

LGBCE (17)8th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 15 August 2017 on 29th Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP

Commissioners Present

Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)
Sir Tony Redmond (Deputy Chair)
Dr Peter Knight CBE, DL
Alison Lowton
Peter Maddison QPM

LGBCE Officers Present:

Jolyon Jackson CBE	Chief Executive
Marcus Bowell	Director of Strategy & Communications
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Jo Porter	Review Manager
Lucy Dunkeyson	Review Manager
Mishka Mayers	Review Officer (item 3 & 9)
Mark Cooper	Review Officer (item 4)
Emily Starkie	Review Officer (item 5)
Dan Carlsson-Hyslop	Review Officer (item 6)
Alex Hinds	Review Officer (item 7)
Laura Taylor	Review Officer (item 10 & 12)
David Owen	Review Officer (item 11)
Dean Faccini	Business Support Officer (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from the Director of Finance and Resources, and the Review and Programme Manager.

Declarations of interest

The Chief Executive declared an interest in item 3 (West Berkshire Draft Recommendations) and took no part in the discussions of that item.

Minutes of LGBCE meeting on 18 July 2017

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 (17)85

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

The Chief Executive and the Chair will meet with the Leader and Chief Executive of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council on 4 September following their request to have a review carried out in time for all-out 2019 elections.

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council is still considering whether to request a review.

There have been no further updates on potential new unitary authorities but it is understood that proposals in Buckinghamshire and proposals in Dorset have been submitted to the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State is considering proposals for mergers from the following areas:

- Taunton Dean and West Somerset
- West Suffolk
- West Devon and South Hams

East Suffolk have met with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). They were advised that it may not be possible to have an electoral review completed in time for all-out 2019 elections if they proceed with a merger. However, they prefer that such a review does take place prior to the establishment of a merged authority, should the merger be approved, and the Commission will continue to liaise with the two authorities.

The Chief Executive had a productive meeting with the Chief Executive from the National Association of London Councils on the Commission's timetable for reviewing London boroughs.

The Chief Executive will meet with the Suffolk Chief Executives' Group on 16 August to discuss the ongoing Suffolk boundary reviews.

2. South Somerset Council Size - LGBCE (17)86

It had been agreed to review South Somerset 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, with Brympton ward having a variance of 23 per cent.

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 that the council size remain at 60 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 60 members.

Agreed

- The Commission agreed that a council size of 60 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.
- It was agreed that the average elector to councillor ratio for equivalent types of authorities (as now provided on the pen portrait report) should also be included on the cover report for all council size papers.

3. West Berkshire Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (17)87

The review of West Berkshire Council had commenced on 17 January 2017. According to the latest available electoral figures, 20 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with Chieveley ward having a variance of 17 per cent.

At its meeting on 17 January 2017, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 42 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 three-, nine two-, and four 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 43 as this provided better levels of electoral equality, particularly in the town of Newbury.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for West Berkshire Council as presented.

4. Forest of Dean Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (17)88

The review of Forest of Dean District Council had commenced on 21 March 2017. According to the latest available electoral figures, 15 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with four per cent of wards being over 20 per cent. One ward, Lydney East, is forecasted to have a variance of 37 per cent by 2023.

At its meeting on 21 March 2017, 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 five three-, seven two-, and nine 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 38, as a council size of 38 councillors provided a better balance of electors per councillor across the district.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Forest of Dean District Council as presented.

5. South Gloucestershire Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (17)89

The review of South Gloucestershire Council had commenced on 21 March 2017. According to the latest available electoral figures, 14 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with six per cent of wards being over 20 per cent. One ward, Frenchay & Stoke Park, had a variance of 27 per cent, and Siston ward had a variance of 25 per cent.

At its meeting on 21 March 2017, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 61 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 eight three-, 15 two-, and seven 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 South Gloucestershire Council as presented.

6. Cheshire West & Chester Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (17)90

The review of Cheshire West & Chester Council had commenced on 21 March 2017 following a request from the authority. According to the latest available electoral figures, 20 per cent of wards had variances of 10 per cent, with four per cent of wards being over 20 per cent. One ward, Boughton, had a variance of 24 per cent.

At its meeting on 21 March 2017, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 69 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 eight three-, 11 two-, and 24 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 70, as this would better reflect community identities and interests.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Cheshire West & Chester Council as presented.

7. Preston Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (17)91

The review of Preston City Council had commenced on 21 March 2017. According to the latest available electoral figures, 36 per cent of wards had variances of 10 per cent or more, with one ward, University, having a variance of 40 per cent.

At its meeting on 21 March 2017, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 48 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 16 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 Preston City Council as presented.

8. North East Derbyshire Final Recommendations - LGBCE (17)92

The review of North East Derbyshire District Council had commenced on 15 November 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, four per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with one ward, Renishaw, having a variance of 35 per cent.

At its meeting on 15 November 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 53 and had subsequently, on 21 March 2017, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, seven 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, for the reasons highlighted in the team's report, 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 10 three-, and nine two-, and five 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 North East Derbyshire District Council as presented

This was subject to the assurance that the appropriate level of consultation had taken place given the relatively small number of submissions received. (The team subsequently confirmed that an appropriate level of consultation had taken place).

