

LGBCE (13) 2nd Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 12 February 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
Lynn Ingram	Finance Director
Marcus Bowell	Communications Manager
Danny Edwards	Review Manager
Lucy Ward	Review Officer
Richard Otterway	Review Officer
Will Morrison	Review Officer
Daniel Knag	Review Officer
Paul Kingsley	Review Adviser
Simon Keal	Review Officer
Mark Pascoe	
Nicholas Dunkeyson	Review Officer
Arion Lawrence	Review Officer
David Owen	Policy and Research Officer
Sarah Vallotton	Business and Committee Services Manager (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Tim Bowden, Richard Buck and Jessica Metheringham.

Declarations of interest:

Mark Pascoe declared an interest in Herefordshire and took no part in the discussion of that item.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 15 January 2013

The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

1. Operational Report - LGBCE (13)16

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

2. Newark & Sherwood Council Size - LGBCE (13)17

It had been agreed to review Newark & Sherwood District Council due to electoral imbalance and at the request of the authority. The review had commenced in July 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.

Following receipt of information about future governance and representational arrangements, it was recommended by LGBCE officers that there was sufficient evidence to support the council size changing to 38 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted they were minded to support a council size of 38 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 38 be used as the basis for consultation.

3. South Kesteven Council Size - LGBCE (13)18

It had been agreed to review South Kesteven due to electoral imbalance. The review had commenced in August 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 38 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 58 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 55 members.

The Commission agreed that a council size of 55 be used as the basis to proceed to consultation on council size.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 55 be used as the basis for consultation.

4. South Ribble Council Size - LGBCE (13)19

It had been agreed to review South Ribble Borough Council due to electoral imbalance. The review had commenced in September 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 33 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.

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 50 members.

The Commission agreed that a council size of 50 be used as the basis to proceed to consultation on council size.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 50 be used as the basis for consultation.

5. Stratford on Avon Council Size - LGBCE (13)20

It had been agreed to review Stratford-on-Avon District Council at the request of the authority. The review had commenced in October 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 29 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10%. The Council passed a resolution at its meeting on 17 December 2012 to move from elections by thirds to whole council elections commencing in 2015.

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 53 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 36 members.

The Commission agreed that a council size of 36 be used as the basis to proceed to consultation on council size.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 36 be used as the basis for consultation.

6. Fenland Final Recommendations - LGBCE (13)21

The review of Fenland District Council had commenced on 6 February 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 33 per cent of its wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with two wards being over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on 13 March 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 39 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 9 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 areas in March, Whittlesey and Wisbech, and these changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 13 single-member wards, 7 two-member wards and 4 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. It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented with modifications in the areas of March, Whittlesey and Wisbech.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Fenland District Council as presented.

7. Gedling Final Recommendations - LGBCE (13)22

The review of Gedling Borough Council had commenced in February 2012 following a request from the Council. According to the latest electoral figures, two of the 22 wards have variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 13 June 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 40 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations based on a council size of 41.

Following publication, four 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 not been judged that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations except in respect of minor amendments to some areas of Arnold and Carlton. These were incorporated in the proposed the Final Recommendations for Gedling Borough Council

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of five three-member wards, 12 two-member wards, and two single-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.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented with minor modifications.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Gedling Borough Council as presented.

8. Herefordshire Final Recommendations - LGBCE (13)22

The review of Herefordshire Council had commenced in February 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 30 per cent of wards had variances

greater than 10 per cent with one ward being over 30 per cent. The Council had also requested a single-member ward review.

At its meeting in June 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 53 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 125 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 not been judged that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations except in respect of a minor amendment to the boundaries in Ledbury, and that Richards Castle Parish be included in the Bircher ward rather than the Mortimer ward. The team also recommended changing a number of ward names across Herefordshire as set out in the Final Recommendations.

These were proposed as the Final Recommendations for Herefordshire Council.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 53 single-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.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented with modifications in the areas of Ledbury and Richards Castle Parish along with the proposed ward name changes.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Herefordshire Council as modified.

9. Bromsgrove Final Recommendations - LGBCE (13)23

The review of Bromsgrove District Council had commenced in February 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, three wards have variances greater than 10 per cent. The Council had also requested a single-member ward review.

At its meeting in June 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 31. Subsequently, when agreeing the Draft Recommendations, the Commission proposed a Council Size of 32.

Following publication, 144 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations. These had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

It was noted that the consultation on the Draft Recommendations had revealed an error in the Council's original electorate figures which had suggested that an area of future housing development would be divided between two polling districts when, in fact, all of the development was scheduled to be built in one ward. Accordingly, the team had needed to make some amendments to the wards proposed in the Draft Recommendations in order to put forward a pattern of wards that would meet the Commission's statutory criteria.

