

LGBCE (10) 5th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 19 August 2010, in Room D at Layden House, 76-86 Turnmill Street, London, EC1M 5LG

Present:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL (Deputy Chair)
Jane Earl
Joan Jones CBE
Professor Colin Mellors

Also present:

Archie Gall	Director	of Reviews
Joan D'souza	Review	Manager
Sam Hartley	Review	Manager
Richard Buck	Review	Manager
Marcus Bowell	Communic	ations & Public Affairs Manager
Sarah Vallotton	Business	& Committee Services Manager

(Minutes)

David Owen	Policy	and Research Officer
Paul Kingsley	Review	Advisor
Tim Bowden	Revie	w Officer
Simon Keal	Review	Officer
Arion Lawrence	Review	Officer
Will Morrison	Review	Officer
Sarah Murphy	Review	Officer
Lisa Siggins	Review	Officer
Alex Skerten	Review	Officer
Eleanor Gregory	Review	Assistant
Phi Dang	Temporar	y Business Assistant

Apologies had been received from Alan Cogbill, Chief Executive and David Hewitt, Director of Finance.

The Chair welcomed a number of new staff to their first Commission Meeting and introductions were made.

1. Minutes from the LGBCE's meeting on 23 July 2010 and Matters Arising

Noted:

1. The Chair would sign the Kirklees and Tonbridge & Malling related alteration orders that day.

Agreed:

1. Agreed to re-word Paragraph 3.4. so that it was more positive in tone.
2. Paragraph 6 - Agreed that the Chief Executive should re-circulate the Corporate Governance Framework whenever it is updated.
3. Paragraph 7.3. – Agreed that this should be amended to indicate the Commission advocated full and clear publication of fees and expenses.
4. Paragraph 14 – Heading of Kirklees related alterations paper number was 33.
5. That there was no need for individual Commissioners' names to appear in the minutes (other than declarations of interest) and these should be removed, given the Commission's commitment to collective responsibility.
6. The minutes were agreed subject to these changes.

2. Declarations of Interest

Noted:

1. Peter Knight declared an interest in Staffordshire and took no part in the discussion on that item.
2. Jane Earl declared an interest in Slough and Oxfordshire and took no part in discussions of those items.
3. Joan Jones declared an interest in Stoke-on-Trent and took no part in the discussion on that item.

3. Finance Progress Report – LGBCE (10)34

Noted:

1. The content of the report was noted. The Commission asked for more detail on why activity for the second half of the year was forecast to increase strongly.

4. Future Business – LGBCE (10)35

Noted:

1. That henceforth the Future Business paper would be a living document that would be constantly updated. Any major revisions would be circulated in between normal paper dispatches.

2. That the related alterations orders scheduled for discussion at the September meeting would only appear on the agenda if the local authorities provided the necessary information in time. If this did not happen, the items would appear on the October agenda instead.

5. Operational Report – LGBCE (10)36

Noted:

1. Letters had been received from a number of Councils requesting that reviews are not carried out in their areas in the near future, citing budgetary pressures and, in a small number of cases, possible reorganisation as the reasons for seeking delay. There was a need to discuss with local authorities whether reviews should go ahead given the budget cuts that local authorities were likely to have to implement in the foreseeable future.
2. Whilst sensitive to the financial and workload pressures on local authorities it was important to explain as effectively as possible the reasons for carrying out reviews in general and FERs in particular. Also the working group on the process of reviews would be mindful of resource issues in its considerations.
3. An engagement strategy would be put forward by the Communications & Public Affairs Manager at the September Commission Meeting. The process of engaging MPs before a review began had already started.
4. That the Local Government Association's support for electoral reviews would be a helpful. The Managing Director of Local Government Improvement and Development had indicated that LGID was committed to carrying out work on the role of the Councillor in the community.

Agreed:

1. That the results of the Electoral Review Process Working Group should be incorporated into the Communications Strategy.
2. To select Hart, Buckinghamshire, Cumbria, Oxfordshire and Surrey for review, and plan to review Somerset in 2011 after district elections.
3. That Lead Commissioners on the reviews would be as follows:
 - Jane Earl – Cumbria & Surrey
 - Peter Knight – Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire
 - Max Caller – Hart. This review would be re-allocated to a new Commissioner once appointments had been made.

