

The  
Local Government  
Boundary Commission  
for England

## LGBCE (14)8th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 19 August 2014, at 10:00am, 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  
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE  
Professor Paul Wiles

### LGBCE Officers Present:

Alan Cogbill	Chief Executive
Jolyon Jackson CBE	Chief Executive Designate
Archie Gall	Director of Reviews
Marcus Bowell	Communications Manager
Tim Bowden	Business Development Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Sarah Vallotton	Business & Committee Services Manager
Mark Pascoe	Review Officer (item 10)
David Owen	Review Officer (items 7 and 11)
Paul Kingsley	Review Officer (item 8)
William Morrison	Review Officer (item 6)
Michelle vonAhn	Policy & Research Officer (items 13 and 14)
Karen Cleverly	Business Support Officer (minutes)

### Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

### Declarations of interest

Sir Tony Redmond declared an interest in item 4, Knowsley Council Size, and took no part in the discussions of that item.

## Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 15 July 2014

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 (14)92

The Director of Reviews presented the Operational Report for August and the Commission noted its content.

The Commission's attention was drawn to the Cherwell electoral review where it was likely that there would be a request for related alterations following a Community Governance Review. A meeting had taken place and proposals were being developed which would consider the most appropriate way forward. It was noted that this might be facilitated if any requests separated aspects of the proposals.

Members agreed that guidance given to local authorities should be strengthened to clarify that a CGR should not be carried out during an electoral review. The Director of Reviews confirmed this would be included when new CGR guidance was published in the autumn. It was felt that it would also be helpful to be alerted to any signals of any intention to pursue a CGR as soon as possible.

A number of requests for related alterations had been received. Six of the nine received were in areas that had recently been the subject of an electoral review.

Rugby Council had indicated that it may wish to withdraw its request review. A decision was expected in September.

The Director of Reviews reported that the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee was calling for evidence about parliamentary boundary reviews. After consideration, members felt that it would not be appropriate for the Commission to give evidence.

#### 2. Stroud Council Size - LGBCE (14)93

It had been agreed to review Stroud District Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 23 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with one ward being over 30 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 51 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 51 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 51 members.

**Agreed**

The Commission agreed that a council size of 51 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

**3. Winchester Council Size – LGBCE (14)94**

It had been agreed to review Winchester City Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures 27 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with one ward being over 30 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 decrease by 12 from 57 to 45 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 45 members.

**Agreed**

The Commission agreed that a council size of 45 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

**4. Knowsley Council Size - LGBCE (14)95**

It had been agreed to review Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council at the request of the local authority in order to consider council size.

The current size of the Council is 63 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 18 from 63 to 45 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 45 members.

## **Agreed**

The Commission agreed that a council size of 45 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

### **5. Lincoln Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (14)96**

The review of City of Lincoln Council had commenced on 10 December 2013. According to the latest available electoral figures, 36 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 10 December 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 33 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 11 three -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 City of Lincoln Council as presented.

### **6. Hertfordshire Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (14)97**

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 being over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on 8 April 2014, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 77.

In preparing the draft scheme, the team had taken into consideration both the submissions it had received and the statutory criteria. In order to achieve a better allocation of councillors across the county, the Draft Recommendations proposed a pattern of 78 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.

As a result of this further consideration and, on the basis of the evidence, the Commission agreed to move away from its original opinion on council size and, instead, agreed a council size of 78 – adding a member to Welwyn Hatfield - as this ensured good electoral equality and provided for a better allocation of elected members between the districts of the local authority.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

It considered that information on coterminosity needed be included in the published report. It therefore decided to defer formal agreement of the written report as presented pending receipt of the revised sections of the report relating to coterminosity which would be circulated by email and agreed by the Chair and lead Commissioner.

### **Agreed**

Draft Recommendations for Hertfordshire County Council as presented subject to the approval of those sections dealing with co-terminosity.

## **7. Warwickshire Draft Recommendations - LGBCE (14)98**

The review of Warwickshire County Council had commenced on 8 April 2014. According to the latest available electoral figures, 52 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 8 April 2014, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 57 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 57 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 with amendments in the following areas:

- Admirals & Cawston and Caldecott
- Nuneaton East and Weddington.

It considered that information on coterminosity needed be included in the published report. It therefore decided to defer formal agreement of the written report as presented pending receipt of the revised sections of the report relating to coterminosity which would be circulated by email and agreed by the Chair and lead Commissioner.

## **Agreed**

Draft Recommendations for Warwickshire County Council as modified, subject to the approval of those sections dealing with co-terminosity.

### **8. Poole Final Recommendations – LGBCE (14)99**

The review of Poole Borough Council had commenced on 9 July 2013. According to the latest available electoral figures, 38 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 8 October 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 42 and had subsequently, on 18 March 2014, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 246 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 10 three-member and 6 two-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 with amendments in the following area:

- Broadstone and Creekmoor.

## **Agreed**

Final Recommendations for Poole Borough Council as modified.

