

LGBCE (15)4th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 21 April 2015, 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
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 (items 2, 3 & 10)
Alison Evison	Review and Programme Manager
Sarah Vallotton	Business & Committee Services Manager
David Owen	Review Officer (item 4)
Mark Cooper	Review Officer (item 5)
Alex Hinds	Review Officer (item 6)
Paul Kingsley	Review Officer (item 7)
Mark Pascoe	Review Officer (item 8)
Lucy Ward	Review Officer (item 9)
Dean Faccini	Business Assistant (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Richard Buck, Review Manager.

Declarations of interest

Max Caller declared an interest in Kent, and took no part in the discussion of that item.

The Business & Committee Services Manager declared an interest in Leicestershire and took no part in the discussion of that item.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 17 March 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)31

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

The 40-day laying period for the draft orders of Lincoln and Woking had been put on hold due to the dissolution of Parliament. The period would restart after the Queen's Speech upon Parliament's planned return in May.

Draft Orders for Bristol, Cherwell, Colchester, Hertfordshire, Peterborough, Rochford, Sheffield and Warwickshire would be laid at various dates between May and July 2015.

It was expected that Copeland Borough Council would make a formal request for an electoral review after the General Election in May.

A provisional date had been agreed with the London Borough of Redbridge in response to its request for an electoral review.

The Commission had written to Rutland County Council to confirm the decision not to carry out an electoral review.

The Commission had contacted Chichester District Council regarding its request for an electoral review.

The Chief Executive updated the Commission on a stage 2 complaint that had been received relating to the electoral review of Woking.

It was noted that 54 local authorities would be holding elections on new ward boundaries at the forthcoming local elections.

2. Lincolnshire Council Size - LGBCE (15)32

It had been agreed to review Lincolnshire County Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 33 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent with Bourne Abbey and Stamford West divisions having a variance of over 30 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 77 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 77 members. However, there was strong evidence to also accept a council size of 71 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it minded to support a council size of 71 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 71 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

3. Warrington Council Size - LGBCE (15)33

It had been agreed to review Warrington Borough Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 41 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 57 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 increase by 1 from 57 to 58 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 58 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 58 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

4. Leicestershire Council Size - LGBCE (15)34

It had been agreed to review Leicestershire County Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 33 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

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 that the council size remain at 55 members.

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

5. Kent Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (15)35

The Deputy Chair chaired this item given that the Chair had declared a conflict of interest

The review of Kent County Council had commenced in October 2014. According to the latest available electoral figures, 31 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent with Romney Marsh division being over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on 18 November 2014, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 81 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 8 two-member divisions and 65 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:

- Minor name changes in the Shepway district
- Minor name changes in the Gravesham district.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Kent County Council as presented.

6. Cambridgeshire Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (15)36

The review of Cambridgeshire County Council had commenced in October 2014. According to the latest available electoral figures 32 percent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 18 October 2014, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 63 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 noted that a council size of 63 did not provide an effective allocation of councillors. In consultation with the lead

Commissioner, the team had prepared proposals on a council size of 61 which provided a more effective allocation of councillors across the districts of Cambridgeshire. The Draft Recommendations proposed a pattern of four two-member divisions and 53 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.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Cambridgeshire County Council as presented.

7. Rochford Final Recommendations - LGBCE (15)37

The review of Rochford District Council had commenced on 15 July 2014. According to the latest available electoral figures, 32 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 15 July 2014, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 39 and had subsequently, November 2014, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 23 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, it was felt that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations in some aspects and these changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission for consideration.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 13 three-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.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Rochford District Council as presented.

8. Bristol Final Recommendations - LGBCE (15)38

The review of Bristol City Council had commenced on 15 July 2014. According to the latest available electoral figures, 29 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent with one ward (Cabot) being at 30 per cent. The City Council had also requested the Commission undertake an electoral review.

At its meeting in July 2014, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 70 and had subsequently, November 2014, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 860 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, it was felt that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations in some aspects and these changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission for consideration.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 4 three-member wards, 27 two-member wards and 4 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.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Bristol City Council as presented.

9. Cherwell Final Recommendations - LGBCE (15)39

The review of Cherwell District Council had commenced on 10 December 2013. According to the latest available electoral figures, 36 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10% with Banbury Grimsbury & Castle ward having variances greater than 25%.

At its meeting on 17 December 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 48 and had subsequently, November 2014, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 33 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, it was felt that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations in some aspects and

these changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission for consideration.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 16 three-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 Cherwell District Council as presented.

