

The
**Local Government
Boundary Commission**
for England

LGBCE (15)10th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 20th October, at 9:45am, in Belgravia, 28th Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP

Commissioners Present

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Professor Colin Mellors (Deputy Chair)
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL
Alison Lowton
Sir Tony Redmond
Professor Paul Wiles CB

LGBCE Officers Present:

Jolyon Jackson CBE	Chief Executive
Lynn Ingram	Finance Director
Marcus Bowell	Communications Manager
Tim Bowden	Review Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Alison Evison	Review and Programme Manager
David Owen	Review Officer (item 2)
Alex Hinds	Review Officer (item 3)
Mark Cooper	Review Officer (item 4)
Paul Kingsley	Review Officer (item 7)
William Morrison	Review Officer (item 6)
Emily Starkie	Review Officer (item 8)
Karen Cleverly	Business Support Officer (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Declarations of interest

The Chair declared an interest in item 9, Swale Related Alterations. The item was chaired by the Deputy Chair and the Chair took no part in the discussions. The Chief Executive declared an interest in Nottinghamshire and the Finance Director declared an interest in Hampshire. They took no part in the discussions of those items.

The Chair noted that this would be Dr Peter Knight's last meeting as his term as a Commissioner was coming to an end. On behalf of the Commission, he thanked Dr Knight for his valued contribution during his time as a Commissioner.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 8 September 2015

The minutes were agreed as a correct record, and were signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

Members asked whether email forwarding arrangements and forward diary schedules for Commissioners were now in place (item 12). The Chief Executive agreed to check and confirm.

1. Operational Report - LGBCE (15)96

The Chief Executive presented the Operational Report for October and the Commission noted its content.

He had recently met with the new Chief Executive of Ordnance Survey. He and the Finance Director had met with the new team from the National Audit Office. It was also reported that he would be attending Parliament the following day regarding arrangements for inter-commission dinner and would be having a meeting with CLG officials later in the week.

It was noted that there were some minor inconsistencies between the Operational Report and the Quarterly Review Programme (item 13). These would be clarified.

With regard to the parliamentary schedule, the Chair requested that, if possible, the Orders for Exeter and Dorset were laid in October so that he could sign them before his departure at the end of the year.

It was noted that the schedule for Huntingdonshire been deferred to allow for a change in the electoral cycle and this would be corrected in the operational report.

The Communications Manager gave an update on the work plan arising from the recent strategy session (Appendix A). It was requested that the month and year for the commencement of PER discussions was added to the plan.

2. Leicestershire Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (15)97

The review of Leicestershire County Council had commenced on 21 April 2015. According to the latest available electoral figures, 33 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 21 April 2015, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 55 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 two two-member, and 51 single-member divisions in total.

The Commission considered the recommendations in detail informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the advice of officers and the submissions received.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Leicestershire County Council as presented.

3. Cambridgeshire Final Recommendations - LGBCE (15)98

The review of Cambridgeshire County Council had commenced on 21 October 2014. According to the latest available electoral figures, 32 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 21 October 2014, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 63 and had subsequently, on 21 April 2015, agreed Draft Recommendations based on a council size of 61 as this would provide for better adherence to the statutory criteria across the county and its component districts.

Following publication, 253 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all of the submissions into account, it was considered that there was sufficient evidence to undertake a period of further limited consultation focusing on the proposals for the Cambridge City area before the Commission published its Final Recommendations.

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 to a period of further limited consultation focusing on the areas of Cambridge City.

Agreed

A period of further limited consultation focusing on the area of Cambridge City.

4. South Lakeland Council Size - LGBCE (15)99

It had been agreed to review South Lakeland District Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 33 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 51 members.

Following receipt of information about future governance and representational arrangements, it was recommended by LGBCE officers that there was sufficient evidence to support that the council size remain at 51 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 51 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 51 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

5. Hampshire Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (15)100

The review of Hampshire County Council had commenced on 19 May 2015. According to the latest available electoral figures, 44 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 19 May 2015, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 78 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 three two-member and 72 single-member divisions in total.

The team brought the Commission's attention to the Test Valley area where the current division and warding arrangements for Test Valley borough would unavoidably result in the creation of several unviable parish wards in Andover and Romsey towns following a recent Community Governance Review.

The Commission considered the recommendations in detail informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the advice of officers and the submissions received.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented. It further agreed that the District Council should be requested to make a Related Alterations submission in respect of the Test Valley area in time for preparation of final recommendations.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Hampshire County Council as presented.

That Test Valley borough should be requested to make a Related Alterations submission in relation to the recent Community Governance Review.

6. Lancashire Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (15)101

The review of Lancashire County Council had commenced on 16 June 2015. According to the latest available electoral figures, 39 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 16 June 2015, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 84 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 two two-member, and 80 single-member divisions in total.

The Commission considered the recommendations in detail informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the advice of officers and the submissions received.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented, subject to a change to two division names. The Commission decided that Brierfield and Nelson North be renamed Brierfield and Nelson West and Nelson South be renamed Nelson East to more accurately reflect the geographical extend of the two proposed divisions.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Lancashire County Council as presented subject to the amendment outlined above.

7. Nottinghamshire Final Recommendations - LGBCE (15)102

The review of Nottinghamshire County Council had commenced on 21 October 2014. According to the latest available electoral figures, 33 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 21 October 2014, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 67 and had subsequently, on 19 May 2015, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 208 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations which 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 aspects and these changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission for consideration.

The Final Recommendations proposed a Council size of 66 with a pattern of one three-member, 10 two-member, and 43 single-member divisions 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.