6. Overview Report – LGBCE (10)37

Noted:

1. The content of the report was noted.

2. The number of three-member wards was likely to increase given the legislative requirements on ward patterns for authorities that elect by thirds.

7. Northampton Final Recommendations – LGBCE (10)38

Noted:

1. Duston Town & St James: The St James Residents' Association had provided good evidence, and a petition of approximately 95 signatures from affected residents, proposing that the areas of Peveral's Way, Abbots Way and part of Weedon Road should be included in St James Ward.
2. The Council broadly supported the draft recommendations for Sunnyside and St David's wards subject to a minor modification of the ward boundary.
3. Rectory Farm & Talavera: The Council proposed a minor modification to the ward boundary in this area which would better reflect community identities.
4. Boothville: The Council opposed the draft recommendations for the proposed Boothville and Wetstone wards, specifically the inclusion of Kendal Close within the proposed Wetstone ward. During the tour of Northampton, Dr Knight and officers reviewed Kendal Close and found that the Council's assertion that Northampton College formed a barrier between Kendal Close and properties to the south was correct. The team therefore proposed the adoption of a modification to move Kendal Close to the proposed Boothville Ward, with the boundary following the northern perimeter of the playing field in its final recommendations.
5. Briar Hill & Delapre: The majority of submissions received in relation to this area opposed the draft recommendations, specifically the inclusion of the area known locally as Buckingham Fields in the proposed Briar Hill ward. The Commission considered evidence and arguments presented during Stage Three and, given the observations on the recent tour and concurred with respondents that access between Buckingham Fields and Briar Hill is limited. Having considered a number of different options for warding patterns in the Briar Hill & Delapre area, to adopt a three-member ward, comprising the proposed Delapre and Briar Hill wards as part of its final recommendations. The proposed name of the ward would be "Delapre & Briar Hill" to reflect the two communities it would comprise.
6. A number of ward name changes were proposed by the Council at Stage Three.
7. The revised 5-year electorate forecasts had been received. There was no difference from the original figures provided for 2013 and therefore no ward would see any change in its electoral variance.

Agreed:

1. To adopt the other final recommendations as proposed in the paper.

8. South Derbyshire Final Recommendations – LGBCE (10)39

Noted:

1. Smisby: At Stage Three, Smisby Parish Council submitted that it had more links with Ticknall parish, and more in common with the other rural parishes in the proposed Repton ward than with the predominantly urban Woodville ward. Smisby and Ticknall Parish Councils had collaborated on an anti-speeding campaign, and the former highlighted the links it shared with parts of the proposed Repton ward. While the resulting ward would have a large geographical size, Smisby Parish Council provided strong evidence of community identities and interests to support this change.
2. Swadlincote Town: At Stage Three submissions focussed on the boundary between the proposed Midway and Woodville wards. Hartshorne Parish Council and a local resident suggested an alternative boundary that would mean all of Goseley and Hartshorne villages would be in Woodville ward. Road links from Hartshorne point primarily towards Woodville, rather than to Midway, which added to the logic of warding the area with Woodville. The Commission considered this modification would provide a better reflection of community identities and communication links, while providing good electoral equality.
3. The revised 5-year electorate forecast had been received. There was not a great deal of difference from the original figures provided and no wards would see any significant change in their electoral variances. However, Church Gresley ward would have an electoral variance of 14% by 2015. The Commission felt it did not have sufficient evidence to justify an amendment to the boundary of the proposed ward to reduce this variance.

Agreed:

1. To note the revised electorate forecasts and adopt the final recommendations as proposed in the paper.

9. West Somerset Final Recommendations – LGBCE (10)40

Noted:

1. Brendon Hills: No counter proposals were received. A Councillor stated that the Council's original proposal to link Bury in Brompton Regis parish with Dulverton made sense. There was a proposal that Brendon Ward should be renamed Brendon Hills ward. The team recommended that the Commission endorse the change of ward name as it better reflected the local area, but did not consider that any evidence had been received to warrant splitting Brompton Regis parish.
2. The revised 5-year electorate forecast had been received. There was not a great deal of difference from the original figures provided and no wards would see any significant change in their electoral variances.

