

LGBCE (14)9th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 16 September 2014, 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
Alison Lowton
Sir Tony Redmond
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE
Professor Paul Wiles

LGBCE Officers Present:

Alan Cogbill	Chief Executive
Jolyon Jackson CBE	Chief Executive Designate
Archie Gall	Director of Reviews
Marcus Bowell	Communications Manager
Tim Bowden	Business Development Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager (item 15)
Sarah Vallotton	Business & Committee Services Manager (item 16)
Lucy Ward	Review Officer (items 2 & 7)
Emily Starkie	Review Officer (items 3 & 10)
William Morrison	Review Officer (items 4, 5 & 6)
Paul Kingsley	Review Officer (item 8)
Johanna Porter	Review Officer (item 9)
David Owen	Review Officer (item 11)
Dean Faccini	Business Assistant (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Dr Colin Sinclair.

Declarations of interest

Sir Tony Redmond declared an interest in item 10, South Bucks and took no part in the discussion of that item.

Jolyon Jackson, Chief Executive Designate declared an interest in item 9, Doncaster and took no part in the discussion of that item.

Professor Colin Mellors and Professor Paul Wiles declared an interest in item 4, Sheffield and neither took part in the discussion of that item.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 19 August 2014

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

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

1. Operational Report - LGBCE (14)108

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

It was reported that Rugby District Council is likely to withdraw its request for an electoral review.

Bexley Council has formally requested a review and a meeting will be arranged in due course.

The Director of Reviews updated the Commission on the proposal to hold direct elections to National Parks. It is understood that it is unlikely that any arrangements would involve warding arrangements so that the Commission would not need to be involved.

Allocation of Lead Commissioners to new reviews would be made at the next meeting.

2. Dorset Council Size - LGBCE (14)109

It had been agreed to review Dorset County Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 33 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 45 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 increase by one from 45 to 46 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 46 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 46 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

3. Colchester Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (14)110

The review of Colchester Borough Council had commenced in February 2014. According to the latest available electoral figures, 26 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting in February 2014, the Commission had been minded to agree 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 17 three-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.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Colchester Borough Council as presented.

4. Sheffield Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (14)111

The review of Sheffield City Council had commenced in February 2014. According to the latest available electoral figures, one ward had a variance of over 30 per cent.

At its meeting in February 2014, 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 28 three-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.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Sheffield City Council as presented.

5. Cotswold Related Alterations - LGBCE (14)112

Following the outcome of a recent Community Governance Review undertaken by Cotswold District Council, it was apparent that the county divisions of Cotswold would not be coterminous with the new parish boundaries. This had implications for the Commission's recommendations relating to ward boundaries in Cotswold.

The Commission had postponed consideration of final recommendations for Cotswold to allow the District Council sufficient time to consult on and request a related alteration to electoral division boundaries in the Cirencester area.

As a result, Cotswold District Council had requested related alterations to some of its electoral divisions.

Agreed

That the Commission make an electoral changes order implementing the alterations to the county electoral divisions as requested by the District Council.

6. Cotswold Final Recommendations - LGBCE (14)113

The review of Cotswold District Council had commenced in May 2013. According to the latest available electoral figures, 11 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting in August 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 35 but had subsequently revised the council size to 34 at the Draft Recommendations stage. The Commission had agreed that a reduction of one member would allow for a better pattern of boundaries.

Following publication, 110 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, there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations in some aspects and these changes had been reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission for consideration.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of two two-member wards and 30 single-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 Draft Recommendations.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented with amendments in the following areas:

- Lechlade, Fairford South & Kempsford area
- Compton Abdale area
- Driffield area
- Cirencester area.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Cotswold District Council as presented.

7. West Devon Final Recommendations – LGBCE (14)114

The review of West Devon Council had commenced in August 2013. According to the latest available electoral figures, 36 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with one ward being over 30 per cent.

At its meeting in November 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 31 and had subsequently, at its meeting in March 2014, agreed Draft Recommendations which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Following publication, 34 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations.

Taking all of the submissions into account, 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 pattern of two three-member wards, nine two-member wards, and seven single-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 Draft Recommendations.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for West Devon Council as presented.

8. Broxtowe Final Recommendations - LGBCE (14)115

The review of Broxtowe Borough Council had commenced in August 2013. According to the latest available electoral figures one ward had 36 per cent fewer electors than the borough average.

At its meeting in December 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 44 and had subsequently, at its meeting in April 2014, agreed Draft Recommendations which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Following publication, 20 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations.

Taking all of the submissions into account, 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 pattern of six three-member wards, 12 two-member wards, and two single-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 Draft Recommendations.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Broxtowe Borough Council as presented.

9. Doncaster Final Recommendations - LGBCE (14)116

Commissioner Alison Lowton was not present for the discussion of this item.

The review of Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council had commenced in August 2013 following an Order from DCLG about the future scheduling of elections for the local authority. According to the latest available electoral figures, two wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting in November 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 54 and had subsequently, at its meeting in March 2014, agreed Draft Recommendations which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Following publication, over 550 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations, many focused on the Armthorpe and Edenthorpe areas.

