

LGBCE (17)2nd Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 21 February 2017, at 13:15pm, on the 29th Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP

Commissioners Present

Professor Colin Mellors (Chair)
Sir Tony Redmond (Deputy Chair)
Dr Peter Knight
Alison Lowton
Peter Maddison

LGBCE Officers Present:

Jolyon Jackson CBE	Chief Executive
Lynn Ingram	Director of Finance & Resources
Marcus Bowell	Director of Strategy & Communications
Alison Evison	Review & Programme Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Lucy Dunkeyson	Review Manager
David Owen	Review Officer (item 2)
Emily Starkie	Review Officer (item 3,6)
Alex Hinds	Review Officer (item 4)
Dan Carlsson-Hyslop	Review Officer (item 5)
Paul Kingsley	Review Officer (item 7)
Carissa Edwards	Office Manager (Minutes)

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

The Commission formally welcomed Alison Evison back from maternity leave.

Declarations of interest

Alison Lowton declared an interest in item 2, Rotherham Council Size, and left the room for the discussion of that item.

Colin Mellors and Peter Maddison, declared an interest in item 6, Leeds Final Recommendations, and left the room for the discussion of that item.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 17 January 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)12

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

Highlights of the report included:

- Brighton and Hove City Council have formally requested a review. The Chief Executive and Chair will attend a preliminary meeting with the council in the near future.
- The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead review has now been added to the programme and briefings with group leaders and councillors took place on 20 February 2017.
- Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council has formally resolved to request a review. The Commission is currently awaiting a formal request.
- Warwick District Council have formally requested a review with the goal of securing co-terminosity between different layers of local government and a slight reduction in its council size. The Chief Executive noted that the electoral data being used by the council did not match our in-house data. The Commission has asked the Council to review its data and reconcile this discrepancy before making a formal decision about whether to begin a review.
- Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council have submitted their bid to merge to the Secretary of State.
- Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council continue to pursue a merger as well as the West Suffolk authorities (Forest Heath District Council and St. Edmundsbury Borough Council)
- Four East Kent authorities have agreed to pursue a merger proposal with Ashford deciding not to be included.
- Discussions between the Commission and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) were taking place about the timing of any electoral review for a merged authority. It was noted that the Commission can conduct an electoral review before the authority comes into existence provided the the Secretary of State first makes the Order to establish a new principal authority.
- The Chief Executive noted that proposals for unitary authorities were currently being discussed in various counties.

2. Rotherham Council Size – LGBCE (17)13

It had been agreed to review Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council following the Government's decision to change the Council's electoral cycle.

The current size of the Council is 63 members. The Commission deferred this decision from its October 2016 meeting in order to allow the Council time to provide further information to support its case for a council size of 59.

Following receipt of this further information about future governance and representational arrangements, it was recommended by LGBCE officers that there was sufficient evidence to support that the council size decrease by 4 from 63 to 59 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was 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 the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

3. Croydon Borough Council Draft Recommendations – LGBCE 17(14)

The review of Croydon Borough Council had commenced on 20 September 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 21 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent. No wards had a variance greater than 20 per cent.

At its meeting on 20 September 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 70 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 14 three-member wards, and 14 two-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 was noted that the Selhurst area railway line established a strong north-south boundary line down to the depot in the north of the borough. The Commission determined that, where there was a variance to the use of this boundary, there needed to be a further explanation.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Croydon Borough Council as presented.

4. Harborough District Council Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (17)15

The review of Harborough District Council had commenced on 18 October 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 44 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent. Broughton Astley-Primethorpe ward has 29 per cent fewer electors than the average.

At its meeting on 18 October 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 34 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 mixed pattern of 3 three-member, 9 two-member, and 7 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 Harborough District Council as presented.

5. Tendring District Council Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (17)16

The review of Tendring District Council had commenced on 18 October 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 11 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent. Brightlingsea ward has 17 per cent more electors than the average. The Council had requested the review.

At its meeting on 18 October 2016, 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 5 three-member wards, 11 two-member wards, and 11 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 Tendring District Council as presented.

