

LGBCE (11) 8th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 11 October 2011, at 11.15am,
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
Sarah Vallotton	Business & Committee Services Manager
David Owen	Policy & Research Officer
William Morrison	Review Officer (Item 3)
Daniel Knag	Review Officer (Item 6)
Kathleen Peacock	Business Support Officer (Minutes)

Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 13 September 2011

The Commission agreed the minutes of the 13 September 2011 Commission meeting as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

All matters arising from the minutes of the Commission meeting on 13 September 2011 were included as part of the agenda.

Declarations of interest:

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

1. Operational Report – LGBCE (11)111

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

Agreed

1. A link to Parliament's website would be circulated to all staff, so that any scheduled debates on draft electoral change orders could be tracked. **MB**

2. Electoral Review Programme - LGBCE (11)112

The Commission was updated on the 2011-13 review programme. The following notable changes had been made to the programme since the Commission's last reviewed it in August 2011;

- An FER of Gedling Council had been slotted into the programme for 2012-13 at the local authority's request. This was to replace the review of Maidstone, which had withdrawn their request.
- The FERs for Warwickshire and Arun had now been scheduled to take place later in the 2012-13 programme than initially planned. This was at the request of the authorities concerned.

The Commission discussed how local authority types affected review process completion timescales. The Commission highlighted the importance of spacing reviews within the programme to reflect the complexity of different authority types. In the longer term, the review programme would also be planned around the fixed county council electoral cycle.

The Commission noted that, in response to an NAO recommendation, the methodology for selecting FERs in the 2011-13 programme had been modified slightly. Also, in future, electorate variances would not be rounded up or down to give a whole number in order to avoid the potential impact of 'sequential rounding'.

Agreed

1. The amended review programme for 2011-13.

2. A paper would be presented to the Commission in December proposing criteria for developing the 2013 – 2014 work programme. **DO**
3. Professor Paul Wiles would be the Lead Commissioner for the Vale of White Horse FER and Professor Colin Mellors would be the Lead Commissioner for the Fenland FER.

3. Northamptonshire County Council Size – LGBCE (11)113

The electoral review of Northamptonshire County Council commenced on 5 September 2011. The review was being conducted on the basis that, according to the latest electoral figures, 41% percent of divisions have variances greater than 10% and one division, Danesholme, has 53% more electors than the county average.

The Commission had held meetings with County Council group leaders and officers to explain the review process, to seek information about electorate forecasts and the basis of the proposed council size. The Council currently has 73 members.

Following receipt of information about future governance and representational arrangements, it was recommended by LGBCE officers that there was sufficient evidence to support a council size of between 56 and 59 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted and the allocation of councillors across the county, it was minded to support a council size of 57 members.

Agreed

1. The Commission agreed to propose a council size of 57. It was agreed that the review be classed as a Type C review for the next stages of the review process.

4. Cumbria County Council Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (11)114

The Commission noted the content of the draft recommendations report for Cumbria County Council and reviewed the alternative division pattern options for the Thursby and Wigton area in Allerdale borough.

Agreed

1. The proposals as set out in the report, including a pattern providing for three single member divisions of Abbeytown, Thursby and Wigton.

5. PABR Update - LGBCE(11)115

The Director of Reviews summarised the PABR update report. Since April 2011, 24 potential PABRs had been investigated. Of these 24 cases, four had

been identified as receiving support from the local authorities involved. The four cases could be summarised as follows:

- Gresley Way; Stevenage/East Herts. The Director of Reviews attended a joint meeting with both authorities in September. Currently the borough's boundary ran through approximately 20 properties.
- Ravenside Bungalow; Northumberland/Gateshead. Both authorities had agreed for their mutual boundary to be amended so that the property would no longer be split between Gateshead and Northumberland.
- Bewl Water; Wealden/Rother. A joint meeting had been scheduled with both authorities to discuss this boundary anomaly further and the rationale for the request.
- Buckshaw Village; Chorley/South Ribble. The Director of Reviews had met with both Council leaders to discuss the transfer of Buckshaw Village into one of the authorities. The two authorities were in the process of discussing where Buckshaw Village should be placed.

The paper included a list of 17 cases that either did not have support from one or more local authorities, or further desk research suggested they should not be reviewed at this point.

Agreed

1. The Gresley Way PABR would be undertaken subject to receipt of a formal request from both Stevenage and East Herts Borough Councils.
2. Ravenside Bungalow PABR would be progressed to the next stage of the process.
3. Chorley and South Ribble Borough Councils would be contacted to determine progress.
4. The other 17 cases included in the report would be removed from the list of potential PABRs, with an indication of the basis for reaching this decision. These cases would not be closed, but no further action would be taken on them at present. .
5. A reminder letter would be sent to Brighton & Hove and Lewes & East Sussex County Councils regarding their potential PABR.