Taking all of the submissions into account, there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations in a number of areas and these changes were reflected in the Recommendations put to the Commission for consideration.

The Recommendations proposed a pattern of 13 three-member wards and 8 two-member wards in total. This involved a council size increase by one from 54 to 55 members, as this figure allowed for a scheme that responded to issues raised during the consultation whilst still achieving reasonable electoral equality.

The revised scheme, which was informed by the submissions, involved a number of changes across the Borough, specifically:

- Adwick-le-Street & Carcroft
- Sprotbrough
- Norton & Askern
- Bentley
- Roman Ridge
- Rossington & Bawtry
- Finningley
- Tickhill & Wadworth
- Edlington & Warmsworth
- Balby South
- Armthorpe
- Edenthorpe
- Barnby Dunn & Kirk Sandall
- Stainforth

Given the scale of the changes proposed, it was felt appropriate to undertake a further, short, borough-wide consultation on the recommendations put forward in the paper. The scheduling of this consultation would take account of the need to meet the timetable for the new arrangements to be in place in time for the 2015 elections.

Agreed

A period of further limited consultation take place.

10. South Bucks Final Recommendations - LGBCE (14)117

The review of South Bucks District Council had commenced in August 2013. According to the latest available electoral figures, 21 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting in September 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 28 and had subsequently, at its meeting in March 2014, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 30 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 had been judged that there was insufficient evidence to change the Draft Recommendations and, therefore, they were proposed as the Final Recommendations for South Bucks District Council

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of six three-member wards, four 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.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for South Bucks District Council.

11. Wyre Forest Final Recommendations - LGBCE (14)118

The review of Wyre Forest District Council had commenced in June 2013. According to the latest available electoral figures, 18 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting in September 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 33 and had subsequently, in March 2014, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 43 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, there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations in some aspects and these changes had been reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission for consideration.

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

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented which included amendments in the following areas:

- Stourport area
- Severn Valley area

- Kidderminster area.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Wyre Forest District Council as presented.

12. Chair's Report

The Chair informed the Commission that he would be meeting with Kris Hopkins MP, who now held the local government brief at DCLG, in October.

The Chair reported on a meeting he had had with the Clerk to the Speaker's Committee on succession arrangements, specifically the potential impact of the General Election on the schedule.

The Commission noted the decision by DCLG to undertake a wide ranging review of governance arrangements in Birmingham.

The Commission asked if there had been any developments regarding the appointment of a further Commissioner. There were no developments to report. The Director of Reviews would speak to DCLG about progressing the appointment.

13. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive noted the Commission's meeting with the Speaker's Committee scheduled for the 4 November. This meeting would be the first of what was proposed to be a series of annual meetings where the Commission would no longer be required to submit a five year-plan for approval every year. They would instead be based on our Annual Report for the previous business year.

The Chief Executive Designate updated the Commission on the Relocation project. The Treasury and Cabinet Office had agreed the Commission's business case to remain in London. They had asked that, in the first instance, the current stock of available government properties be investigated as a potential location for the Commission. This cleared the way for the case to go to the Speaker's Committee.

The development of a new IT strategy was progressing. A note had been sent out to all Commissioners asking them to confirm their IT requirements and expectations about how the Commission might make the most effective use of IT in its work going forward. Commissioners were asked to respond as quickly as possible in order that their IT requirements could be included in the strategy.

14. Equalities Act Working Group – LGBCE (14)19

The Business & Committee Services Manager introduced the Equalities Act Working Group paper. Alison Lowton was confirmed as the lead Commissioner for the working group and she would offer her input as required.

The Commission had identified that the equalities statements used in the review reports did not provide sufficient information on how equalities screening is carried out as part of the review process. The working group will address this. It was likely to propose further measures to obtain relevant information. The Commission was asked to endorse the recommendations in the report as an interim position.

Agreed

The Commission agreed the recommendations as presented in the paper, but recognised that further work was required in order to be assured that the equalities screening process was as effective as possible, along with other measures to improve procedural and cultural aspects of the Commission's equalities strategy.

15. Performance Management – LGBCE (14)20

In the absence of the Policy & Research Officer, the Review Manager presented the paper, 'Performance Management: 1st Quarter outturns for non-financial indicators'.

There are six Key Performance Indicators (KPIs); four of them non-financial indicators. The report highlighted KPI 3 (satisfaction with the Commission) as being in decline. Further research would be undertaken by the team in order to pinpoint the exact reasons and to recommend any remedial action. The team's findings would be presented to the Commission at a later date.

The Commission noted the position.

16. New & Emerging Risks

The Commission identified three new risks:

- Potential outcomes from DCLG's review of Birmingham which could lead to future work for LGBCE.
- The Commission's equalities strategy and policy; the work and procedural change likely to be needed to improve it to provide greater assurance.
- The potential knock-on effect of devolution proposals for England following the Scottish referendum.

Agreed

To add these risks to the risk register.

17. Future Business – LGBCE (14)21

The Director of Reviews reminded the Commission of the planned visit to the East Sussex local authorities.

A request from Cornwall Council for a meeting had been received. The Commission would be briefed on the outcome.

AOB

There were no other items.

Close of Business 12:22

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

21/10/14