

LGBCE (11) 8th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 13 September 2011, at
11.45am, 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
Professor Paul Wiles CB

LGBCE Officers Present:

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| 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 Howell | Communications & Public Affairs Manager |
| Sarah Vallotton | Business & Committee Services Manager |
| David Owen | Policy & Research Officer |
| Nicholas Dunkeyson | Review Assistant (Item 2) |
| Lisa Siggins | Review Officer (Item 3) |
| Arion Lawrence | Review Officer (Item 4) |
| Daniel Edwards | Review Officer (Items 5) |
| Simon Keal | Review Officer (Item 6) |
| Alex Skerten | Review Officer (Item 7) |
| Paul Kingsley | Review Officer (Item 8) |
| William Morrison | Review Officer (Item 9) |
| Daniel Knag | Review Officer (Item 10) |
| Kathleen Peacock | Business Support Officer (Minutes) |

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Dr Colin Sinclair CBE.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 9 August 2011

The Commission agreed the minutes of the 9 August 2011 Commission meeting as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

All matters arising from the minutes of the Commission meeting on 9 August 2011 were included on the agenda.

Declarations of interest:

Dr Peter Knight and David Hewitt reaffirmed their interests in Staffordshire and Rushmoor respectively.

No new interests were registered by Commissioners or officers during the meeting.

1. Operational Report – LGBCE (11)98

The Director of Reviews presented the September Operational Report and the Commission noted its content.

Agreed

A report updating the position on PABR requests would be available at the October Commission meeting.

2. Overview Report - LGBCE (11)99

The Commission noted the content of the Overview Report. The report gave a summary of the final and draft recommendations appearing later on the agenda.

3. Rushmoor Borough Council Final Recommendations – LGBCE (11)100

The review of Rushmoor Borough Council had commenced on 14 September 2010. According to the latest electoral figures, 30% of its wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 9 November 2010, the Commission had been minded to agree a Council size of 39 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations on 12 April 2011.

Following publication, seven submissions had been received 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 which included the following:

1. A warding name change from Grange Field Ward to Cherry Wood Ward,
2. A warding name change from Manor & Grove Ward to Manor Park Ward.

These changes were included in the Final Recommendations for Rushmoor Borough Council.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 13 three-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.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Rushmoor Borough Council as presented.

4. Broxbourne Borough Council Final Recommendations – LGBCE (11)101

The review of Broxbourne Borough Council had commenced on 14 September. According to the latest electoral figures, 31% of its wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 9 November 2010, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 30 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations on 12 April 2011.

Following publication, 167 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 was felt that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the draft recommendations in respect of the south west of the borough. This resulted in minor amendments being proposed to the boundaries of the Goff's Oak, Flamstead End and Rosedale & Bury Green wards. These changes were reflected in the Final

Recommendations presented to the Commission. Other minor amendments included:

1. A minor modification to the boundary between the wards of Waltham Cross and Cheshunt South & Theobalds wards.
2. A change of ward name from to Broxbourne ward to Broxbourne & Hoddesdon South ward.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 10 three-member wards.

The Commission considered the Final Recommendations in detail and were informed by the statutory criteria. Taking into account the submissions received following publication of the Draft Recommendations.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Broxbourne Borough Council as presented.

5. County Durham Final Recommendations - LGBCE(11)102

The review of County Durham County Council had commenced on 15 July 2008 due to the County's change in status to a unitary authority.

At its meeting on 2 March 2009, the Boundary Committee for England had been minded to agree a council size of 126 members. The Durham review had undergone a number of different stages, including several periods of consultation and, as a consequence, the process had altered significantly from a standard review schedule.

Following publication of the further draft recommendations, 243 submissions had been received. These 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 respect of the listed areas below, and these changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations presented to the Commission:

1. Crook, Hunwick, Willington and Tow Law,
2. Esh Winning, Bearpark and Ushaw Moor,
3. Chester-le-Street, Sacriston and the surrounding area.
4. Coxhoe and Durham South
5. Framwellgate & Newton Hal and Neville's Cross

The Final Recommendations proposed a mixed warding pattern of 63 divisions, with 11 single member divisions, 41 two member divisions and 11 three member divisions.

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 County Durham County Council as presented.
2. That a community governance review would be suggested to the authority in the Final Recommendations report to tidy up a number of small parish boundary anomalies.

6. Staffordshire County Council Final Recommendations – LGBCE (11)103

Dr Peter Knight declared an interest in this review and withdrew from the meeting room during the Commission's discussion of this item.

The review of Staffordshire County Council had commenced on 14 September 2010. According to the latest electoral figures, 42% of its divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 9 November 2010, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 62 members and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations on 12 April 2011.

Following publication, 75 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 sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations in respect of some division patterns in the following districts, and these were proposed as the Final Recommendations for Staffordshire County Council:

1. East Staffordshire,
2. South Staffordshire,
3. Stafford.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 60 divisions comprised of 58 single-member divisions and two, two-member divisions.

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

Final Recommendations for Staffordshire County Council as presented.

7. Gloucestershire County Council Final Recommendations – LGBCE (11)104

The review of Gloucestershire County Council had commenced on 14 September 2010. The review was being conducted on the basis of a request received from the County Council for a single-member division pattern to replace its current mixed pattern of single- and two-member divisions.