6. Epping Forest Related Alterations – LGBCE (11)116

The Commission noted the content of the Epping Forest Related Alterations paper and considered Epping Forest District Council's request for an electoral changes order which would result in coterminosity between parish, district and county electoral division boundaries. The proposed changes would affect approximately 160 electors within the District and the proposed changes would not cause the district to reach the FER criteria.

Agreed

1. An order would be drafted to implement the related alternations for Epping Forest District Council as proposed in the report.

7. Chair's Report

The Chair announced that Alan Cogbill had been reappointed LGBCE Chief Executive on a three-year contract. This followed an open competition for the post. The Chief Executive's objectives and goals for 2012 had been agreed by the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Commission.

The Chair was scheduled to attend meetings with both John O'Brien the London Council's Chief Executive and David Laws MP.

Agreed

1. The Chief Executive's 2012 objectives would be circulated to all staff to ensure that staff objectives set during the appraisal process would feed into the Chief Executive's goals. **AC**

8. Chief Executive Report

A date for the Speaker's Committee Budget Sub-committee meeting had been set for 9 November. The 2012-13 to 2016-17 Corporate Plan was being drafted in preparation for the meeting.

The Director of Finance was negotiating with the LGBCE's main suppliers, such as Ordnance Survey regarding mapping costs, and with the LGA, regarding the LGBCE's lease of Layden House and the shared services agreement. The results of the negotiations process were anticipated before the end of the financial year.

The Chair's reappointment was being progressed through Parliamentary channels. Some procedural delays had occurred. This was likely due to delays to Electoral Commissioner appointments which were being handled at the same time, and through the same process. Commissioners would be regularly updated.

9. Individual Voter Registration – LGBCE (11) 117

The Policy and Research Officer updated the Commission on the progress made with his research into the impact the proposed Individual Voter Registration system could have on the work of the LGBCE. A draft letter in response to the Government's consultation was attached to the report.

As agreed by the Commission at its last meeting, the other UK Boundary Commissions had been approached to ascertain if they wished to participate in a joint response to the consultation. Responses received so far indicated that the other UK Boundary Commissions did not intend to contribute to a collective response to Government. However, the Chair indicated that the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales would be responding, along similar lines to the draft LGBCE response.

Agreed

1. The draft letter attached to the report.

10. Future Business – LGBCE (11)118

The content of the future business paper was noted by the Commission.

15.30 Meeting Closed

Strategic Planning Event Follow Up Workshop

After the Commission meeting had finished, Commissioners, Directors and members of the management team discussed the outcomes from the Strategic Planning Event held on 8 & 9 September and how the agreed actions would be implemented.

1. Action Points

The event's facilitator had circulated a detailed list of outcomes and agreed actions from the event to all those who had attended. The Commission noted the content of the report.

2. Commissioners' Role

The Chief Executive had prepared a draft protocol on Commissioner and staff roles. The protocol was discussed and a number of amendments were suggested. The Commission discussed the Lead Commissioner's role and how much time Lead Commissioners would be required to commit throughout the review process.

Agreed

1. A working group would be formed to agree a process for recording customer satisfaction both throughout the review process and after the implementation of review results. This would form the basis for delivering the customer satisfaction KPI. The membership of the group would be Professor Paul Wiles, Sir Tony Redmond and Professor Colin Mellors.
2. A process for encouraging best practice in Commissioners' and staff working practices would be implemented.
3. Suggested amendments to the draft protocol would be made and role of the Review Manager throughout the process would be highlighted.
4. The protocol would be the subject of discussion with staff at the end of the January Commission meeting.
5. A short bullet points list would be produced, summarising the Lead Commissioner's duties throughout the review progress.
6. The Audit Committee would review its terms of reference at its meeting in November to incorporate the amendments suggested during the Strategic Planning event.

3. Communications Strategy

Due to time constraints this report was deferred to the November Commission meeting.

4. Future Strategic Planning Event 2012

The Commission discussed plans to follow up on the initial Strategic Planning Event, as follows:

1. A one-day follow up event would be held in Autumn 2012 for Commissioners and SMT.
2. A half day event would be arranged for all LGBCE staff and Commissioners in Spring 2012 to encourage a more integrated approach to reviews and joint understanding of the organisation's direction and goals.