6. Leeds City Council Final Recommendations – LGBCE (17)17

The Deputy Chair, Sir Tony Redmond, chaired this item.

The review of Leeds City Council had commenced on 23 February 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 9 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent. City and Hunslet ward has 29 per cent more electors than average currently but is projected to have 77 per cent more than average by 2022.

At its meeting on 23 February 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 99 and had subsequently, on 15 November 2016, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 53 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, the Commission agreed to make five changes to the draft recommendations. These amendments provided improved community identity for the Final Recommendations for Leeds City Council.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 33 three-councillor 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 Leeds City Council as presented.

7. South Norfolk District Council Final Recommendations – LGBCE (17)18

The review of South Norfolk District Council had commenced on 21 June 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 22 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent. Old Costessey ward has a variance of 39 per cent.

At its meeting on 21 June 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 46 and had subsequently, on 8 November 2016, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 24 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, the Commission agreed to make a change to the Draft Recommendations to better reflect the links between parishes.

These amendments provided improved community identity for the Final Recommendations for South Norfolk District Council. The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 5 three-member wards, 10 two-member wards, and 11 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.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for South Norfolk District Council as presented.

8. Chair's Report

The Chair updated the Commission on the Commissioner recruitment process. Two of the three interview sessions scheduled have now been completed and a formal approval process will begin once interviews have been completed.

The Chair informed the Commission that discussions with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on the proposed mergers of local authorities were continuing. Should any mergers proceed, the timescale for Commission involvement would be tight and it was important to have an agreed process for handling such reviews.

The Chair noted the recent visit to Cornwall District Council, which was attended by the Lead Commissioner and the Chief Executive to discuss the work that been undertaken by the Council on council size..

The Chair suggested the desirability of clear version control on all documents uploaded to the website.

The Director of Communications and Strategy mentioned the new extranet facility that would shortly become available for Commissioners. It was agreed that a member of the Commission would trial the new provision in April 2017.

The Chair thanked the team for organising the Risk Appetite workshop that had preceded the Commission meeting.

9. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive reported that a 1 per cent pay offer had been made across the board to the Union. Members had accepted this under protest at the Government's continued pay restraint. The increase would be implemented from 1 April 2017.

It was agreed that a meeting with two Director Generals from DCLG and Paul Rowsell would be scheduled for April 2017.

10. Finance Director's Report

The Director of Finance and Resources informed the Commission that the National Audit Office (NAO) were in the process of carrying out the year-end final accounts audit. They are currently in their second of a three-week audit.

The DFR requested that all Commissioners input their March expense reports as early as possible as the Finance Team will be closing the year-end accounts earlier than in previous years.

11. Audit & Risk Committee – Chair's Report

The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee gave an oral update on the Audit & Risk Committee meeting that occurred earlier in the day:

The highlights were as follows:

- It was noted that the new internal auditors (Gateway) were in attendance at the meeting and specifically looked at Risk and Health & Safety.
- The recent British Safety Council Health and Safety Assessment report was discussed and it was felt that the response was proportionate to the size of the organisation.
- The Chair led a discussion on Information Management and Security and agreed that it was necessary for all staff and Commission members to undergo yearly e-training on proper Information Security.
- The strategy document from the new internal auditors, covering the next two to three years was discussed. It is designed to offer guidance on which areas of the organisation should be looked at in-house and which areas should be looked at by the auditors.
- The Chair noted the continued discussion of current individual policies, and felt that the progress report on Equalities and Diversity was very helpful in showing a way forward in relation to Equalities and Diversity and the Commission's consultation process.
- The Commissioner's requested to see a copy of the Equalities report and a copy of the Director of Communication and Strategy's Consultation report.

12. Draft Report to Speaker's Committee – LGBCE (17)19

It was suggested that a summary of the Commission's achievements should be added to the conclusion of the draft report.

The Commission agreed.

13. Future Business – LGBCE (17)20

The Chief Executive reminded all members of the Commission that a Policy Workshop is to be held after the Commission Meeting in March and will begin at approximately 4pm.

14. AOB

There were no other items.

Close of Business 15:54

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.