Agreed:

1. To note the revised electorate forecast and adopt the final recommendations as proposed in the paper.

10. Sedgemoor Final Recommendations – LGBCE (10)41

Noted:

1. Coastal parish cluster: the Commission received objections to the Knoll ward, and to linking Alstone with Highbridge.
2. Burnham & Highbridge: the Commission received submissions arguing for the renaming of Highbridge & Burnham South ward as Highbridge & Burnham Marine ward.
3. Cheddar Valley Parish Cluster: Submissions received on this area were supportive, but requested a ward name change from Axe to Axevale. The District Council proposed renaming the Cannington ward as Cannington & Wembdon.

[REDACTED]

Agreed:

1. The final recommendations as set out in the report.
2. The Commission agreed to confirm the electorate forecasts at the next meeting once these had been sent by the Council.

11. Central Bedfordshire Final Recommendations – LGBCE (10)42

Noted:

1. Biggleswade Town and its hinterland: A proposal that Stotfold ward be renamed Stotfold and Langford as better reflecting the constituent communities.
2. Ampthill Town: Haynes Parish Council proposed that Houghton Conquest ward should be renamed Hayes, given Houghton Conquest was the main settlement within the proposed ward and Haynes parish was the other settlement of the proposed ward.
3. The major area of contention was in the proposed Sandy ward. Blunham Parish Council objected to being linked with the more urban Sandy parish and felt it did not share community identities with the town.

[REDACTED]

- 
5. The revised 5-year electorate forecast had been received. There was not a great deal of difference from the original figures provided and no wards would see any significant change in their electoral variances.

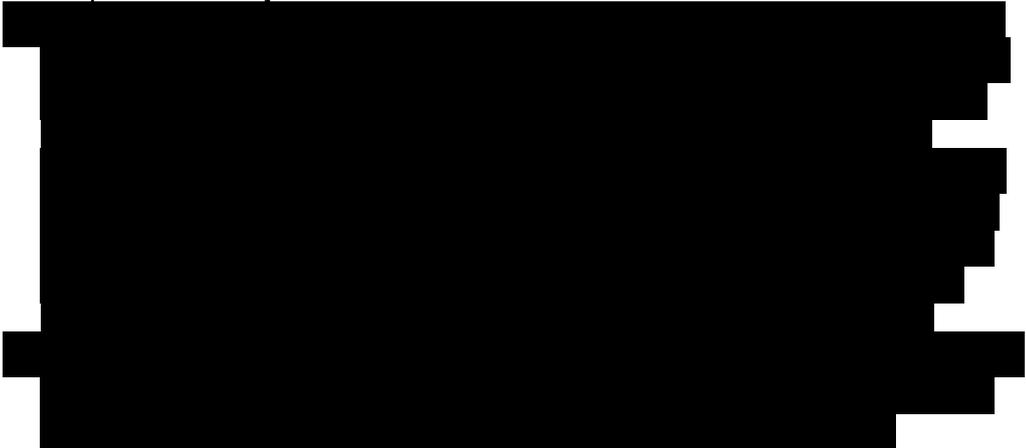
Agreed:

1. To note the revised electorate forecasts.
2. To adopt the final recommendations as proposed in the paper.

12. Bedford Final Recommendations - LGBCE (10)43

Noted:

1. The Council proposed a minor amendment in Harpur ward, proposing that an area known as The Broadway be transferred to Harpur ward due to the distinct nature of housing and premises in the area. The recent tour of the area, supported this change which would also maintain good electoral equality.
2. At Stage Three, the Council, in agreement with Brickhill Parish Council, proposed that Ellis Road should be warded with Brickhill to produce a two-member ward coterminous with the parish boundary for reasons of effective and convenient local government while maintaining reasonable electoral equality.
3. Bedford Town East: The Council suggested a minor amendment to Putnoe ward, proposing moving 13 electors into the proposed Goldington ward to ensure that the small roads in the area were wholly contained in a single borough ward. The evidence of the tour of the borough supported the proposed change.
4. The most contentious area was the proposal to ward the Spires estate in Renhold parish with Goldington ward in Bedford town. The Spires estate was effectively development from the town but a number of respondents objected to the draft recommendations.



