

LGBCE (13) 1st Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 15 January 2013, at 09:30am, 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
Professor Paul Wiles CB
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE
Sir Tony Redmond

LGBCE Officers Present:

Alan Cogbill	Chief Executive
Archie Gall	Director of Reviews
Richard Buck	Review & Programme Manager
Jessica Metheringham	Review Manager
Danny Edwards	Review Manager
Marcus Bowell	Communications Manager
Sarah Vallotton	Business & Committee Services Manager
Richard Otterway	Review Officer
Daniel Knag	Review Officer
Will Morrison	Review Officer
Arion Lawrence	Review Officer
Nick Dunkeyson	Review Officer
Alex Hinds	Review Assistant
David Owen	Policy and Research Officer
Dean Faccini	Business Assistant (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

Apologies were given for Tim Bowden, Review Manager.

Declarations of interest:

No declarations of interest.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 11 December 2012

These were agreed along with the suggestion that an office note of follow-up actions would form a separate document.

Matters Arising

No matters arising.

1. Operational Report - LGBCE (13)01

The content of the Operational Report was noted by the Commission.

2. Wyre Council Size Post Consultation - LGBCE (13)02

It had been agreed to review Wyre Borough Council due to electoral imbalance. The review had commenced in April 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 31 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 55 members.

At its meeting in October 2012 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 50 members. The consultation ended on 3 December 2012.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted it was minded to support a council size of 50 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 50 be used as the basis to proceed to consultation on warding arrangements and preparation of draft recommendations.

3. Telford & Wrekin Council Size Post Consultation - LGBCE (13)03

It had been agreed to review Telford & Wrekin Borough Council due to electoral imbalance. The review had commenced in June 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 39 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 54 members.

At its meeting in October 2012 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 44 and a retention of 54 members. The consultation ended on 3 December 2012

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted 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.

4. Shepway Council Size Post Consultation - LGBCE (13)04

It had been agreed to review Shepway District Council at the request of the authority. The review had commenced in May 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 36 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 46 members.

At its meeting in October 2012 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 30 members. The consultation ended on 3 December 2012.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted it was minded to support a council size of 30 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 30 be used as the basis to proceed to consultation on warding arrangements and preparation of draft recommendations.

5. Selby Council Size Post Consultation - LGBCE (13)05

It had been agreed to review Selby District Council at the request of the authority. The review had commenced in April 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, three 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 41 members. The Council proposed that the number of elected members be reduced to 31.

At its meeting in October 2012 the Commission considered all the evidence it had received on council size. The Commission decided to consult locally on a change in council size to 31 members. The consultation ended on 3 December 2012

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.

6. Milton Keynes Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (13)06

The Review Manager presented an amendment to the draft recommendations for the electoral review of Milton Keynes. The amendment related to an error in the calculation for the split polling district figures in the wards of Bletchley Park and Bletchley East.

Agreed

The Commission agreed to the amendment to the draft recommendations for Milton Keynes.

7. Arun Final Recommendations - LGBCE (13)07

The review of Arun District Council had commenced on January 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 31 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 14 February 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 53 and the Draft Recommendations being considered had been prepared on this basis.

Following publication, 104 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 some instances. Also, in order to ensure communities were not divided between wards, it was appropriate to base final recommendations on a council size of 54 rather than 53 members envisaged in the draft recommendations. These changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 15 two-member wards, and eight 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 Arun District Council as presented.

8. Rushcliffe Final Recommendations - LGBCE (13)08

The review of Rushcliffe Borough Council had commenced in November 2011. According to the latest electoral figures, 32 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent from the average.

At its meeting on 14 August 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 44 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 27 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 ward boundary amendments to West Bridgford and East Bridgford, plus a number of ward names changes. These were proposed as the Final Recommendations for Rushcliffe Borough Council.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 11 single-member wards, 18 two-member wards and five 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 Rushcliffe Borough Council as presented.

9. Quarterly Review Programme Review - LGBCE (13)09

The Commission considered the recommendations from the Quarterly Review Programme and noted the potential implications of accommodating further reviews commencing in the 2013 – 2014 financial year.

Agreed:

That the proposed new project plans should also incorporate current reviews

That important dates for meetings and tours are scheduled in Commissioner diaries well in advance of reviews commencing.

