

## LGBCE (11) 10th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 8 November 2011, at 9.45am,  
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  
Sir Tony Redmond  
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE  
Professor Paul Wiles CB

### LGBCE Officers Present:

Alan Cogbill	Chief Executive
Archie Gall	Director of Reviews
David Hewitt	Director of Finance
Joan D'Souza	Review Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Timothy Bowden	Review Manager
Marcus Bowell	Communications & Public Affairs Manager
David Owen	Policy & Research Officer
Eleanor Gregory	Review Assistant (Item 2 & Minutes)
Simon Keal	Review Officer (Item 4)
Jessica Metherringham-Owlett	Review Officer (Item 5)
William Morrison	Review Officer (Items 6)
Arion Lawrence	Review Officer (Item 7)
Richard Otterway	Review Officer (Item 8)
Dean Faccini	Business Support Officer (Minutes)

### Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Sarah Vallotton, Business & Committee Services Manager.

## Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 11 October 2011

The Commission agreed the minutes of the 11 October 2011 Commission meeting as an accurate record.

### Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

### Declarations of interest:

Sir Tony Redmond and Max Caller reaffirmed their interest in Buckinghamshire and Swale respectively

Max Caller registered an interest in the Surrey review.

### 1. Operational Report – LGBCE (11)119

The Director of Reviews presented the November Operational Report. Reference was made to discussions between the Director and the Chief Executive of Purbeck District Council over the timetabling of review of that authority and the potential of the authority to resolve to move to a cycle of whole council elections.

#### Agreed:

1. To defer consideration of the draft recommendations for Purbeck subject to the authority's affirming immediately its wish to move, and thereafter resolving at the earliest opportunity to move, to a cycle of whole council elections.
2. The Director should convey the Commission's conclusions to the Chief Executive of Purbeck District Council prior to the Council meeting scheduled for that day. .

It was noted that Rother District Council had withdrawn its request for a PABR of its boundary with Wealdon.

### 2. Overview Report – LGBCE (11)120

The content of the Overview Report was noted.

### 3. Surrey Final Recommendations – LGBCE (11)121

The Chair withdrew from the discussion and decision-making on this agenda item. Professor Mellors, as Deputy Chair, chaired the discussion.

A further electoral review was being conducted because the December 2009 electorate figures indicated that more than 30% of divisions have electoral variances of more than 10% from the average for the county. There are currently 80 single-member divisions across the 11 districts in Surrey:

The review began on 12 October 2010, with consultation on council size. At its meeting on 8 December 2010, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 80 members, as proposed by the County Council.

During Stage One, the Commission received further evidence from Surrey County Council proposing an increase in council size to 81 members which would improve the allocation of members between the districts and achieve good electoral equality. The Commission considered this at its meeting on 14 June 2011 and was minded to recommend increasing the council size to 81 members.

At its meeting on 14 June 2011, the Commission agreed its draft recommendations which were broadly based on the County Council's scheme with some modifications in particular areas to better reflect the statutory criteria

During consultations on its draft recommendations, 465 representations had been received including submissions from the County Council, a Member of Parliament, county councillors, district councillors, town and parish councils, residents' associations, local organisations and local residents. These had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

The Commission considered the Final Recommendations in detail having regard to the statutory criteria.

Taking all of the evidence received into account, it was agreed that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the draft recommendations in the following areas:

1. Elmbridge District; (The Dittons and Esher & East Molesey)
2. Tandridge District; (Warlingham, Whyteleafe, Woldingham, Lingfield, Crowhurst, Godston & Oxted);
3. Surrey Heath District in Chobham;
4. Runnymede District: Woodham & New Haw and Addlestone;
5. Spelthorne District (minor changes in five separate areas).
6. Epsom & Ewell Borough (to transfer four roads into Ewell division).

**Agreed:**

1. Final Recommendations for Surrey County Council as presented
2. That the final recommendations report should stress the need for a community Governance Review for the Surrey Heath area.

#### 4. Swale Council Size Recommendations - LGBCE(11)126

The Chair withdrew from the discussion and decision-making on this agenda item. Professor Mellors, as Deputy Chair, chaired the discussion.

A further electoral review of Swale Borough Council was being conducted as the December 2010 electorate figures indicated that one ward - Iwade & Lower Halstow - exceeded the 30% variance threshold and has 47% more electors per councillor than the borough average.

During the preliminary stage, the Commission sought views on council size from the political groups on the council. However, at its August 2011 meeting, the Commission concluded that there was insufficient evidence to reach a decision and agreed to undertake a six-week consultation on the issue of council size.

