

## LGBCE (10) 3rd Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 2 June 2010, in Room D in  
Layden House, 76-86 Turnmill Street, London, EC1M 5LG

Present:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)  
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL (Deputy Chair)  
Joan Jones CBE  
Professor Colin Mellors  
Jane Earl

Also present:

Alan Cogbill	Chief Executive
Archie Gall	Director of Reviews
Sam Hartley	Review Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Alex Skerten	Review Officer
Eleanor Gregory	Review Assistant (item 8 only)
Sarah Vallotton	Business and Committee Services Manager
	Minutes

The Chair introduced Alex Skerten to the Commissioners and welcomed him to his first Commission meeting.

## 1. Minutes from the LGBCE's meeting on 18 May 2010

### Noted:

1. The Commissioners' Fees, Travel and Expenses Policy would be modified to reflect the discussion at the meeting.
2. The Chief Executive confirmed that he and the Chair had agreed to write to Gary Streeter MP, who had been re-appointed to the new Speakers' Committee, to update him on the LGBCE's work and staff plans.
3. Further Review Programme: Lincolnshire had been removed from the work programme in order to allow the review of West Lindsey to be completed first.
4. A Bill had been introduced into Parliament to repeal the Norfolk & Devon Structural Change Orders and preclude the implementation of the Boundary Committee's recommendations for Suffolk.
5. There were still costs owed to, and by, the LGBCE in consequence of Judicial Review proceedings against the Boundary Committee for England. There would be a net balance owed to LGBCE, but this will have to be returned to the Treasury. There is no budget provision for any further contingent liabilities resulting from Judicial Reviews.

### Agreed:

1. The minutes were agreed subject to minor changes.
2. While the Commission had agreed at its previous meeting not to conduct electoral reviews of the proposed new unitary authorities of Exeter and Norwich, given the introduction of the Local Government Bill repealing the structural change Orders, it was no longer necessary for the Commission to write to them about this matter.
3. To continue with the engagement strategy with CLG Ministers and officials.

## 2. Declarations of Interest

1. Declarations of Interest arising from the Further Review Programme: The Chair declared that he has a contract with Swale Borough Council to appraise their CEO. It was agreed he would formally declare an interest when the Commission was discussing Swale and step down from the Chair for those items. The Deputy Chair declared an interest as an elector in Staffordshire. It was agreed that the Deputy Chair would take the lead work on the Gloucestershire review, and that Colin Mellors would take the lead on the Staffordshire review. Joan Jones declared an interest as an elector in Gloucestershire.
2. None for the business of the meeting.

## **Governance**

### **3. Chair's report**

#### **Noted:**

1. Potential impact of proposed public sector resource constraints and, specifically, on the Commission's ability to recruit to vacant posts. The Chief Executive said that a reasonable case could be made for recruiting to business critical posts.
2. The Chief Executive had broached with the Clerk to the Speaker's Committee the possibility of the Chair meeting the Speaker. The Clerk had agreed to take soundings from the Speaker's Office. The Chief Executive would report back after meeting the Clerk.
3. An offer for the post of Communications & Public Affairs Manager had been made. A start date would be confirmed in the near future.
4. The Review Manager and Research & Policy Officer posts had been advertised. Interviews would be held in the near future.
5. The Business & Committee Services Manager was discussing with Liberata's IT department ways to improve Commissioners' access to their emails, and hoped to find a resolution soon.
6. The Chief Executive would review the Corporate Governance Structure in the near future. As part of the review, he would look into whether the collective responsibility of the Commission needed to be clarified.

#### **Agreed:**

1. To write to Grant Shapps MP to seek guidance on the Government's perspective on further local government reform.
2. To alert the Leaders of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords that the first Order would be laid as soon as possible.
3. The Business Managers of both Houses would also be put on notice that Orders need to be dealt with quickly to allow changes to be made in time for the next elections.
4. That the Chief Executive would prepare a process chart and formal report showing the division of responsibilities between the House authorities, if possible, in time for submission to the next Commission meeting on 23 July.
5. That, as part of the current review of Further Electoral Review processes, maximum efficiency would be ensured through both streamlining and establishing critical milestones in advance.

### **4. Freedom of Information – LGBCE (10)18**

#### **Noted:**

1. The Chief Executive presented the Freedom of Information paper, which set out the procedure for dealing with requests under the Freedom of Information Act. He highlighted the logging process for

requests which were intended to ensure that response deadlines are met.