That individual project plans are shared with the Commission.

10. Responses to Consultation on Parishes – LGBCE (13)10

The Research and Policy Officer presented the draft response to the consultation on Parishes undertaken by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

Agreed

That the Commission endorse the response to the consultation subject to minor amendments discussed in the meeting which would clarify the Commission's views on some matters.

11. Proposed Consultation on Council Size Determination – LGBCE (13)11

The Research and Policy Officer presented the proposed consultation on Council Size Determination. The Commission was asked to consider its approach on determining council size by agreeing to the proposed council size classifications as outlined in the report.

Agreed

That the Commission acknowledged the work that had been undertaken since its last discussion on the matter and the broad 'direction of travel'.

It was recognised that more work was needed to construct appropriate groupings of local authorities to understand the patterns of council size and, therefore, to identify where strong cases were needed to justify what might appear an 'outlier' position.

It was also important that the model was informed by the changing landscape of council size decisions.

That there would be a further workshop following the meeting to consider the type of data to be used when constructing the 'comparative families' in grouping council types.

12. Chair's Report (oral)

The Chair informed the Commission of a prayer laid in Parliament against the Final Recommendation for Purbeck. If a formal motion by Parliament is not made against the order, the order for Purbeck will be signed on 16 January 2013.

The Chair had received a letter from Brandon Lewis MP following their recent meeting in which he informed the Chair that he was minded to write to all English Council Leaders and Chief Executives indicating his readiness to grant 'out of term' elections to enable electoral reviews (to address government or political management issues) to be implemented outside the regular electoral cycle.

Mr Lewis also acknowledged the Commission's request for an additional Commissioner and proposed a further meeting with the Chair once the Commission's proposal has been received.

The Chair and the Chief Executive will attend an inter-commission event along with representatives from all of the UK's Boundary Commissions, Parliamentary and Local Government.

Agreed

That the Commission reflect on the points made during the Delegated Legislation Committee debate on the Purbeck Order.

That the Business and Committee Services Manager circulate the letter from Brandon Lewis MP to members of the Commission.

13. Chief Executive's Report (oral)

The Chief Executive reminded the Commission that the draft Corporate Plan 2013/14 will be submitted to the Speaker's Committee at the beginning of February for approval.

The Speaker's Committee will meet on the 23rd January 2013 to approve a request made by the Commission for a supplementary estimate to the budget.

The Commission is waiting on the outstanding National Audit Office (NAO) draft Value for Money report. The Chief Executive will press the NAO for it.

The Chief Executive updated the Commission on the progress made in cases for business improvement. The Improvement Management Steering Group will meet at the end of the month to discuss the latest proposals.

14. Finance & Performance Report – LGBCE (13)12 Including 3rd Quarter results & budget reforecast

The Chief Executive presented the 3rd quarter Finance & Performance Report.

The Commission noted the content of this report and its forecasted underspend. It was considered important that the Commission endeavoured to respond to review demand and support future efficiencies and that available resources should be used to this end. Accordingly, it was agreed that investment opportunities should be considered where they offer value for money, are quick to implement, and do not carry any additional future costs.

15. Draft Corporate Plan 2013/14 and Final Submission to Speaker's Committee including budget for approval – LGBCE (13)13

The Chief Executive presented the Draft Corporate Plan 2013/14 for the Commission's approval. The Plan will see the Commission undertake an additional five electoral reviews in 2013/14.

Agreed

The Commission agreed the Draft Corporate Plan pending amendments as discussed.

16. Declaration of Interest Policy and Code of Conduct – LGBCE (13)14

The Chief Executive presented the latest draft of the newly consolidated Code of Conduct policy, incorporating the Declaration of Interest Policy.

The Chair asked the Commission to raise any points of principle when considering the policy. Commissioners felt that the new document was an improvement on the several existing policies.

Agreed

That the Commission the Chief Executive of any textual changes outside the meeting.

The Declaration of Interests policy to be submitted to the Audit Committee for further, more detailed consideration, before final endorsement from the Commission.

17. Future Business – LGBCE (13)15

The Commission noted the content of the Future Business document.

The Commission was informed that the Overview Report would no longer be submitted to the Commission on a quarterly basis. This report would now be presented on an annual basis.

13:10 Meeting Closed