

The
**Local Government
Boundary Commission**
for England

LGBCE (17)1st Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 17 January 2017, at 13:00, in Skyloft Belgravia Suite, 28th Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP

Commissioners Present

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

LGBCE Officers Present:

Jolyon Jackson CBE	Chief Executive
Lynn Ingram	Director of Finance
Marcus Bowell	Director of Strategy & Communications
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Lucy Ward	Review Manager
Paul Kingsley	Review Adviser (item 4)
Laura Taylor	Review Officer (item 5)
Alex Hinds	Review Officer (item 6)
David Owen	Review Officer (item 7)
Mark Cooper	Review Officer (item 8)
Dean Faccini	Business Support Officer

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Declarations of interest

The Chief Executive declared an interest in item 3. West Berkshire, and item 8. East Devon. He left the room for the discussion of both items.

Richard Buck, Review Manager, declared an interest in item 6. Horsham, and left the room for the discussion of that item.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 20 December 2016

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)01

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

Highlights of the report included:

- The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead has been added to the review programme following the Commission's agreement.
- A review request has been received from Warwick District Council. The Chair and Chief Executive would meet with council leaders shortly.
- Three other authorities were currently considering submitting a request for review. The team would notify the Commission if, and when, a request became formal.
- The West Suffolk authorities of Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury have informed the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) of their intention to merge.
- A meeting on the potential merger of Taunton Deane Council and West Somerset Council has been scheduled for the 18 January.
- An update was given on recent meetings held with council leaders at Carlisle City Council and Dartford Borough Council.
- The Chair and Chief Executive would meet with council leaders at South Somerset District Council on 18 January.
- The Commission agreed to the team's proposal to include Norwich City Council to the review programme.

2. Test Valley Council Size - LGBCE (17)02

It had been agreed to review Test Valley Borough Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 29 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, 17 per cent of wards had variances greater than 20 per cent, with St Mary's ward having a variance of over 30 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 decreasing by five from 48 to 43 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 43 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 43 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

3. West Berkshire Council Size – LGBCE (17)03

It had been agreed to review West Berkshire District Council at the request of the local authority. According to the latest available electoral figures, 20 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 52 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 decrease by 10 from 52 to 42 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 42 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 42 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

4. Allerdale Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (17)04

The review of Allerdale District Council had commenced on 20 September 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 32 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 20 September 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 10 three-, seven two-, and five 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.

As a result of this further consideration and, on the basis of the evidence received, the Commission agreed to move away from its original opinion on council size and

instead agreed a council size of 49 since the addition of one councillor provided for a better pattern of ward boundaries across the local authority.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Allerdale District Council presented.

5. Ashford Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (17)05

The review of Ashford Borough Council had commenced on 14 June 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 43 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 16 June 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 47 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 eight two-, and 31 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 Ashford Borough Council presented.

6. Horsham Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (17)06

The review of Horsham District Council had commenced on 27 September 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 36 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 27 September 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 47 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 six three-, 14 two-, and two 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.

As a result of this further consideration and, on the basis of the evidence received, the Commission agreed to move away from its original opinion on council size and instead agreed a council size of 48 since this provided for a better allocation of councillors across the district and reduced the splitting of parishes.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Horsham District Council presented.

7. Newcastle-under-Lyme Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (17)07

The review of Newcastle-under-Lyme Council had commenced on 20 September 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 16 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, and 8 per cent of wards had variances greater than 20 per cent. One ward, Keele, had a variance of 58 per cent.

At its meeting on 20 September 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 44 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 six three-, 11 two- and four 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 Newcastle-under-Lyme presented.

8. East Devon Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (17)08

The review of East Devon District Council had commenced on 20 September 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 22 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, and 3 per cent of wards had variances greater than 20 per cent. One ward, Broadclyst, had a variance of 56 per cent.

At its meeting on 20 September 2016, 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 12 three-, six two-, and 12 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 East Devon District Council presented.

9. Chair's Report

The Chair had two items to report:

- An update was given on Commissioner recruitment. Interviews for the vacancies have been scheduled for the 14 and 15 February.
- A discussion on three-member warding patterns. The Chair led a discussion on the circumstances in which the Commission might be persuaded to move away from a wholly three-member warding pattern. The Commission considered both the statutory position and how this is conveyed in current technical guidance which, it was felt, remained fit for purpose. Officers would consider appropriate phrasing to ensure that consistent and clear messages were given about the matter at relevant council briefings.

10. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive had three items to report:

- A meeting with the Speaker's Committee has been scheduled for 29 March.
- Gary Streeter MP has left his role at the Speaker's Committee. Bridgette Philipson MP will replace him.
- It had been suggested that it might be helpful to have an all-staff briefing on the current landscape of local government by an appropriate expert on local government. The Commission agreed to this idea and proposed two dates; 24 March (pm) or 29 March (am).

11. Quarter 3 Financial Projections – LGBCE (17)09

The Finance Director introduced the Quarter 3 Financial Projections. As part of the Commission's performance management approach, the quarterly financial projections and the non-financial indicator report will combine into a single report. This would commence quarter 1, 2017/18.

Highlights of the report included:

- An underspend of £130K had been forecast. A number of reasons were given for this figure, including:
 - a high number of Commissioner and staff vacancies
 - a reduced printing contract

- the postponement of several projects from the Commission's Business Plan expenditure.
- The Operational Management Team (OMT) would seek to reduce the overspend by the end of quarter 4. Areas for appropriate re-profiling of existing spending priorities have been identified. They include:
 - bringing forward spending on physical assets to strengthen the organisation's business continuity process
 - enhanced data security to ensure our systems are more resilient
 - underpinning the organisation's training budget.

12. KPI Progress Report – LGBCE (17)10

The Director of Strategy and Communications summarised the KPI Progress Report.

KPI 1 Electoral Imbalance – The Commission has exceeded its target in reducing high levels of electoral inequality. This was achieved through the completion of reviews, the scheduling of future reviews, and underlying changes to the election registers.

KPI 2 Request Reviews - The Commission has exceeded its target in authorities requesting a review. Nine authorities have been added to the current review programme with a further eight included to the review programme for 2017/18. The target number was five.

KPI 3 Customer satisfaction – The Commission has exceeded its target in achieving an average satisfaction score of 70%. The Commission currently has an average satisfaction score of 77%. A new survey has been implemented and the Commission is now collecting diversity data to improve the way in which it engages with different ethnicity groups.

KPI 4 Orders laid before Elections – The Commission's current rate of orders laid before elections stands at 100%. All other reviews are on schedule and this should see their orders laid before the next anticipated election.

Agreed

Commission Peter Maddison to join the KPI review group.

13. Future Business – LGBCE (17)11

Noted.

AOB

There were no other items.

Close of Business 15:52

Peter Maddison
21/2/17