9. Bolsover Final Recommendations - LGBCE (17)93

The review of Bolsover District Council had commenced on 15 November 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 25 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with 20 per cent of wards being over 20 per cent. One ward, Shirebrook East, had a variance of 29 per cent.

At its meeting on 15 November 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 37 and had subsequently, on 21 March 2017, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, nine 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, for the reasons highlighted in the team's report, 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 four three-, and 12 two-, 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.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Bolsover District Council as presented.

This was subject to the assurance that the appropriate level of consultation had taken place given the relatively small number of submissions received. (The team subsequently confirmed that an appropriate level of consultation had taken place).

10. Blackburn with Darwen Final Recommendations - LGBCE (17)94

The review of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council had commenced on 15 November 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 30 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with one ward, Audley, having a variance of 20 per cent.

At its meeting on 15 November 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 51 and had subsequently, on 21 March 2017, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 14 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, for the reasons highlighted in the team's report, 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 17 three-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 Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council as presented.

11. Ribble Valley Final Recommendations - LGBCE (17)95

The review of Ribble Valley Borough Council had commenced on 15 November 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 29 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with one ward, Whalley, having a variance of 32 per cent.

At its meeting on 15 November 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 40 and had subsequently, on 21 March 2017, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 10 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, for the reasons highlighted in the team's report, 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 14 two-, and 12 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 Ribble Valley Borough Council as presented.

12. Surrey Heath Final Recommendations - LGBCE (17)96

The review of Surrey Heath Borough Council had commenced on 19 July 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 25 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with one ward, St Michaels, having a variance of 23 per cent.

At its meeting on 19 July 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 34 and had subsequently, on 20 December 2016, agreed Draft Recommendations but based on a revised council size of 35 members since this figure provided for better boundaries.

Following publication, 62 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations, and 174 submissions had been received commenting on the subsequent Further Draft Recommendations, both of 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 Surrey Heath Borough Council.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of seven three-, and seven 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 Draft Recommendations.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Surrey Heath Borough Council as presented.

13. Future Work Programme 2018/19 - LGBCE (17)97

The Future Work Programme 2018/19 follows on from the agreed outline five-year programme of reviews for 2018/19 to 2022/23.

It was recommended to the Commission that the following electoral reviews were added to the review programme for 2018/19:

- Intervention reviews: the Commission identified 18 local authorities from the 32 authorities it had written to that met the Commission's intervention criteria.

- Requested reviews: slots for requests from five local authorities were accepted and added to the 2018/19 programme. The review programme does however, have capacity to add more.
- London Boroughs: The Commission will commence its programme of London electoral reviews in 2018/19. Eleven London boroughs have been included, with three out of the 11 meeting the Commission's intervention criteria.

Agreed

- The Commission agreed to the Future Work Programme 2018/19.
- The Chair would meet with the council leader at Durham County Council and the council leader at Northumberland County Council to discuss their likelihood of meeting the Commission's intervention criteria.
- The Commission would write to any local authority that had responded positively to the possibility of a review, but which had not been included in the 2018/19 programme indicating the basis of the decision not to include them in next year's programme and indicating when they might expect to be included.

14. Chair's Report

The Chair gave an update on the Commissioner recruitment process. Recommendations for appointments were now with the Cabinet Secretary.

The Chair had met with the Chief Executive lead for the District Council's Network (DCN). This had been a productive meeting and it was agreed that a further meeting with the DCN Board would be helpful to discuss matters of common interest.

15. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive had nothing further to add.

16. Business Plan – LGBCE (17)98

The Director of Strategy and Communications updated the Commission on its Business Plan for 2016/17. The plan sets out how the Commission will deliver its aims and focus its resources for the current financial year.

Highlights of the report included:

- Reviews: the Commission is on track to complete its review timetable for 2017/18.
- Learning & Development: a report detailing the Commission's progress on training against budget would be provided at its meeting in September.
- Equalities: a report from the Equalities Working Group would be presented to the Audit & Risk Committee at its meeting in October. The report would focus on the impact assessment of the Commission's updated public consultation process, and the impact assessment on the review process.

- **Review Process:** implementation of the Review Process is well underway following its sign off at the Commission meeting in May.
- **Council size policy:** the discussion on council size, provisionally scheduled for September, will be deferred until after the appointment of the new Commissioners.
- **Performance Information:** the Commission will receive a joint KPI and financial indicators report at its meeting in October. The Commission is also due to consider new overall KPIs at its September meeting for implementation in 2018/19.
- **New website:** Officers have carried out a procurement exercise to acquire a more cost-effective website. The aim is to deliver a new website during this current financial year.
- **Extranet:** the Commissioner extranet facility is on course for roll out in November 2017.
- **Sharepoint:** the process of selecting an implementation partner will commence in September with a view to implementing a new filing system and intranet by the end of the financial year.
- **Relocation:** the steering group is scheduled to meet in September where it will consider the business case and explore options for new premises.

17. Future Business – LGBCE (17)99

The Commission noted the Future Business document.

AOB

There were no other items.

Close of Business 3:45

A handwritten signature in black ink, followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right. To the right of the line, the date '19/9/17' is written in a similar cursive style.