10. Hertfordshire Final Recommendations - LGBCE (15)40

The review of Hertfordshire County Council had commenced on 8 April 2014. According to the latest available electoral figures, 34 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent with one division, Hatfield North being 55 per cent.

At its meeting on 8 April 2014, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 77 and had subsequently agreed Draft Recommendations with an increase of council size by one member to 78.

At its meeting on 27 January 2015, the Commission agreed to undertake a period of further limited consultation focusing on the proposals for the Stevenage area before considering its Final Recommendations.

Following the further limited consultation, 5 submissions were received commenting on the further Draft Recommendations for Stevenage. These submissions had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all of the submissions into account, it had been judged that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations in the Stevenage area and adopt the alternative proposals put forward for consultation. The alternative was therefore proposed as the Final Recommendations for Hertfordshire County Council.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 78 single-member divisions 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 Hertfordshire County Council as presented.

11. Quarterly Review Programme Update - LGBCE (15)41

The Business Development Manager presented the Quarterly Review Programme Update.

Agreed

The Commission agreed to the changes to the review programme.

12. Chair's Report

The Chair had nothing additional to report.

13. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive confirmed that the 2015-16 Commissioner daily fee rate had been updated to incorporate a 1 per cent pay increase from 1 April 2015.

The Chief Executive informed the Commission that the Treasury Solicitors Office (TSOL) had undergone a recent name change and was now known as the 'Government Legal Department'. He intended to ascertain if this had any implications in terms of a change in service to the Commission. If it meant that the service provided would be different to the one currently offered, or if there were any conflicts of interest, the Commission would need to consider procuring a different legal service. The Chief Executive would report back to the Commission.

14. Risk Update and New & Emerging Risks - LGBCE (15)42

The Business & Committee Services Manager explained the process of reviewing the risk register.

The Risk Working Group would meet on a monthly basis to review the register. On alternate months, the group would either review the controls and assurances part of the register or invite risk owners to the meeting to receive updates on how their assigned risks were being managed. This would include a review of controls in place, controls needed and measurement against the Assurance Framework.

The most recent changes made to the register by the Risk Working Group were considered by the Commission. These included:

- Relocation and Back Office Project risks which might may become more evident as the main focus of the project neared completion.
- Following their initial work on the applicability of geo-demographic profiles to inform the review process, the Equalities Working Group would be looking at recruitment practices for both Commissioners and staff to find ways of encouraging greater diversity.

The Commission requested that consideration be given to improving the issues log, and how issues recorded tied into the risks listed on the Register.

15. Relocation & Back Office Services Project Update

The Finance Director updated the Commission on the latest developments in the relocation and back office project.

Meeting room space had been booked at Millbank Tower for the Commission meetings in May, June and July. The PSHO would find permanent meeting room space for the Commission meetings taking place from July onwards. However, it was recognised that, given previous uncertainties, it was important to get formal reassurance on this once the move to Millbank Tower was complete.

There had been a delay to the installation of the fibre optic cables for the leased line due to the discovery of asbestos. It was expected that the lease line would be up and running from mid-May.

Extensive testing had been carried out on the LGBCE's new HR and Payroll systems. These systems would be up and running soon.

The Aqilla finance system, which had been populated with the necessary financial information needed to raise and process purchase orders and expenses, was now up and running. The March 2015 fees and expenses had been input to Aqilla and had been submitted for payment. They would be paid on the last working day of the month by PBS.

An agreement had been reached with the LGA on the exit costs for the contract with Liberata and continued service support up until the finalisation of the Annual Report and Resource Accounts. This included a contract for the use of Liberata's Management Accountant for three-days a week for the next couple of months.

Staff passes for Millbank Tower would be available from Thursday. The Business Team would mail out passes to Commissioners.

16. Financial Outturn 2014-15 - LGBCE (15)43

The Finance Director presented the Financial Outturn 2014/15.

Highlights of this report were:

- The provisional outturn position was in line with the forecast throughout the year.
- Revenue expenditure on the Relocation and Back Office Services project was within budget.

- In 2014/15 the Commission benefited from a number of cost reductions including the agreed reduction in cost to the SLA with the LGA/Liberata. These savings had enabled the LGBCE to fund the back office relocation project.
- The final accounts audit would take place from 4th May 2015 for 2 weeks.
- In accordance with NAO guidance, the Draft Annual Report & Accounts would be considered by the Audit Committee in May. Any amendments would be approved at a special Audit Committee in June and then be presented to the Commission for finalisation at its June meeting.

The Chair noted the content of the report and thanked the Finance Director for all her work.

17. Future Business - LGBCE (15)44

Noted

Close of Business 13:27