During consultation, the Commission received 15 submissions from members of the public and parish councils. A written submission was not received from the Council. On 12 October 2011, Dr Knight and officers met with the leaders of the three political groups on Swale Borough Council to discuss further the issue of council size.

Five submissions from members of the public proposed a reduction in council size, with two local residents specifying a reduction to 23 and 25 members respectively. The other submissions received either proposed retaining 47 members or made no specific proposal.

The Commission noted the evidence from the group leaders that Swale has a participatory style of governance whereby all members are encouraged to participate in all formal decision making. Evidence received from members of the public and parish councils agreed that it was important for members to be able to manage their workload effectively in order that they could properly fulfil their community representational role. The Commission was satisfied that further consultation on the issue of Council size would elicit no further substantive evidence.

**Agreed:**

1. The Commission was minded to recommend a Council size of 47 members for Swale Borough Council.
2. The FER of Swale Borough Council would proceed to the next stage of the review process with the preparation of draft recommendations.

#### 6. Oxfordshire Final Recommendations – LGBCE (11)122

A further electoral review of Oxfordshire County Council was being conducted because, based upon the December 2009 electorate figures, Witney East electoral division contains 35% more electors per councillor than the average for the county.

The review began on 12 October 2010, with consultation on council size. At its meeting on 8 December 2010, the Commission had been minded to agree a reduction of members from 74 to 64. Following the start of the review, Oxfordshire County Council provided updated electorate forecasts which indicated that a council size of 63 would provide for a better allocation of elected members between districts. The draft recommendations were therefore based on a council size of 63.

At its meeting on 14 June 2011, the Commission agreed its draft recommendations which were broadly based on the County Council's scheme, the Labour Group's proposals, and locally suggested division patterns.

Following publication, 120 submissions had been received including submissions from three district councils, political groups, county and district councillors, parish and town councils, the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, and local residents. A petition containing approximately 600 signatures was received from the Cumnor area in the Vale of White Horse area. These had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

During Stage Three consultation, Oxford City Council provided detailed mapping of polling districts which had not been provided earlier in the review. Consequently, in five small areas across Oxford, the mapping for the draft recommendations was not coterminous with the polling districts which formed the basis of the submissions made at Stage One. The final recommendations therefore contained minor amendments to reflect this.

Taking all of the submissions into account, it was felt that there was sufficient evidence on community identity and interests to move away from the draft recommendations in the following areas:

1. The City of Oxford (St Margarets' & Wolvercote)
2. South Oxfordshire( Wallingford and Benson)
3. Vale of White Horse (Kingston & Cumnor and Sutton Courtenay and Marcham)
4. West Oxfordshire (Carterton).

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.

**Agreed:**

1. Final Recommendations for Oxfordshire County Council as presented
2. Parish warding arrangements be altered in order to retain a Cumnor Hill parish ward and that a map detailing parish warding arrangements for this area be attached to the minutes.

## 7. Buckinghamshire Final Recommendations – LGBCE (11)123

A further electoral review of Buckinghamshire County Council was being undertaken owing to the levels of electoral inequality in the county. At present 14 of the 47 electoral divisions (30%) have variances more than 10% from the average for the county. After the start of the review the Council, under the provisions of the 2007 Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act formally requested that the review seek to secure a uniform pattern of single-member divisions.

The review began on 12 October 2010, with consultation on council size. At its meeting on 8 December 2010, the Commission had been minded to agree a reduction of members from 57 to 49.

At its meeting on 14 June 2011, the Commission agreed its draft recommendations which were broadly based on the County Council's scheme with some modifications in particular areas to better reflect the statutory criteria.

Following publication, 35 submissions had been received, including submissions from the County Council, the Liberal Democrat Group on the County Council, and the Liberal Democrat parties in Aylesbury and Chiltern. The majority of the submissions focused on specific areas, in particular Chesham town in Chiltern district and on the northern part of Aylesbury Vale District. These had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all of the submissions into account, it was considered there was sufficient evidence to move away from the draft recommendations in the following areas:

1. Aylesbury Vale District (Stone & Waddesdon) to improve access;
2. Aylesbury Vale District (Thornborough parish) to reflect community identity and a better balance between the statutory criteria
3. Wycombe District (Marlow) to ensure more clearly defined division boundaries;
4. Name changes to several of the divisions were also made to better reflect the geography and local community identity.

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.

The Commission considered that the proposed divisions in the north of Aylesbury Vale District no longer reflected the names and communities of the divisions as agreed under its draft recommendations. The Commission concluded that division names of Buckingham East and Buckingham West were a better reflection of the communities in these divisions.

