

LGBCE (15)3rd Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 17 March 2015, 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
Alison Lowton
Sir Tony Redmond
Professor Paul Wiles

LGBCE Officers Present:

Jolyon Jackson CBE	Chief Executive
Lynn Ingram	Finance Director
Marcus Bowell	Communications Manager
Tim Bowden	Business Development Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Sarah Vallotton	Business & Committee Services Manager
Mark Pascoe	Review Officer (item 4)
Karen Cleverly	Business Support Officer (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Declarations of interest

Peter Knight declared an interest in Birmingham and took no part in any discussions relating to Commission business in this area.

Alison Lowton declared an interest in Rotherham and took no part in any discussions relating to Commission business in this area.

Jolyon Jackson declared an interest in item 3, Welwyn Hatfield Council Size, and took no part in the discussion of that item.

Lynn Ingram declared an interest in item 4, Devon Draft Recommendations, and took no part in the discussion of that item.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 17 February 2015

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 (15)25

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

Members asked for the initials of the lead Commissioner to be included in future reports. Members also wished to record their thanks for the detailed work carried out by the Review Officer for Lincoln and Lincolnshire.

Members discussed the apparent decline in the customer satisfaction KPI and, in particular, whether this reflected an actual decrease in satisfaction or whether it was more a reflection of the methodological challenges of obtaining valid information which was not influenced by people's perception of outcomes rather than the manner in which those outcomes had been achieved. Previous methods of collecting information had shown high levels of satisfaction with the conduct of the review by officers and the process itself, but low levels of satisfaction with review outcomes when these did not coincide with their own preferred outcomes even where the latter were inconsistent with the statutory criteria. The questions that enabled respondents to express satisfaction with the conduct of reviews had been removed. Commissioners felt that this had led to poorer satisfaction ratings overall. New methods should be considered to ensure that respondents were able to distinguish comment on the way that LGBCE had gone about its work from their views about the outcome of a review which might arise from other factors. The Chief Executive agreed to review the KPI for consideration by the Audit Committee.

Agreed

The initials of the lead Commissioner for each scheme would be added to the Operational Report in future.

Further consideration would be given to the design of a valid KPI to measure stakeholder satisfaction.

2. Watford Council Size - LGBCE (15)26

It had been agreed to review Watford Borough 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 a variance of -19 per cent in Tudor ward.

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 that the council size remain at 36 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 36 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 36 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

3. Welwyn Hatfield Council Size - LGBCE (15)27

It had been agreed to review Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 41 percent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with one ward, Hatfield West, having a variance of 29 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 48 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 48 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 48 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 48 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

4. Devon Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (15)28

The review of Devon County Council had commenced on 21 October 2014. According to the latest available electoral figures, 39 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 21 October 2014, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 60 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 2 two-member, and 56 single-member divisions 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 with amendments in the following areas:

- The division name of Exmouth & Budleigh Coastal be renamed Budleigh Salterton Coastal

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Devon County Council as modified.

5. Chair's Report

The Chair reported that he and the Chief Executive had presented the Commission's forward plan and budget to the Speaker's Committee. It had been accepted.

The Chair and Deputy Chair had met with representatives of the Birmingham Intervention Panel who were likely to make a submission with respect to the electoral review of Birmingham City Council. The Chair and Deputy Chair had also briefed the Birmingham Council.

The Commission noted that the review of the Parliamentary Commission was unlikely to offer any significant prospect of joint working. Its report would be published by the end of March.

Finally the Chair reported on the progress of appointing new Commissioners. Following interviews it was hoped to make two or three recommendations to Ministers by the end of March which would be the final opportunity for appointments to be confirmed in the current Parliament. CLG had indicated that it would try to expedite the process.

6. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive had nothing further to report.

7. Staff Appraisal and Performance Management Process – LGBCE (15)29

The Business & Committee Services Manager presented a report on the organisation's new performance management policy and procedure.

The policy covered competencies required by staff to be effective, along with values and behaviours that would underpin such competencies. These reflected the Commission's three core objectives.

The process included annual self-assessment and plans for longer term development. All staff had had an appraisal at the start of 2014/15 and the end-of-year reports were due to be completed by the end of May 2015. This was slightly later than the usual target of the end of April, due to the office move.

Commissioners asked whether staff had received training and development identified through appraisals and were informed by the Finance Director that the budget had been spent this year. In addition, a new training register had been developed in order to keep track of training requests and delivery. This was reviewed by the management team on a regular basis. It was suggested that a training plan for the organisation might arise from an overview of identified training needs.

Whilst welcoming the priority now being given to performance management, Commissioners cautioned about the complexity of the new process for an organisation of the Commission's size. They also wondered if the inclusion of 360-degree feedback might be valuable.

It was agreed that there would be a brief report back about how well the new process was working and that periodically they would be informed of the generic training needs identified by the performance review exercise. The findings of the 2014/15 process would be discussed at the Commission meeting in November or December, once the mid-year reports for 2015-2016 had been completed.

Agreed

The results of the 2014/15 appraisals process would be reported to the Commission meeting in November 2015.

8. Risk Update and New & Emerging Risks

The Business & Committee Services Manager reported that the Risk Management Working Group would now be meeting every month and would alternate between interviewing risk and control owners and examining assurances.

The Commission identified one new risk:

- The possibility of reviews crossing the electoral period becoming a matter of political controversy during the campaign.

Agreed

To add this risk to the risk register issues log.

9. Relocation & Back Office Services Project Update

The Finance Director reported progress on the relocation and back office services project.

Relocation to Millbank Tower.

The intention was to move out of the current office on 24 April with business starting from the new office on 27 April. The Chief Executive and Chair of the Steering Group had visited Millbank Tower to look at meeting rooms and discuss the options for Commission meetings. It had been agreed to pay a small additional fee for staff to use the canteen which would be useful as an additional, casual meeting space.

Commissioners stressed the importance of resolving the issue of identifying a satisfactory meeting room.

IT

The contract with Wavex had been signed and the team was in the process of purchasing IT hardware.

HR & Payroll

HR and payroll information was being transferred from the existing system onto the new PBS system.

Finance

A new finance system called Aqilla had been selected. A CIPFA resource had been secured to shadow the end of year accounts process and to assist with setting up future processes.

The Steering Group had also discussed the exit from the current LGA/Liberata contract.

The next Steering Group meeting was due to take place after the Commission meeting.

10. Future Business – LGBCE (15)30

Noted.

11. AOB

It was clarified that following the Commission's decision to agree amendments to its Standing Orders the final text did not need to come back to the Commission before being incorporated in the document. In the absence of both the Chair and Deputy Chair an equality of votes for a Chair for a particular item would be decided by lots.

Close of Business 10.50am

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'M' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

CHAIR
21/4/15

