

LGBCE (13) 3rd Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 12 March 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

LGBCE Officers Present:

Alan Cogbill	Chief Executive
Archie Gall	Director of Reviews
Lynn Ingram	Finance Director
Marcus Bowell	Communications Manager
Tim Bowden	Review Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Danny Edwards	Review Manager
Jessica Metherringham	Review Manager
Simon Keal	Review Manager
Lucy Ward	Review Officer
Nicholas Dunkeyson	Review Officer
Daniel Knag	Review Officer
Paul Kingsley	Review Officer
Mark Pascoe	Review Adviser
Simon Keal	Review Officer
Dean Faccini	Business Assistant (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Sir Tony Redmond and Sarah Vallotton, Business & Committee Services Manager.

Declarations of interest

The Chair declared an interest in Hackney and took no part in the discussion of that item.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 12 February 2013

The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

1. Operational Report - LGBCE (13)37

The Director of Reviews provided an update on review activity over the previous month.

The report indicated those local authorities that had requested reviews for the 2013/14 review programme and meetings had taken place with three of the five authorities. Ryedale, East Cambridgeshire and Surrey Heath had subsequently withdrawn their requests. Additional requests had been received and the Director of Reviews would be contacting those authorities in due course.

Following meetings with Canterbury and Wyre Forest, the Chair and Director of Reviews were satisfied that those authorities were ready for a review to commence. The Commission was asked to accept their requests and include the reviews in the 2013-14 review programme.

A request from the Mayor of Liverpool for assistance in a governance review and electoral review had been received. The Chair and the Director of Reviews had scheduled a meeting to consider this request.

Bristol had now resolved to move to whole council elections and had requested a review in time for implementation in 2016. The Director of Reviews was scheduled to meet the Council the following week.

Agreed

- That Canterbury and Wyre Forest are to be included in the 2013-14 Review Programme.
- That Sir Tony Redmond was appointed Lead Commissioner for Canterbury.
- That Dr Peter Knight is appointed Lead Commissioner for Wyre Forest.
- That the Chair and Deputy Chair be delegated to take decisions on any other requested reviews to be included in the 2013-14 programme, with Commissioners being informed of those decisions.

2. Breckland Council Size - LGBCE (13)38

It had been agreed to review Breckland District Council due to electoral imbalance. The review had commenced in August 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, two wards have variances of over 30 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.

Following receipt of information about future governance and representational arrangements, it was recommended by LGBCE officers that there was sufficient evidence to support a revised council size of 50 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence the Commission agreed to consult on a council size of 50 members.

Agreed

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

3. Corby Council Size - LGBCE (13)39

It had been agreed to review Corby Borough Council due to electoral imbalance. The review had commenced in August 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 40 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10% from the average for the borough.

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 29 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 remaining at 29 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted they were minded to support a council size of 29 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 29 be used as the basis for consultation.

4. Braintree Council Size - LGBCE (13)40

It had been agreed to review Braintree District Council at the request of the authority. The review had commenced in August 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 23 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10% from the average for the district.

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 60 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 revised council size of 50 members.

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

Agreed

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

5. North Dorset Council Size Post Consultation - LGBCE (13)41

It had been agreed to review North Dorset District Council due to electoral imbalance. The review had commenced in June 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 29 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with one being over 30%, with a variance of 38% from the district average.

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 33 members.

At its meeting in December 2012 the Commission considered all the evidence it had received on council size and recommend a council size of 33 as the basis for consultation. On the basis of the evidence received during consultation, it was recommended by LGBCE officers that there was sufficient evidence to support the council size remaining at 33 members.

In considering the evidence, the Commission noted that some electors had favoured a smaller council size but had not put forward an evidenced proposition for an alternative figure.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted they were minded to support a council size of 33 members.

Agreed

- The Commission agreed that a council size of 33 be used as the basis for consultation on warding arrangements.
- Officers to report to a future Commission meeting about how the council size consultation might be structured in order to assist respondents in providing a rationale for the views they express.

6. South Hams Council Size Post Consultation - LGBCE (13)42

It had been agreed to review South Hams District Council due to electoral imbalance. The review had commenced in June 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 33 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10% from the average for the district.

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 40 members.

At its meeting in December 2012 the Commission considered all the evidence it had received on council size and recommended a council size of 30 as the basis for consultation. On the basis of the evidence received during consultation, it was recommended by LGBCE officers that there was sufficient evidence to support a council size of 30 members.

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

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 30 be used as the basis for consultation on warding arrangements.

7. North Somerset Council Size Post Consultation - LGBCE (13)43

It had been agreed to review North Somerset District Council due to electoral imbalance. 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 with two being over 30 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 61 members.

At its meeting in December 2012 the Commission considered all the evidence it had received on council size. Given the submissions presented, the Commission had decided to consult on the issue of council size, specifically seeking views about council sizes of both 46 and 51 members. The consultation ended on 18 February 2013

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted they were 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 consultation on warding patterns.

8. NW Leicestershire Council Size Post Consultation - LGBCE (13)44

It had been agreed to review North West Leicestershire District Council at the request of the authority for a Single-Member Ward Review. The review had commenced in June 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, five per cent of wards had variances greater than 10% from the average for the district.

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 38 members.

At its meeting in December 2012 the Commission considered all the evidence it had received on council size and recommended a council size of 38 as the basis for consultation. On the basis of the evidence received during consultation, it was recommended by LGBCE officers that there was sufficient evidence to support a council size of 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 on warding arrangements.