### **9. High Peak Final Recommendations – LGBCE (14)100**

The review of High Peak Borough Council had commenced on 9 July 2013. According to the latest available electoral figures 30 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 8 October 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 43 and had subsequently, on 18 March 2014, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 140 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 one three-member, 13 two-member, and 14 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 High Peak Borough Council as presented.

## **10. Stafford Final Recommendations – LGBCE (14)101**

The review of Stafford Borough Council had commenced on 9 July 2013. According to the latest available electoral figures, 27 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent. Additionally, it had been agreed to review Stafford Borough Council at the request of the local authority in order to consider council size.

At its meeting on 8 October 2013, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 40 and had subsequently, on 8 March 2014, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 47 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 one three-member, 15 two-member, and seven 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 Stafford Borough Council as presented.

### **11. Wyre Forest Final Recommendations – LGBCE (14)102**

It was agreed to defer consideration of this item until the September Commission meeting.

## **Agreed**

To defer consideration of the Final Recommendations for Wyre Forest District Council until the meeting of the Commission on 16 September 2014.

### **12. 2014-17 Work Programme - LGBCE (14)103**

The Review Manager presented the report on the prospective programme of review activity for the period 2014 – 2017. He highlighted that a number of larger urban and metropolitan authorities would be included towards the end of the next financial year to allow for the likely impact of the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER). The team was arranging meetings between the Chair and political leadership of authorities from which firm requests had been received.

A meeting had been scheduled in September regarding the potential pilot for a cluster review in East Sussex.

## **Agreed**

The programme of review activity for 2014-17 was agreed.

### **13. Electorate Forecasts Analysis – LGBCE (14)104**

The Policy and Research Officer presented the report and explained that, on the whole, forecasts of electorate by local authorities were broadly accurate. Some, however, had a propensity to over-estimate and this was often related to proposed housing developments that were delayed, or did not come to fruition.

Members welcomed the report and asked if anything could be done to minimise the number of over-estimations. The examination of past reviews for good practice and the greater challenging of assumptions, particularly around housing development, would be helpful. It was acknowledged that IER would be likely to have an impact on forecasting.

Members found the paper very useful and requested that a similar paper was brought to the Commission at regular intervals. It was suggested that the paper might be published as an abstract on the website to promote improvement.



## **Agreed**

That a report on electoral forecasts would be brought to the Commission at appropriate regular intervals.

### **14. Commission Satisfaction Survey – LGBCE (14)105**

The Policy and Research Officer explained that the Commission, at its June meeting, had requested further information relating comments made through the satisfaction survey.

Although the number of responses was small, she explained that the majority of respondents were satisfied; however, analysis of the free-text comments indicated that the main negative issues raised were perceptions about: disregarding local views, ineffective consultation and website problems.

It was hoped that recent improvements to the website and the consultation portal would improve the customer experience. It was suggested that the Commission may wish to be more explicit about the rationale for choosing a particular warding option and that this could be considered during the development of the new-style draft and final recommendation reports.

The officer confirmed that effective methods of following up on dissatisfied comments were currently being explored.

The Commission thanked the officer for the report and confirmed that monitoring of responses should continue.

### **15. Chair's Report**

The Chair noted the public debates that were taking place in relation to the boundaries between Hull and East Riding councils. No approach had been made to LGBCE and, in the event that any such approach was made, the Commission would simply follow its published process.

The Chair would meet with the Clerk to the Speaker's Committee regarding succession planning and the impact that the 2015 general election might have on succession planning.

It was noted that, currently, the Commission benefitted from a member who also served on the Electoral Commission which served to facilitate shared intelligence. This was unlikely to be the case in future and it was considered that it would be helpful if officers ensure effective future liaison as appropriate.

## 16. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive Designate updated the Commission following his recent meetings with Paul Rowsell of DCLG, Tony Bellringer of the Boundary Commission for England and Sue Grey from the Cabinet Office.

He confirmed that the revised business case for the Back Office and Relocation project had now been agreed by the Project Steering Group.

He had met with HM Treasury to outline the plans for the move. A meeting planned for November would provide an opportunity to outline the plans to the Speaker's Committee.

## 17. New & Emerging Risks

The Commission identified two new risks:

- Developments during post- election period.
- IT reliability

### **Agreed**

To add these risks to the risk register.

## 18. Fees, Travel and Expenses Policy - Review - LGBCE (14)106

The Business and Committee Services Manager presented the revised Fees, Travel and Expenses Policy which had been reviewed by the Audit Committee on 14 July 2014.

Members considered and approved the policy.

### **Agreed.**

The revised Fees, Travel and Expenses Policy.

## 19. Future Business – LGBCE (14)107

The Commission noted that a number of related alterations reports would be scheduled and that Wyre Forest Final Recommendations would be added to the September meeting.

The Business and Committee Services Manager advised that she would be sending out suggested Commission meeting dates for 2016 in the near future.

AOB

There were no other items.

**Close of Business 13:15**

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76/9/14

CHAU

