

LGBCE (16)7th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 19th July 2016 at 11:30am, Meeting Room, 29th Floor Millbank Tower.

Commissioners Present

Professor Colin Mellors (Chair)
Sir Tony Redmond (Deputy Chair)
Alison Lowton
Peter Maddison
Dr Peter Knight CBE (via video conference)

LGBCE Officers Present:

Jolyon Jackson CBE	Chief Executive
Lynn Ingram	Director of Finance
Marcus Bowell	Strategy and Communications Director
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Jo Porter	Review Manager (via video conference)
Lucy Ward	Review Manager
Paul Kingsley	Review Adviser (item 5 and 9)
David Owen	Review Officer (item 6)
Mark Cooper	Review Officer (item 8)
Dean Faccini	Business Assistant (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Professor Paul Wiles.

Declarations of interest

Jo Porter, Review Manager, declared an interest in item 3. Croydon, item 5. Chichester, item 7. Hampshire, and item 9. West Sussex. Jo did not take part in any of the discussions for those items.

Dr Peter Knight declared an interest in item 9. West Sussex, and did not take part in the discussion of that item.

Lynn Ingram, Finance Director, declared an interest in item 7. Hampshire, and did not take part in the discussion of that item.

Minutes of LGBCE meeting on 21 June 2016

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

Matters Arising

Alison Lowton raised the matter of the Scheme of Delegation report. The Chief Executive confirmed that the report would be tabled at the next Commission meeting in August.

1. Operational Report - LGBCE (16)64

The Chief Executive presented the Operational Report for July 2016 and the Commission noted its content.

The Chief Executive asked the Commission to formally agree to the following new electoral reviews:

- Cheshire West & Chester
- South Gloucestershire
- Forest of Dean
- Babergh

The Commission agreed the new requests. The reviews would be added to the review programme.

The Chief Executive updated the Commission on new and potential requests for electoral reviews:

- Scarborough Borough Council had made a formal request.
- Pendle Borough Council were likely to submit a formal request.
- Forest Heath Council was also likely to make a formal request.

The review of Scarborough Borough Council would be allocated to Alison Lowton.

The review schedule for East Hampshire is likely to be subject to minor delay at the request of the authority. Timings would be amended after further discussion with the authority.

2. Surrey Heath Council - LGBCE (16)65

It had been agreed to review Surrey Heath due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 31 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 40 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 decrease by 6 from 40 to 34 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 34 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 34 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

3. Croydon Council Size - LGBCE (16)66

It had been agreed to review the London Borough of Croydon at the request of the local authority. According to the latest available electoral figures, 21 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 70 members.

During the preliminary period of the review, the Commission received two submissions that presented opposing, but equally persuasive, arguments for the case to maintain and reduce council size.

The Commission considered all the available evidence, and on the basis of this evidence, it agreed that the Lead Commissioner would meet with the working groups from each of the two submissions to seek further evidence before making a formal decision on council size.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that further evidence would be sought by the Lead Commissioner from each of the two working groups for both submissions.

4. Manchester City Council Size - LGBCE (16)67

It had been agreed to review Manchester City Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 21 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 96 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 96 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 96 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 96 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

5. Chichester Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (16)68

The review of Chichester District Council had commenced on 19 January 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 14 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 19 January 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 36 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 three-, 11 two-, eight 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.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Chichester District Council Chichester District Council.

6. Bexley Final Recommendations – LGBC (16)69

The review of the London Borough of Bexley had commenced on 18 August 2015. According to the latest available electoral figures, two wards had a variance of over 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 18 September 2015, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 45 and had subsequently, 19 January 2016, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 119 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. As presented in the Final Recommendations presented to the Commission, it was also considered that there was sufficient evidence to undertake a period of further limited consultation before the Commission published its Final Recommendations. The areas for further consultation would focus on the proposals for:

- Erith
- Northend & Slade Green
- Northumberland Heath
- Barnehurst

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

- A number of minor modifications to the boundaries of eight wards, primarily located in central and southern Bexley.

Agreed

It agreed to a period of further limited consultation.

8. Lincolnshire Further Limited Consultation Outcome – LGBCE (16)71

The review of Lincolnshire County Council had commenced on 21 April 2015. According to the latest available electoral figures, 33 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent with Bourne Abbey and Stamford West divisions having a variance of over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on 21 April 2015, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 71 and had subsequently, 17 November 2015, agreed Draft Recommendations based on a council size of 70. At its meeting on 19 April 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a period of further limited consultation in the areas of North Kesteven, South Holland, South Kesteven and West Lindsey.