9. Wellingborough Council Size Post Consultation - LGBCE (13)45

It had been agreed to review Wellingborough Borough Council due to electoral imbalance. The review had commenced in June 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 44 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 36 members.

At its meeting in December 2012 the Commission considered all the evidence it had received on council size and recommended 36 members as the basis of its consultation on council size. The consultation ended on 18 February 2012.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted they were minded to support a council size of 36 members.

Agreed

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

10. Three Rivers Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (13)46

The review of Three Rivers District Council had commenced on January 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 25 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on October 2012, the Commission had been minded to agree a Council size of 39 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 13 three-member wards.

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 Three Rivers District Council as presented.

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

The review of East Dorset District Council had commenced on June 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, eight per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent

At its meeting on 11 September 2012, the Commission had been minded to agree a Council size of 29 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 seven single-member wards, five two-member wards, and four three-member wards.

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 East Dorset District Council as presented.

12. Uttlesford Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (13)47

The review of Uttlesford District Council had commenced on January 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 33 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with one ward being over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on October 2012, the Commission had been minded to agree a Council size of 39 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 three-member, ten two-member, and ten single-member wards.

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 Uttlesford District Council as presented.

13. Hackney Final Recommendations – LGBCE (13)48

Having declared an interest, the Chair took no part in this discussion and the item was chaired by the Deputy Chair.

The review of the London Borough of Hackney had commenced on 9 January 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 37 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10% from the average for the borough.

At its meeting on December 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 57 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 45 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations which were based on a council size of 57. These had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria. At its meeting in December 2012, the Commission agreed significant changes in three areas of Hackney and decided to undertake further limited consultation on these areas given that they moved away significantly from the Draft Recommendations.

The Commission received 14 further submissions in response to the further limited consultation. As a result of the evidence received, the Commission proposed one minor boundary change in the Dalston area of Hackney.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 15 three-member and six two-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 further Draft Recommendations. It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for the London Borough of Hackney as presented.

14. South Oxfordshire Modifications to Final Recommendations – LGBCE (13)49

Agreed

That the Commission formally acknowledged the change to electorate figures to those presented at its meeting in February 2013, and rejected the proposed modification to the Final Recommendations of South Oxfordshire.

15. Corrections to Parish Warding Arrangements for the Final Recommendations of Fenland and Warwick District Councils – LGBCE (13)50

Agreed

The Commission formally agreed the corrections to Parish Warding arrangements for the Final Recommendations of Fenland and Warwick District Councils.

16. Chair's Report (oral)

The Chair updated the Commission on his recent meeting with the MP for Milton Keynes.

The Chair reminded the Commission that preparation for the meeting with the Speaker's Committee was underway. This meeting would take place before the next scheduled Commission meeting in April.

17. Chief Executive's Report (oral)

The Chief Executive informed the Commission that he awaited a response to his further letter to the DCLG following the Chair's approach to the Minister about the need for an additional Commissioner.

The Chief Executive highlighted aspects of the review of programme management and the need to expedite progress in order to ensure best use of resources. He would shortly be issuing an invitation to tender to support this work, a draft of which had been seen by Commissioners.

The Chief Executive had received further feedback from the Parliamentary Boundary Commission (PBC) following their meeting with the Cabinet Office. The PBC reported there was support from the Cabinet Office for an interim arrangement on the lines discussed. It was noted, however, longer-term issues remained to be considered, especially in the area of funding.

The Chief Executive updated the Commission on the April agenda for the Commissioner workshop.

The Finance Director had been liaising with the LGA on their continuing negotiations with Liberata on the shared support services contract. It was anticipated that some savings might be achieved although the potential implications for service level were noted.

18. Draft Governance Statement – LGBCE (13)51

The Commission was asked to consider a skeleton of the Governance Statement following an earlier discussion at the February Audit Committee. The Audit Committee had also agreed that an Internal Control Questionnaire (ICQ) should form part of the input into the statement, to be completed by all staff. The Commission was asked to agree to the use of the ICQ.

The Finance Director confirmed that work had begun on production of the Draft Annual Report and that Commissioners would have an opportunity to see it in draft, prior to final approval at its meeting on 11 June.

Agreed

- The content of the Draft Governance Statement as presented.
- The use of the Internal Control Questionnaire.

19. Audit Committee Minutes – LGBCE(13)52

The Commission noted the Audit Committee minutes for February.

Agreed

That the Commission formally approved the recommendation for a one-year renewal of the contract for services by RSM Tenon with a subsequent full re-tender exercise taking place.

20. Future Business – LGBCE (13)53

The Communications Manager updated the Commission on the work being undertaken to ensure that LGBCE deployed the most effective means of explaining review process, and related matters, to Councils and other audiences. This matter would be included in the agenda for the Commissioner workshop in April.

The Director of Reviews spoke about the April agenda and noted that the 'Review of the Year' report would be considered alongside the Annual Report.

The Director of Reviews advised that electoral data from all of the local authorities in England had been received and analysed. The Commission would receive a report on those authorities which might be included in its 2014-15 programme at the August Commission meeting. Considering its possible future programme in August, would enable the Commission to be informed by requests that might emerge at the LGA Conference. Also, to assist in the preparation of that report, it would be helpful for the Commission to provide an early steer on its priorities for the 2014-15 review programme. A paper about this would be brought forward to the Commission's next meeting.

12:00 Meeting Closed