Agreed:

1. The final recommendations as set out in the report.
2. The Commission agreed to confirm the electorate forecasts at the next meeting once these had been sent by the Council.

13. Mansfield Final Recommendations – LGBCE (10)44

Noted:

1. The Council requested that Rainers Field should be transferred from the Portland ward to the Carr Bank ward, arguing that the area acts as a link in the existing Ravensdale ward. No electors would be affected. .
2. Two Councillors proposed amendments to the boundary between Brick Kiln and Grange Farm wards. The boundary proposed would improve electoral equality in Brick Kiln but worsen it in Grange Farm. The Commission considered that the proposal provided for a sensible boundary without significantly worsening electoral equality.
3. The revised 5-year electorate forecasts had been received. There was not a great deal of difference from the original figures provided and no wards would see any significant change in their electoral variances.

Agreed:

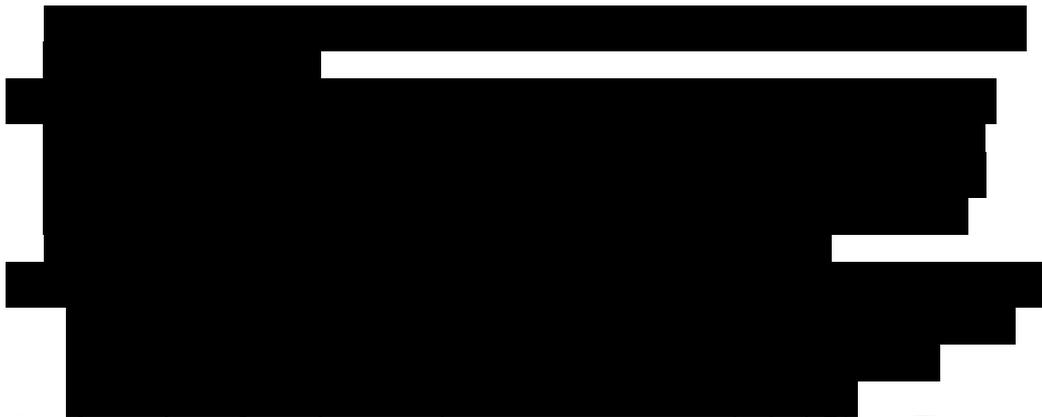
1. To note the revised electorate forecasts and adopt the final recommendations as proposed in the paper.

14. Stoke-on-Trent Final Recommendations LGBCE (10)45

Noted:

1. The background to the review.
2. The Commission had received over 170 representations during Stage Three.
3. The Council's Stage Three response proposed a uniform pattern of 44 single-member wards but no evidence was received to demonstrate how this pattern would better reflect communities in the area.
4. The Commission had also received a city-wide proposal for a uniform pattern of 22 two-member wards, but this had not included detailed ward boundaries. There was no consensus on the warding pattern with regard to single, two or three member wards across the city.
5. Active consultation activities had been undertaken in Stoke-on-Trent, with Commissioners and officers spending a total of six days in the city canvassing opinion from a wide range of people and organisations.





11. A number of ward name changes were requested at Stage Three.
12. The revised 5-year electorate forecasts had been received. There was not a great deal of difference from the original figures provided and no wards would see any significant change in their electoral variances.

Agreed

1. To note the revised electorate forecast.
2. To adopt the final recommendations as proposed in the paper.

15. Report on Stoke-on-Trent Consultation Activities LGBCE (10)46

Noted:

1. This was a helpful paper that highlighted areas where useful information could be gathered, as well as other activities that were less informative and would not be repeated.
2. It highlighted the need to capture all input, not only written submissions.

Agreed:

1. The Electoral Review Process Working Group would look at the report in more depth and report back with its conclusions to the Commission.

AOB

Agreed:

1. That whenever the agenda allowed, in future, Commission Meetings would begin at 11.30am, except when there was an Audit Committee meeting the evening before, in which case the Commission Meeting would begin at 9.30am the following day.

13:50 Meeting closed