At its meeting on 9 November 2010, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 53 and had subsequently, agreed Draft Recommendations on 12 April 2011.

Following publication, 75 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 sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations in respect of some division patterns in the following districts and these were proposed as the Final Recommendations for Gloucestershire County Council:

1. Cheltenham
2. Gloucester
3. Tewkesbury

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 53 single-member divisions.

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

Final Recommendations for Gloucestershire County Council as presented.

8. Cumbria County Council Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (11)105

The review of Cumbria County Council had commenced on 12 October 2010. According to the latest electoral figures, 30% of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent, and the Dalston & Cummersdale division had a variance of 33% from the average for the County.

On the 29 March 2011 the Commission wrote to all stakeholders announcing that it was minded to recommend a council size of 84.

Thirty submissions had been received during the stage one consultation that commented on localised division patterns based on a council size of 84 members. However, no county-wide schemes were received during the stage one consultation period. Given the relative lack of community identity evidence, the draft recommendations for the county had been based on securing minimal electoral variances both now and in five years time. Where possible, the team had incorporated the localised submissions received during consultation. In areas where no submissions had been received the team had relied on their observation of the area during a recent tour of the county to help formulate the scheme.

The Commission considered the Draft Recommendations in detail informed by the statutory criteria. The proposed Wigton and Thursby divisions in Allerdale district were especially challenging in producing a pattern that would achieve reasonable electoral equality whilst respecting whole parishes and avoiding a 'doughnut' arrangement for Wigton. Accordingly, the Commission considered that further options should be explored before it agreed draft recommendations for this specific area.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented with an alternative division scheme to be circulated and agreed by correspondence for the Wigton and Thursby area.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Cumbria County Council subject to agreement in correspondence of the division arrangements in the Wigton and Thursby area, to be confirmed at its meeting in October.

9. St Albans/Welwyn Hatfield PABR Final Recommendations – LGBCE (11) 106

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. The Final Recommendations for the St Albans/Welwyn Hatfield PABR as presented.
2. The final report will be sent to the Secretary of State with an accompanying letter from the Chair on 20 September.
3. Residents affected by the PABR will also be sent a copy of the final recommendations report.

10. Huntingdonshire Related Alterations – LGBCE (11)107

Electoral forecast data had indicated that Huntingdonshire would reach the FER intervention criteria in 2008. The electoral changes orders would have a limited impact on reducing electoral inequality when implemented.

Agreed

1. The Related Alternations for Buckden, Gransden and Offords divisions be removed from Huntingdonshire related alterations order request.
2. The remainder of Huntingdonshire related alterations request would be accepted by the Commission and the necessary electoral changes orders made.
3. A letter would be sent to Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council informing them that a county FER would be required, as the intervention criteria has been met.

11. Chair's Report

Amendments to the Localism Bill (2010) had been tabled in the House of Lords by Baroness Hanham. These amendments, if enacted, would remove the permitted resolution period regulating when local authorities could resolve to move to whole council elections.

The Chair's re-appointment was being progressed.

Agreed

1. A process would be developed to inform Local Authorities concerning the implications of the Localism Bill amendments. **MB**

12. Chief Executive Report

Preparations were being made for the submission to the Speaker's Committee, based on the position papers discussed at the Strategic Planning Event.

13. Finance Progress Report – LGBCE (11)108

The Finance Director outlined performance against the budget to 31 August 2011 and a provisional revised estimate for the year 2011-12. The report confirmed that LGBCE spending is in line with budget forecasts in most areas.

The Local Government Group had indicated that it hoped to negotiate a reduction in Liberata's charges. Any savings resulting from the negotiation would be passed on to LGBCE.

14. Individual Voter Registration – LGBCE (11)109

The Commission discussed the implications of the new individual electoral registration system, the principle of which was due to be extended from Northern Ireland to the rest of the UK in 2014.

The Commission discussed the potential merits of the new system and concluded that it would be prudent to keep track of emerging research trends relating to any potential impact on electoral registers.

Within the new system, voters would be given the option to opt out of any future contact by electoral services and the Commission discussed how this may affect current electoral figures. The negative impact of removing the current electoral canvass procedure and how the new 'data matching' service might resolve this issue was discussed by the Commission.

Agreed

1. A response to the IER consultation would be drafted. The Commission would consult with the other Local Government Boundary Commissions, to ascertain the extent to which a coordinated response may be prepared. **DO**

15. Strategic Planning Event Summary

Commissioners, the Chief Executive, Directors and the Public Affairs & Communications Manager had recently attended a Strategic Planning Event and visited the offices of the Ordnance Survey.

A list of actions and outcomes from the event was currently being produced by the event's facilitator and would be circulated prior to the next Commission meeting.

The Commission discussed the potential for carrying out a similar event in 2012.

Agreed

1. A similar, one day event should be held for Commissioners and staff possibly early in the 2012/13 financial year.

16. Future Business Paper – LGBCE (11) 110

The Commission noted the content of the Future Business paper and a new paper that showed action points arising from Commission meetings. At present, this included all action points that had arisen since the beginning of the year but would, in future, only list outstanding actions and delivery dates.

15.20 Meeting Closed