

LGBCE (12) 9th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 11 September 2012, at 09:45am, 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 (by speaker phone)

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 Metheringham	Review Manager
Danny Edwards	Review Manager
Marcus Bowell	Communications Manager
Sarah Vallotton	Business & Committee Services Manager
Arion Lawrence	Review Officer
Nicholas Dunkeyson	Review Officer
Paul Kingsley	Review Adviser
Richard Otterway	Review Officer
William Morrison	Review Officer
Daniel Knag	Review Officer
David Owen	Research & Policy Officer
Mark Pascoe	Review Officer
Dean Faccini	Business Assistant (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Dr Colin Sinclair and Professor Paul Wiles.

Declarations of interest:

Colin Mellors indicated his membership of the Board of the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership. However, the Commission agreed that the interest was not such as to conflict with his contributing to the discussion of the Craven review.

Mark Pascoe declared an interest in Herefordshire and would not take part in any discussion of that item.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 14 August 2012

The minutes of the 14 August were agreed as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

Sir Tony Redmond was unable to attend the meeting in person due to an injury and so participated by speakerphone. The Commission was satisfied that Sir Tony could be an active participant as he had access to all the papers, and associated mapwork, under consideration, and would therefore be able to participate fully in the discussion.

1. Herefordshire Single Member Ward Request – LGBCE (12)112

The electoral review of Herefordshire Council was being conducted following the Commission's decision to review the Council's electoral arrangements. According to the latest electoral figures, 30 percent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with one ward being over 30 per cent.

The Council resolved formally to request the Commission to conduct the electoral review as a single-member ward review at its meeting on 20 July 2012.

Previous requests for single-member ward reviews from other local authorities had been submitted prior to the start of the review process. The electoral review of Herefordshire was currently at the stage of developing draft recommendations. The Commission was assured that, while unhelpful at this point in the process, the request could be accommodated without invalidating the submissions that had been received. Had the request been received at any later stage of the review process, it would not have been possible to accommodate the request.

A request had been made to the Deputy Chief Executive of the Council for any information and evidence of community identity produced in the formulation of proposals. The team would seek to reflect this in formulating

the warding arrangements, and these would be considered by the Commission at its October meeting.

Agreed:

1. That, exceptionally, the request for a single-member ward review be accepted and that the review proceed with a presumption of securing a uniform pattern of single-member wards.
2. That the Commission's technical guidance be amended to clarify that, in future, requests for single-member ward reviews would not normally be agreed unless they were received before the information gathering stage. This would ensure that all interested parties have the same opportunity to contribute to a review, and on the same basis.

2. East Dorset Council Size Post Consultation – LGBCE (12)113

It had been agreed to review East Dorset at the request of the authority. The review had commenced in December 2011. According to the latest electoral figures, eight per cent 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 36 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 29 members.

At its meeting in May 2012 the Commission considered all the evidence it had received on council size. Given the change proposed, the Commission had decided to consult on change in council size to 29 members. The consultation ended on 6 August 2012.

In the light of the information received, LGBCE officers judged that available evidence pointed to a council size of 29 as being the appropriate size.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted they were minded to support a council size of 29 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 29 be used as the basis to proceed to consultation on warding arrangements and preparation of draft recommendations.

3. Kensington & Chelsea Council Size Post Consultation – LGBCE (12)114

It had been agreed to review The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea due to electoral imbalance. The review had commenced in January 2012. Based on December 2010 electorate data, 44% of wards in the borough had electoral variances greater than 10% from the average for the borough.

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 54 members.

At its meeting in June 2012 the Commission considered all the evidence it had received on council size. Given the change proposed, the Commission had decided to consult on a change in council size to 51 members. The consultation ended on 6 August 2012.

In the light of the information received, LGBCE officers judged that available evidence pointed to a council size of 51 as being the appropriate size.

The Commission considered all the available evidence. On the basis of the evidence submitted they were minded to support a council size of 51 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 51 be used as the basis to proceed to consultation on warding arrangements and preparation of draft recommendations.

4. Fenland Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (12)115

The review of Fenland District Council had commenced on 6 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 14 August, the Commission agreed its Draft Recommendations based on a Council size of 39. Since then, the team had noted that the recommendations did not fully address the effect of the existing county divisions on the parish warding arrangements.

The team therefore recommended two minor amendments to the parish warding arrangements for the Draft Recommendations.

The Commission considered the recommendations in detail informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the submissions received. It agreed

its Draft Recommendations with modifications to parish warding in the areas of Whittlesey and Chatteris, as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Fenland District Council as modified.

5. Arun – modifications to the Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (12)111

The Commission agreed the Draft Recommendations for Arun District Council at its meeting on 10 July 2012.

Subsequently, LGBCE's audit procedure had revealed that the figures were inconsistent with the boundaries adopted by the Commission at its July meeting, specifically in relation to the Rustington and East Preston area. The inconsistency occurred only in the mapping, as the figures provided reflected the team's recommendation as presented at the July meeting.

The team therefore proposed that the Commission endorse its earlier draft recommendations and agree to alter the mapping accordingly. This approach had been raised through correspondence with the Commission on 17 August, who were now being asked for formal agreement.