Following its period of further limited consultation, 35 submissions had been received commenting on the further Draft Recommendations for North Kesteven, South Holland, South Kesteven and West Lindsey - all of 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 pattern of 70 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.

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

- a minor amendment in North Kesteven to include the entirety of the Heighington parish in the same division area.
- proposed warding pattern for Sleaford
- names of the divisions in the North Hykeham area
- a minor amendment in the South Kesteven area to include the parish of Toft cum Lound & Manthorpe in the Bourne South and Thurlby division.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Lincolnshire County Council as presented.

9. West Sussex Further Limited Consultation Outcome – LGBCE (16)72

The review of West Sussex County Council had commenced on June 2015. According to the latest available electoral figures, 32 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on June 2015, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 70 and had subsequently, 17 November 2015, agreed Draft Recommendations. At its meeting on 19 April 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a period of further limited consultation in the area of Crawley Borough.

Following its period of further limited consultation, 17 submissions had been received commenting on the further Draft Recommendations for Crawley Borough, 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 further Draft Recommendations, and therefore, they were proposed as the Final Recommendations for West Sussex County Council.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 70 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 and Further Draft Recommendations.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for West Sussex County Council as presented.

10. Chair's Report

The Chair updated the Commission on:

- LGA Conference

The Chair reflected positively on the LGBCE's attendance at the recent LGA conference. The conference included a LGBCE led workshop which was very well attended.

- Commissioner recruitment update

The Chair confirmed that the person specifications for the replacement Commissioner(s) had been agreed by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). A panel to conduct the interviews had also been identified. It was hoped that the advert would go out shortly.

The Chair also formally congratulated Peter Knight on his reappointment as Commissioner.

11. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive updated the Commission on:

- LGA Conference

The Chief Executive also reflected positively on the LGA conference.

- New Ministerial team at the DCLG

Following recent changes in government, a new ministerial team had been appointed at the DCLG. The Chief Executive would look to schedule a meeting with the Chair and the new Minister allocated to the Speakers Committee.

- Staff recruitment

An update was given on staff recruitment. Interviews for the two vacant Review Assistants positions had taken place which resulted in two job offers being made.

The Chief Executive also circulated a discussion paper produced by the Local Government Association called 'What Next For Devolution?'

12. Finance Director's Report on Quarter 1 Financial Projections & Budget Setting for 2016/17 – LGBCE (16)73

The Finance Director confirmed that the Annual Report & Accounts for 2015/16 had been laid in Parliament.

The Finance Director then presented the Quarter 1 Financial Projections & Budget Setting for 2016/17. The report focused on two key areas:

- Detailed Budget Setting for 2016/17
- Quarter One Finance Projections

Detail Budget Setting

- The LGBCE has been allocated the same budget as last year and this is unlikely to change for the foreseeable future.
- Commissioners were reminded that during 2015/16, there was an underspend against our resource allocation by £72k.
- The resource agreed in the Corporate Plan for 2016/17 was again £2,137k, the same as 2015/16.
- Some additional one-off expenses were met last year:
 - Appointment of new chair
 - Inter-Commission Meeting
 - Running two mapping systems
 - Implementation costs for IT Contract

Plans are in place to support a number of projects taking place this financial year, including:

- The relocation project to move the LGBCE out of its current premises by 2018 (the end of its current lease).
- The new SharePoint project
- Further development work to the LGBCE website

There will also be some Business Team restructure costs.

Projections and Budget Monitoring:

- At this stage, the forecast is for a small underspend of £13k but the budget will need careful monitoring and ownership across the organisation.

The Commission agreed to the budget.

13. Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting of 20 June 2016 (previously circulated on 23 June 2016) – LGBCE (16)74

The minutes were agreed and signed by the Audit Committee and Risk Chair.

14. Business Plan 2016/17 Draft – LGBCE (16)75

The Strategy and Communications Director presented the first draft of the Business Plan 2016/17, which sets out the Commission's mission statement, vision, values and strategic objectives.

The Commission agreed to the first draft of the Business Plan 2016/17, pending minor amendments to the following areas:

- A small amendment to the wording of the Commission's mission statement.
- A small amendment to the wording of the second bullet point under 'Our Vision'.
- A slight reworking of the description for Strategic Objective number 2.
- The removal of the second bullet point under Strategic Objective number 3.

15. Future Business – LGBCE (16)76

This paper was noted.

AOB

There were no additional items.

Close of Business

14:32

Col. Miller
9/5/16

