBE

CHAIR