Taking these changes into account, it was proposed to move away from the draft recommendations in respect of Woodvale, Perryfields, Sanders Park, Sidemoor, Hill Top, Catshill North, Catshill South, Romsley, Hagley East, Hagley West and Belbroughton & Clent wards. These changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission.

A further consequence of the proposed changes was that the size of the Council would be 31 members, the same as that used as the basis for the original council size consultation. Although this number had subsequently been increased to 32 in the Draft Recommendations – since this offered a better overall pattern of boundaries – the changes referred to above now meant that 31 members would allow for more appropriate boundaries. The Final Recommendations, therefore, proposed a pattern of 31 single-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. It noted that the proposed changes were substantial in Bromsgrove Town and to the west of the district. The team therefore proposed a further limited consultation to these areas only and recommended adoption of the Draft Recommendation be accepted as the basis for Final Recommendation in the other areas.

Agreed

That a further limited consultation should be held in the areas of Bromsgrove Town and in the west of the district. That draft recommendations should be adopted as final in the remaining areas of Bromsgrove. The results of the limited consultation would be discussed at the Commission meeting in May.

10. Warwick Final Recommendations – LGBCE (13)24

The review of Warwick District Council had commenced on 9 January 2012 following a request from the Council. According to the latest electoral figures, 35 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 46 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 322 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 Bishop's Tachbrook, Heathcote and Whitnash areas in the South Leamington Spa area. It was also felt that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the draft recommendations in respect of Myton in the Warwick Town area.

In the Kenilworth area, there had been support for reverting to the existing three-member Park Hill and St John's wards, subject to a minor boundary modification. While this represented a fairly significant departure from the draft recommendations, it was well supported, and the team therefore recommended this change be adopted in the final recommendations. All these changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of two single-member wards, 18 two-member wards and 2 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.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented with modifications in the areas of Bishop's Tachbrook, Heathcote, Whitnash, Myton and Kenilworth.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Warwick District Council as presented.

11. Hambleton Final Recommendations – LGBCE (13)25

The review of Hambleton District Council had commenced in February 2012 following a request from the Council. According to the latest electoral figures, 30 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 13 June 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 28 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 13 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 Stokesley, Bedale and Tanfield wards. The team also proposed changing the name of Cowtons ward to Appleton Wiske & Smeatons ward. These changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of two three-member wards, seven two-member wards and eight single-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.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented with modifications in the areas of Stokesley, Bedale and Tanfield wards and the proposed name change of Cowtons ward to Appleton Wiske & Smeatons.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Hambleton District Council as presented.

12. Tower Hamlets Final Recommendations – LGBCE (13)27

The review of Tower Hamlets Borough Council had commenced in January 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 35 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with one ward being over 30 per cent.

At its meeting in June 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 45 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 110 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 not been judged that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations except in respect of minor amendments to the boundaries between the wards of Millwall and Blackwall & Cubitt Town, Bow West & Bow East and Limehouse and St Katherine's and Wapping. The team also suggested some amendments to ward names as set out in the Final Recommendations.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of seven three-member wards, 11 two-member wards, and two single-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.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented with modifications in the areas of Millwall and Blackwall & Cubitt Town, Bow West & Bow East and Limehouse and St Katherine's and Wapping. It also agreed the ward names above, with the modification that Poplar North be named Lansbury and Poplar South be named Poplar.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets as modified.

13. South Oxfordshire Final Recommendations – LGBCE (13)28

The review of South Oxfordshire District Council had commenced in October 2011 at the request of the authority. According to the latest electoral figures, 14 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting in June 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a council size of 36 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 24 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 inclusion of East and West Hagbourne as a part of a three-member Didcot South ward, the inclusion of Sonning Common in a two-member Sonning Common ward and the creation of a two-member Wheatley ward. These changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 4 three-member wards, 7 two-member wards, and 10 single-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.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented with modifications in the areas of East and West Hagbourne, Sonning Common and Wheatley.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for South Oxfordshire as modified.

14. Vale of White Horse Final Recommendations – LGBCE (13)29

The review of Vale of White Horse District Council had commenced in October 2011. According to the latest electoral figures, 24 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting in June 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a council size of 38 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 97 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 boundary changes to Marcham, Wootton, Wantage & Grove Brook, Wantage Charlton, Sutton Courtenay and an alternative warding pattern in North Hinksey. The team also recommended names for the modified wards of Botley and Sunningwell, Watchfield & Shrivenham, Faringdon, Drayton, Sutton Courtenay and Kennington & Radley, along with a number of ward name changes as set out in the Final Recommendations.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of no three-member wards, 14 two-member wards, and 10 single-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.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented with modifications in the areas of Marcham, Wootton, Wantage & Grove Brook, Wantage Charlton, Sutton Courtenay and North Hinksey. It also agreed the ward name proposals and changes as set out above.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Vale of White Horse District Council as modified.

