

LGBCE (13) 4th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 9 April 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 Howell	Communications Manager
Tim Bowden	Review Manager
Richard Buck	Review & Programme Manager
Daniel Edwards	Review Manager
Jessica Metherringham	Review Manager
Sarah Vallotton	Business & Committee Services Manager
Simon Keal	Review Officer
Richard Otterway	Review Officer
Nicholas Dunkeyson	Review Officer
Mark Pascoe	Review Officer
Alex Hinds	Review Officer
Dean Faccini	Business Assistant (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

No apologies were given.

Declarations of interest

The Chair declared an interest in the Suffolk Coastal review and did not take any part in the discussion of that item.

Professor Colin Mellors declared an interest in the York review and did not take any part in the discussion of that item.

Review Officer Simon Keal also declared an interest in the York review and did not take any part in the discussion of that item.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 12 March 2013

The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

No matters arising.

1. Operational Report - LGBCE (13)54

The Director of Reviews reported that a number of representations had been received in relation to the Final Recommendations for Tower Hamlets.

The Director of Reviews updated the Commission on the meetings he and the Chair had recently attended at Elmbridge Borough Council and Liverpool City Council.

2. Suffolk Coastal Council Size - LGBCE (13)55

Following the Chair's declaration of interest, this item was chaired by the Deputy Chair.

It had been agreed to review Suffolk Coastal District Council due to electoral imbalance. The review had commenced in October 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, two of the council's 34 wards had a variance of over 30 per cent.

The Commission had held meetings with local authority group 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 55 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 changing to 43 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted they were minded to support a council size of 43 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 43 be used as the basis for consultation.

The Chair resumed chairing the meeting from this item.

3. Ashfield Council Size - LGBCE (13)56

It had been agreed to review Ashfield Council due to electoral imbalance. The review had commenced in April 2013. According to the latest electoral figures, 40 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per.

The Commission had held meetings with local authority group 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.

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 changing to 35 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted they were minded to support a council size of 35 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 35 be used as the basis for consultation.

4. Aylesbury Vale Council Size - LGBCE (13)57

It had been agreed to review Aylesbury Vale District Council due to electoral imbalance. The review had commenced in April 2013. According to the latest electoral figures, 33 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with one ward having a variance of over 30 per cent.

The Commission had held meetings with local authority group 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 59 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 59 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted they were minded to support a council size of 59 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 59 be used as the basis for consultation.

5. East Lindsey Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (13)58

The review of East Lindsey District Council had commenced on August 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 31 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on November 2012, the Commission was 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 four three-member, 12 two-member and 19 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 East Lindsey District Council as presented.

6. Middlesbrough Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (13)59

The review of Middlesbrough Council had commenced on December 2011. According to the latest electoral figures, 30 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent and Middlehaven ward had a variance of -35%.

At its meeting on November 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 46 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-member wards, 10 two-member wards, and two 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 Middlesbrough Council as presented.

7. York Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (13)60

The Deputy Chair and Simon Keal took no part in the discussion of this item.

The review of City of York Council had commenced on May 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, one ward has a variance of over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on December 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 47 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 9 three-member wards, 8 two-member wards, and 4 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 York City Council as presented.

8. Quarterly Review Programme 2013-2014 - LGBCE (13)61

The Commission noted the content of the Quarterly Review Programme 2013-2014.

9. Review Programme 2014-2015 - LGBCE (13)62

The Review & Programme Manager presented an update on the Review Programme 2014-2015.

Agreed

That a further report, informed by a sensitivity analysis, be produced for the August meeting in order to aid the Commission in identifying which authorities most appropriately meet the criteria for inclusion in the review programme.

This would include consideration of the stability of the figures over time, the degree to which authorities met the intervention criteria (including alternative approaches such as the percentage of the electorate as well as wards/divisions which were above 10% and 30%) and the robustness of planning assumptions for the numbers of authorities likely to meet the current intervention criteria going forward. This work would then enable officials to suggest a priority ranking for each authority.

10. Chair's Report (oral)

The Chair reported on the meeting he and the Chief Executive had had with the Speaker's Committee. The five-year corporate plan and 2013-2014 budget had been approved by the Committee, subject only to adding an explanatory footnote analysing corporate costs more finely.

11. Chief Executive's Report (oral)

The Chair reported on further exchanges with the Boundary Commission for England over possible closer joint working.

12. Year End Finance and Performance Report – LGBCE (13)63

The Finance Director presented the Year End Finance and Performance Report. The Commission placed on record their thanks for the work undertaken by the Finance Director to produce this report to a high standard and in such a short time since the financial year end.

The Finance Director reported that there would undoubtedly be some small changes in the final year-end figures, but that the report represented the most accurate summary of the Commission's financial position possible at this stage.

13. Finalisation of Code of Conduct and Subsequent Changes to Corporate Governance Framework – LGBCE (13)64

Following earlier consideration by the Commission, and subsequently by the Audit Committee, the Commission was asked to agree the revised Code of Conduct and subsequent amendments to the Commission's standing orders, which form part of the Corporate Governance Framework. The necessary notice of proposed changes to the Framework, which would require a two thirds majority of the Commission, had been given.

Agreed

The revised Code of Conduct, and changes to the Commission's standing orders and Corporate Governance Framework, as presented were agreed unanimously

That the Business & Committee Services Manager invite Commissioners and relevant staff to make their annual declarations of interest using the new Code of Conduct as a guide.

14. Future Business – LGBCE (13)65

The Commission noted the schedule.

The meeting was formally adjourned at 11:43. The Commission entered a series of workshop sessions where it considered the annual strategic planning event due to take place in August 2013; technical guidance on the determination of council size and the communications strategy.

15. Annual Strategic Planning Event: August 2013 (oral)

The Commission discussed arrangements for the next annual Strategic Planning event. It was agreed that the focus of the workshop would be future business challenges.

16. Council Size Determination – LGBCE (13)66

The Commission agreed:

- Subject to some re-presentation of the material, to endorse the principles set out in the proposed new technical guidance on council size
- That, officers would produce a sensitivity analysis to inform the how the Commission might identify local authorities that varied significantly from their comparator groupings.

AOB

The Commission congratulated Review Manager, Daniel Edwards, and Review Assistant, Eleanor Gregory on their respective appointments to new roles outside of the organisation.

Meeting Closed at 3.15pm