**Agreed:**

1. Final Recommendations for Buckinghamshire County Council as presented.
2. Division names of Buckingham East and Buckingham West.

## 8. Hart Final Recommendations – LGBCE (11)124

A further electoral review of Hart District Council was being conducted as, based on the December 2009 electorate figures, 22% of wards currently have electoral variances of greater than 10% from the average for the district and Fleet North ward has a variance of 34%. The Council elects by thirds.

The review began on 12 October 2010, with consultation on council size. At its meeting on 8 December 2010, the Commission had been minded to agree a reduction of members from 35 to 33.

At its meeting on 14 June 2011, the Commission agreed its draft recommendations which were broadly based on aspects of both the Council's and the Community Campaign (Hart) Group's proposals.

Following publication, 11 submissions were received. Most respondents endorsed the warding pattern in their respective areas while some proposed minor modifications and changes to ward names. The Council proposed further modifications, most notably in the Fleet and Church Crookham area, and a number of changes to ward names. These had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all of the submissions into account, it was considered there was sufficient evidence to move away from the draft recommendations in the following areas:

1. A modification in the Fleet town area, due to an anomaly in the electorate figures provided to the Community Campaign (Hart) Group by officers at Hart District Council
2. A number of ward name changes, and minor modifications to the boundaries of Church Crookham, Crookham Village, Yateley East and Blackwater & Hawley 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.

### **Agreed:**

1. Final Recommendations for Hart District Council as presented.

## 9. Slough Draft Recommendations– LGBCE (11)125

A further electoral review of Slough Borough Council was being conducted as, according to the December 2010 electorate figures, 50% of its wards exceeded the 10% variance threshold. The Council is currently represented by 41 councillors and elects by thirds.

The review began on 16 May 2011 with discussions between the Commission and Slough Borough Council regarding council size. At its meeting on 14 June 2011, the Commission were minded to agree a council size of 42, an increase of one member based on a submission from the Council.

During the Information Gathering stage, the Commission received ten submissions, including borough-wide schemes from Slough Borough Council, the Labour Group, Slough Conservatives, and Mr Kingswood, a local resident. These had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

The schemes received provided competing warding arrangements for each part of Slough Borough: west, central and east. The submissions provided by the Council, the Labour Group, and Mr Kingswood all proposed a uniform pattern of 14 three-member wards. The Conservative Group provided for a mixed warding pattern of 12 three-member wards and three two-member wards.

The Commission considered the Draft Recommendations in detail, having regard to the statutory criteria and taking into account the submissions received. The Commission decided to broadly base its draft recommendations on the proposals of the Council and Labour Group, subject to modifications in some areas to better reflect communication links and provide clearer ward boundaries by following ground detail.

**Agreed:**

1. Draft Recommendations for Slough Borough Council as presented.

## 14 Chair's Report

The Chair reported that a meeting has been held with John O'Brien, Chief Executive of London Councils. The discussion focussed on the current and forthcoming electoral reviews in several London Boroughs and the Commission's approach to these.

A prayer has been laid by Daventry MP Mr Chris Heaton Harris against the Daventry Draft Order.

## 15. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive reported that the reappointment of the Chair has been confirmed and is passing through the operative process.

The Chief Executive and some members of the senior management team were scheduled to meet the Speaker's Committee Budget Sub-Committee on 9 November 2011. An update on this would be provided in due course

## 16. Audit Committee Report & Risk Update

The Chair of the Audit Committee, Sir Tony Redmond, updated the Commission on the discussions of the November Audit Committee. Formal minutes of the Audit Committee will be included in the papers for the Commission's December meeting.

### **Agreed:**

For the Chief Executive to re-examine the Commission's obligations in respect of Equalities and Diversity and ensure this was accurately reflected in the risk register.

## 17. Finance and Performance Review (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarters) LGBCE(11) 127

The Finance Director presented the report on Finance. The Commission noted the report.

## 18. Communications Strategy (deferred from October workshop) LGBCE (11) 128

The Communications & Public Affairs Manager presented the report on key points from the strategy workshops. The Commission received an update on progress made on the key areas identified. These included potential improvements to the website, interaction with broadcast media, effective interaction with community groups and customer satisfaction. The Commission noted the report.

## 19. Future Business – LGBCE (11) 97

### **Agreed:**

1. For a simple list of Commission meeting dates to be circulated
2. For the note on key issues from the Councillor survey to be circulated by the Policy & Research Officer and officially considered by the Commission at its December meeting.

AOB

The Director of Reviews circulated to the Commission a summary of policy issues.

**13.50pm Meeting Closed**