Agreed

That the team's recommendation be accepted and the mapping changed accordingly.

6. Warwick Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (12)116

It had been agreed to review Warwick District Council due to electoral imbalance. The review had commenced on 9 January 2012. According to the latest electoral figures, 35 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 14 February 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 two three-member wards, 18 two-member wards, and one single-member ward.

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 Warwick District Council as presented.

7. Boston Final Recommendations – LGBCE (12)117

The review of Boston Borough Council had commenced on November 2011. According to the latest electoral figures 38 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 13 December 2011, the Commission was minded to agree a Council size of 30 and had subsequently, on 15 May 2012, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 29 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 was proposed that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations in respect of Leverton, East Boston, Fishtoft, Trinity plus a number of ward name changes. These were proposed as the Final Recommendations for Boston Borough Council.

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

The Commission considered the Final Recommendations in detail informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the submissions received. It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Boston Borough Council as presented.

8. Northampton Final Recommendations – LGBCE (12)118

The review of Northamptonshire County Council had commenced in September 2011. According to the latest electoral figures, 41 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent with one division being over 30 per cent.

At its meeting in October 2011 the Commission considered all the evidence it had received on council size. Given the change proposed, the Commission

had decided to consult on the issue of council size. The Commission sought views on a change in council size to 57 members.

At its meeting in January 2012 the Commission was minded to agree a council size of 57 and had subsequently, in May 2012, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Taking all of the submissions into account it had not been judged that there was insufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations except in respect of minor amendments.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 57 single member divisions.

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 Northampton as presented.

9. Craven Related Alterations – LGBCE (12)119

The Commission considered the content of the Craven Related Alterations paper.

Agreed

An order would be drafted to implement the related alternations for Craven District Council as proposed in the report.

10. Blaby Related Alterations – LGBCE (12)120

The Commission considered the content of the Blaby Related Alterations paper.

Agreed

An order would be drafted to implement the related alternations for Blaby District Council as proposed in the report.

11. West Oxfordshire Related Alterations – LGBCE (12)121

The Commission considered the content of the West Oxfordshire Related Alterations paper.

Agreed

An order would be drafted to implement the related alternations for West Oxfordshire District Council as proposed in the report.

12. Chair's Report (oral)

The Chair reported on ministerial changes at DCLG. Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP was no longer a Minister of State at the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), having been appointed to the Cabinet. Bob Neill MP had also left DCLG. Although it was unclear how new ministerial responsibilities would be allocated, it appeared likely that Brandon Lewis, newly appointed as a Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at DCLG, would have lead responsibility for local government matters. The Chair would seek to meet him at the Minister's earliest convenience.

It was noted that there may be a delay in making a new appointment to the Speaker's Committee to replace Grant Shapps.

With the Chief Executive, the Chair had met the Chair of the South African Municipal Demarcation Board, who was interested in understanding how the Local Government Boundary Commission for England operated, and in the potential for some international collaboration of independent bodies which review local government boundaries.

13. Chief Executive's Report (oral)

The Chief Executive updated the Commission on the new LGBCE consultation portal, designed to make it easier for people to comment on reviews, which was intended to encourage more submissions from members of the public. The Chair, who had seen a demonstration of the portal and found it impressive, thanked those staff who had worked on the project. All Commissioners would have a demonstration of the portal at the next meeting.

The Chief Executive updated the Commission on contract negotiations between the Local Government Association and Liberata. The LGBCE had endorsed the LGA's efforts to secure reductions, of proportionate benefit to the LGBCE, which would contribute materially to the requirements of financial stringency. He would give the Commission's further views to the LGA.

The Chief Executive noted that an outstanding employment tribunal matter had been further postponed.

The Chief Executive noted that the session involving Commissioners and staff, held after the August Commission, had proved a fertile source of suggestions for further improvements in LGBCE performance, which he was assessing. The commission would be updated on progress at its monthly meetings.

14. Draft Proposal to Speaker's Committee & Corporate Plan 2013-2018 – LGBCE (12)122

The Commission considered the draft, recognising that discussion with other parties would be needed before it could be settled.

Agreed:

Suggested amendments would be sent to the Communications Manager in time to be incorporated in the report, which would be considered further at the October Commission meeting. The Chair and Chief Executive would seek various briefing meetings in advance of final submission of proposals to the Committee.

15. Operational Report – LGBCE (12)123

The Commission noted the Report. In particular, an issue had arisen relating to parish wards in district review areas. In future, the team would have regard to existing county division boundaries (as well as proposed district wards) when undertaking a district review. This would ensure consistency with the approach taken in county reviews, where both tiers of boundaries were taken into account when providing for parish electoral arrangements.

16. Quarterly Review Programme Update – LGBCE (12)124

The Commission considered the report.

Agreed:

Amendments to the review timetable as outlined in the report.

17. Individual Electoral Registration Update – LGBCE (12)125

The Commission noted this update.

18.Future Business – LGBCE (12)126

The Commission noted the schedule.

13:00 Meeting Closed