The Commission paid particular attention to the Hucknall area in Ashfield District where the Draft Recommendations had proposed three single-member divisions. Support had been received for such an approach, but there had also been strong support for a single three-member division. The Commission recognised the clear commitment to collaborative working by members across in Hucknall and the perceived importance of retaining a single identity for the area. On balance, however, and after much debate, it was felt that effective and convenient local government for the public would be better achieved through three-single member divisions whilst still allowing for elected members to work together in order to promote the interests of Hucknall as a whole.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Nottinghamshire County Council as modified.

8. East Cambridgeshire Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (15)103

The review of East Cambridgeshire District Council had commenced on 16 June 2015. According to the latest available electoral figures, 37 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with two wards being over 30 per cent and one ward, Dullingham Villages, having a variance of 48%.

At its meeting on 16 June 2015, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 27, however the Draft Recommendations being considered had been prepared on the basis of a council size 28 as this would provide for better adherence to the statutory criteria across the district.

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 three three-member, eight two-member, and three single-member wards in total.

The Commission considered the recommendations in detail informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the advice of officers and the submissions received.

As a result of this further consideration and, on the basis of the evidence, the Commission agreed to move away from its original opinion on council size and, instead, agreed a council size of 28 as this would provide for better adherence to the statutory criteria across the district.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for East Cambridgeshire District Council as presented.

9. Swale Related Alterations - LGBCE (15)104

The Commission considered the content of the Swale Related Alterations paper.

The Review Manager advised that no electors would be affected by the alteration.

Whilst acknowledging the consultation undertaken by the Council should have been more explicit in its consideration of related alterations, the Commission was persuaded that this is what had been intended in its terms of reference and the response of the parish council. Accordingly, and taking this into account the Commission was minded to agree to the making of an Order implementing the related alteration as there would be no impact on any electors and an indication of potential ward boundary changes had been raised during the Council's Community Governance Review consultation.

Agreed

The Commission agreed to the making of an Order implementing the related alteration.

Officers should review the Technical Guidance on this matter to see if the requirements on local authorities when undertaking community governance reviews could be made more explicit.

10. Kettering Related Alterations - LGBCE (15)105

The Commission considered the content of the Kettering Related Alterations paper. It was minded to agree to the related alteration as the proposals were supported locally and the changes proposed would not worsen the current levels of electoral inequality.

Agreed

The Commission agreed to the making of an Order implementing the related alteration.

11. Rutland Related Alterations - LGBCE (15)106

The Commission considered the content of the Rutland Related Alterations paper. It was minded to agree to the related alteration as the proposals were supported locally and would not result in changes to the electoral variances.

Agreed

The Commission agreed to the making of an Order implementing the related alteration.

12. Newark & Sherwood Related Alterations - LGBCE (15)107

The Commission considered the content of the Newark & Sherwood Related Alterations paper. It was minded to agree to the related alteration as the requested alterations would have little or no impact on electoral variances and would restore coterminosity.

Agreed

The Commission agreed to the making of an Order implementing the related alteration.

13. Quarterly Review Programme - LGBCE (15)108

The Commission noted the content of the report and proposed amendments to the review timetable.

The following points were made:

- There were some inconsistencies with the Operational Report (item 1). These would be clarified.
- Ashford (Kent) may need to be removed from the programme as a meeting had not yet taken place.
- Croydon and Newcastle-under-Lyme would be added.
- A decision on council size for the Isles of Scilly would be needed by March/April 2016 if the review were to be completed in time for the next elections. The Chair would seek a meeting with the Council.

Agreed

The Review Programme and proposed amendments.

14. De Montfort University Submission - LGBCE (15)109

The Chief Executive outlined the proposed piece of work to be carried out by De Montfort University which arose from the strategy event.

The intention was to carry out a data trawl and produce a 'think piece' which may help inform the Commission's approach to future reviews and to the devolution agenda. It was clarified that the work would not produce a 'definition of good governance' but would provide examples of models that might encourage good governance.

It was clarified that, whilst the results would be considered by the Commission, whether and how they might be deployed would be for further discussion.

Agreed

The proposal was agreed subject to the comment above.

15. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive reported that the Deregulation Bill had been passed. The organisation would now only be required to submit one corporate plan during each Parliamentary term. There would also be reduction in the number of National Audit Office value-for-money audits.

The Chair had made representations to the Speaker's Committee to continue to report to it on an annual basis.

The Parliamentary Boundary Commission had appointed a new Chief Executive and was finalising its staffing arrangements and future plans.

The Communications Manager gave an update on the devolution agenda and how it might impact on future work of the Commission. It was likely that more would be known after the Comprehensive Spending Review announcements on 25 November. The Chair asked the Communications Manager to circulate a daily update to Commissioners on the Bill and related developments, highlighting any areas of particular relevance to the Commission.

16. Chair's Report

The Chair reported on continued delays in the appointment of the new Commissioners.

The new Commission Chair would be recommended by the Speaker's Committee to the House in early November and the Chief Executive would advise Commissioners as soon as the outcome was known.

17. Finance Director's Report – LGBCE (15)110 Quarter 2 Year End Projection

The Finance Director reported that she was projecting an underspend of £68,000 compared to a reported underspend of £25,000 at the end of the first quarter. The main reason was due to a substantial refund from the Local Government Association for historically overcharging for business rates. She would be considering options for taking up the underspend by the year end, e.g. by bringing work forward.

Legal costs were continuing to be accrued by the ongoing employment tribunal relating to a previous employee. The outcome would be known shortly.

18. Future Business– LGBCE (15)111

The Chief Executive reported that there would be a policy workshop after Audit Committee in November. The workshop would focus on the process review and a financial review.

AOB

There were no other items.

Close of Business 13:40

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'C' followed by a horizontal line.

Chair

A small, handwritten mark or signature in black ink, consisting of a short horizontal line with a slight curve.