

LGBCE (12) 8th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 14 August 2012, at 11:15am, 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
Sir Tony Redmond
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE
Professor Paul Wiles CB

LGBCE Officers Present:

Alan Cogbill	Chief Executive
Archie Gall	Director of Reviews
David Hewitt	Finance Director
Richard Buck	Review & Programme Manager
Tim Bowden	Review Manager
Jessica Metherringham	Review Manager
Danny Edwards	Review Manager
Marcus Bowell	Communications Manager
Sarah Vallotton	Business & Committee Services Manager
Simon Keal	Review Officer
William Morrison	Review Officer
Paul Kingsley	Review Advisor
Nicholas Dunkeyson	Review Officer
Alex Skerten	Review Officer
David Owen	Policy & Research Officer
Alex Hinds	Review Assistant
Julian Pellew-Martin	Business Assistant
Dean Faccini	Business Assistant (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

No apologies received.

Declarations of interest:

No declarations of interest.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 10 July 2012

There was one small amendment to page 11. With that amendment, the minutes were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

No matters arising.

1. Operational Report – LGBCE (12)100

The Director of Reviews informed the Commission that further correspondence on the final recommendations for Cumbria had been exchanged with the Leader and Deputy Leader of Cumbria Council. The recommendations had been published on 31 July 2012.

Ministers had approved the Commission's recommendations for the Northumberland/Gateshead and Stevenage/East Hertfordshire PABRs.

A paper would be sent out to Commissioners seeking their approval for an amendment to the Arun draft recommendations. This paper would also be presented to the September Commission meeting for formal agreement.

2. Overview Report – LGBCE (12)101

The Commission noted the content of the Overview Report.

3. East Lindsey Council Size – LGBCE (12)102

It had been agreed to review East Lindsey Council due to electoral imbalance. The review had commenced in December 2011. According to the latest electoral figures, 31 percent 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 60 members.

At its meeting in June 2012, the Commission considered all the evidence it had received on council size. On the basis of the evidence received, the Commission had decided to write to the Council asking for further information on the challenges and opportunities that might result from a council size in the region of the low to mid 50s since it was considered that the evidence presented pointed towards such a figure rather than the figure of 60 indicated in the council submission.

The Director of Reviews wrote to the Council on 18 June conveying the Commission's views and seeking this further information. Following this request, the Commission received a revised submission from the Council reiterating its proposal for the existing council size of 60 and a joint submission from two independent members proposing a lower figure.

Having regard to all of the information available, the Team judged that it pointed to a council size of 55 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted they were minded to support a council size of 55 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 55 be used as the basis for consultation.

4. Rushcliffe Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (12)103

The review of Rushcliffe Borough Council had commenced in November 2011. According to the latest electoral figures, 32 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent from the average.

At its meeting on 13 December 2011, the Commission was minded to agree a council size of 45 members.

In preparing the draft scheme, the team had taken into consideration both the submissions it had received and the statutory criteria. The Team considered that a council size of 44 would allow for a better allocation of councillors between the urban and rural areas. As a result, the Draft Recommendations proposed a pattern of five three-member wards, nine two-member wards, and 11 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 Rushcliffe Borough Council as presented.

5. Fenland Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (12)104

The review of Fenland District Council had commenced in February 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 33 per cent of its wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with two wards being over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on 13 March 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 40.

In preparing the draft scheme, the team had taken into consideration both the submissions it had received and the statutory criteria. The Council had produced a submission based on a council size of 39. The Team considered the Council's proposal and noted that it produced good levels of electoral equality. The team therefore recommended the adoption of the Council's proposal of 39. As a result, the Draft Recommendations proposed a pattern of four three-member wards, six two-member wards, and 15 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 Fenland District Council as presented.

6. Tonbridge & Malling Final Recommendations – LGBCE (12)105

The review of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council had commenced in November 2011. According to the latest electoral figures, 38 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with one being over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on 17 January 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 53 and had agreed Draft Recommendations at its meeting on 12 March 2012.

Following publication of the draft recommendations, 78 submissions had been received, including a further submission from the Council proposing an increase of one to a council size of 54. The Council's proposal was supported by limited evidence of community identity. The council size differed from the 53 councillors previously agreed by the Commission due to the allocation of councillors over the borough and, in particular, in the north east.

All the submissions had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking the evidence into account, the team recommended that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the draft recommendations in respect of a number of areas across the borough, and to agree the slightly modified council size.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 7 three-member wards, 16 two-member wards, and one single-member ward.

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 modified.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council as modified.

7. Purbeck Final Recommendations – LGBCE (12)106

The review of Purbeck District Council had commenced in May 2011. According to the latest electoral figures, 43 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent

At its meeting on 17 April 2012, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 25 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 74 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations. These had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all of the submissions into account, it had not been judged that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations

except in respect of minor amendments in the areas of Organford and East Holme.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of four three-member wards, four two-member wards, and five 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 Purbeck District Council as presented.

8. Draft Response to Law Commission Consultation – LGBCE(12)107

The Commission considered a document produced by the Policy & Research Officer that looked at the proposed response to the Law Commission's consultation on electoral law reform. The paper also set out what role the Commission might adopt during this consultation. It presented a draft response to the consultation for the Commission's consideration.

Agreed

The Commission noted the report and agreed that the draft response be modified to reflect the issues raised in the discussion

9. Chair's Report (oral)

The Chair had nothing additional to report to the Commission.

10. Chief Executive's Report (oral)

The Chief Executive had nothing additional to report to the Commission.

11. Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting on 9 July 2012 – LGBCE (12)108

The Commission noted the minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting on 9 July 2012.

12. Review and Financial Programme Planning (oral)

The Review & Programme Manager, along with the Finance Director, presented an update on the project planning process for electoral reviews. The presentation sought to give assurances to the Commission of how reviews are planned, not just from a review team perspective but also from a leadership and financial control aspect. It was acknowledged that this system was still in its early stages and would be refined as review teams became more confident in using the system.

Agreed

- That the Commission agreed to the Review and Financial Programme Planning system on the basis that it was embedded into the work activities of all review officers and manager.
- Commissioners Professor Paul Wiles and Dr Colin Sinclair will meet with the Review & Programme Manager in six months time to review progress.

13. Draft Corporate Governance Framework deferred from July – LGBCE (12)95

The Commission approved the Draft Corporate Governance Framework.

14. Draft Corporate Governance Policies – LGBCE (12)109

The Commission approved the Draft Corporate Government Policies as working documents, but agreed that they should be re-written to better integrate them and simplify their presentation. This should be done as soon as possible; in the meantime the principles set out in the working documents would be used in guiding the work of the Commission.

15. Future Business – LGBCE (12)110

The Commission noted the content of the Future Business paper.

14:00 Meeting Closed