2. The Commission's Publication Scheme should be available in time for the next meeting. This would include the totality of Commission policies captured by generic description.
3. That the qualified exemptions would include exploratory discussions with interested parties. Proper disclosure would always be weighed against the need to protect private information and the need to be able to discuss some matters, or at some times, on a confidential basis.
4. That no circumstances could be foreseen when a Commission paper could not be disclosed at the end of a review, but that it may not be appropriate to release information during a review.

Agreed:

1. That Commissioners would be informed immediately a Freedom of Information request was received relating to one of the reviews for which they were responsible.
2. The importance of specifying reasons for decisions.
3. The paper as amended.

## 5. Budget Update – LGBCE (10)19

Noted:

1. The paper was noted.

**10.50 Break**

**11.00 Resumed**

## **Reviews**

### 6. Declarations of Interest

1. There were no declarations of Interest.

## 7. Future Business - LGBCE (10)20

Noted:

1. Not all proposed reviews had yet been allocated to Commissioners, pending the appointment of new Commissioners.
2. The first Audit Committee meeting would take place on 14 June 2010. Commissioners would be asked to confirm appointments to the Audit Committee at the July Commission meeting.
3. A meeting with the internal and external auditors had taken place, which included discussion about the Commission's method of securing back office services as the VFM topic for Year 1. Also the idea of holding a risk management workshop, facilitated by the internal auditors (RSM Tenon) was raised.

Agreed:

1. The proposed timetable for Commission meetings from January 2011 retains the existing timetable for the remainder of 2010.
2. The allocation of reviews to Commissioners subject to the re-assignment of Staffordshire to Colin Mellors and Gloucestershire to Peter Knight to avoid a conflict of interest. The attached chart shows the resulting allocations.
3. Audit Committee dates to be timetabled and added to the Future Business Paper.
4. The Audit Committee risk management workshop to be arranged.

## 8. Overview Report – LGBCE (10)21

Noted:

1. The Review Assistant presented the Electoral reviews overview report.
2. The Commission requested a consistent approach when portraying electoral variances, specifically, in treatment of the 10% threshold.
3. The report was noted.

## 9. Cheshire West & Chester – Final Recommendations – LGBCE (10)22

Noted:

1. The revised 5-year electorate forecasts had been received and were tabled. There was not a great deal of difference from the original figures provided and no wards would see any significant change in their electoral variances.
2. At the Boundary Committee meeting on 18 March, it had been agreed to hold limited further consultation on the draft recommendations on an alternative warding scheme in the west of the authority. The consultation ended on 21 April and 29 submissions had been received. 27 were in favour of the alternative, with 1 favouring the draft recommendations and 1 expressing no

preference. The paper recommended that the Commission adopt the alternative proposals as part of the final recommendations.

Agreed:

1. To note the revised electorate forecasts and adopt the final recommendations as proposed in the paper.

## 10. Cheshire East – Final Recommendations LGBCE (10)23

Noted:

1. Sandbach: No further comments had been received specifically in relation to the errors in the original draft recommendations report.
2. Poynton & Adlington: A number of submissions had been received. However, the impact of some of the proposals would have a much wider consequential effect on neighbouring areas for which had already been supported. Also, it was noted that retaining Adlington in Prestbury ward would result in significant electoral imbalance. Commissioners and officers had toured and scrutinised the area thoroughly during last summer, and their findings did not support the alternative proposals now being put forward.
3. One small technical change between Handforth ward and the Wilmslow area relating to moving the boundary to the southern border of a cemetery was recommended.
4. Crewe & Leighton: A number of submissions had been received. The proposals were, in the main, considered unsuitable because they would have caused unacceptable electoral variances. Also, some would result in wards that would straddle the main London to Manchester railway line and would not provide sufficiently clear ward boundaries. The paper recommended that the Commission confirm the draft recommendations for the area, subject to one final amendment to realign the boundary between the proposed St Barnabas and Leighton wards to provide a more distinct ward boundary that would better reflect community identities.
5. The revised 5-year electorate forecasts had been received and were tabled. There was not a great deal of difference from the original figures provided and no wards would see any significant change in their electoral variances.

Agreed:

1. To note the revised electorate forecasts and adopt the final recommendations as proposed in the paper.

## 11. County Durham

Noted:

1. The Review Manager reported that the revised electorate forecasts had not yet been provided by County Durham. They were expected imminently. It was hoped the calculations would be completed and the figures circulated by the end of the following week. They would be formally confirmed at the July meeting.

## 12. AOB

1. There was no other business

4.10: Meeting closed