15. Kensington & Chelsea Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (13)30

The review of The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea had commenced in January 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 44 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent

At its meeting on 11 September 2012, the Commission agreed a council size of 51 and the Draft Recommendations being considered had been prepared on the basis of such a council size.

In preparing the draft scheme, the team had taken into consideration both the submissions it had received and the statutory criteria. The Draft Recommendations proposed a pattern of 14 three-member wards and 4 two-member wards.

It was noted that the Draft Recommendations were based on a council size of 50 – one fewer than the originally agreed 51 – since this allowed for a better allocation of members in the north of the borough.

The Commission considered the recommendations in detail informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the submissions received. It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea as presented.

16. East Dorset Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (13)31

This item was deferred to the Commission Meeting in March.

17. Protocol on Ward/Divisions Naming Conventions – LGBCE (13)32

This paper was withdrawn.

18. Protocol on the need to undertake further limited consultations – LGBCE (13)33

The Commission reviewed the protocol and, with some small drafting amendments, agreed that it should be adopted.

Agreed

The protocol on the need to undertake further limited consultations as amended.

19. Chair's Report (oral)

The Chair reported that the Director of Reviews was exploring with DCLG the assistance the Commission might be able to offer with Community Governance Reviews where a council was not in a position to undertake such reviews. However, no specific proposals had been put forward and careful

thought would need to be given to the implications of undertaking such work in terms of both impact on other work and how it would be resourced. There would be a full discussion at a Commission meeting in the event that any formal proposal was put forward.

The Chair reported that the Improvement Steering Group had recently met via a video conference and a record of the Steering Group's discussion would be produced and circulated to Commissioners.

20. Chief Executive's Report (oral)

The Chief Executive reported that thought was being given to the issue of how LGBCE might enhance the information that it makes available to councils (and others) about the review process, especially at the outset of a review. This included both the presentations that are made to councils and, possibly, through the production of a short video to cover the various issues. Officers were seeking professional advice about how LGBCE might provide an effective and accessible message for key audiences and, consequently, ensure that all involved might get the most out of direct meetings.

21. Report on Discussions with Parliamentary Boundary Commission on Possible "Joint Working" (oral)

The Chair reported that exploratory discussions with the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) and the Cabinet Office were taking place.

The short term option was to provide space for BCE staff, who would effectively be seconded to LGBCE and carry out local government reviews during the BCE fallow period. The BCE staff would return to BCE when required for the next Parliamentary boundary review.

Commissioners were asked whether, in principle, they agreed to move forward on this basis, subject to continuing negotiations.

Agreed

That the project should continue on this basis, subject to further discussion at the Commission, as and when appropriate...In taking forward, LGBCE would be mindful of any key principles that they would not wish to compromise in any new arrangements.

22. Performance Review 3rd Quarter – LGBCE (13)34

The report presented outturn summaries describing performance relating to four non-financial Key Performance Indicators for the period up to the end of December.

The report showed that the Commission was working toward the meeting of its targets in 2012-2013.

23. Audit Committee Oral Report including Risk Update

The Chair of the Audit Committee reported on the Audit Committee meeting that had taken place the previous day. The Audit Committee had considered its draft Annual Report to the Commission, and continued its oversight of how the risk management process was developing. It had also looked at the NAO's value for money report which it had welcomed.

It had considered the revised Code of Conduct, which it viewed as a useful document. The code would now be put to the Commission for formal endorsement. Audit Committee was keen that code be applied consistently and, therefore, believed that a six-monthly review of its operation would be helpful.

The plans for re-tendering the internal auditor service had been interrupted by the former Finance Director leaving the organisation. It had therefore been agreed to ask the existing internal auditor, RSM Tenon, to extend their existing contract for one year on the same terms to allow a full and comprehensive re-tendering process to take place. RSM Tenon had agreed to this. The re-tendering process would start early, with a view to having a new contract in place by spring 2014.

24. NAO Value for Money Report – LGCBE (13)35

The Chief Executive reported that the NAO value for money report had been received. It was considered proportionate and fair, highlighting a number of things that could be used to improve management information and oversight. The recommendations were acceptable, and many of them had already been put in place. It was noted that further work was being undertaken on costs.

25. Future Business – LGBCE (13)36

The future business paper was noted.

AOB

There was need to consider alternative timetabling for Commission meetings taking place during 2014 due to Commissioners' commitments. It was suggested that Commission meetings might move from their current regular time of the second Tuesday in the month to either the second Thursday of the

month or the third Tuesday of the month from January 2014. Alternative timetables were circulated with the dates of all meetings for both options shown. Commissioners were asked to send their preference to the Business and Committee Services Manager.

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