

LGBCE (17)5th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 16 May 2017, at 12:30pm, in Belgravia Suite, 29th Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP

Commissioners Present

Professor Colin Mellors (Chair)
Sir Tony Redmond (Deputy Chair)
Dr Peter Knight CBE, DL
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
Paul Kingsley	Review Officer (items 6,9)
Dan Carlsson-Hyslop	Review Officer (item 7)
Mark Cooper	Review Officer (item 8)
David Owen	Review Officer (item 10)
Alex Hinds	Review Officer (item 11)
Laura Taylor	Review Officer (item 12)
Carissa Edwards	Officer Manager & HR Lead (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Declarations of interest

The Chief Executive declared an interest in item 8, East Devon, and took no part in the discussions of that item.

Richard Buck declared an interest in item 11, Horsham, and took no part in the discussions of that item.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 18 April 2017

The minutes were agreed as a correct record, and were signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Action Points from Previous Minutes

The following actions from the Commission's Action Points Log had been completed:

- Electronic calendar invites sent out for the 2017, 2018 and 2019 Commission meetings.
- Standardised the process on how the Commission meeting minutes accurately record changes made to draft and final recommendations through the officer's report.
- The use of projections as a key performance indicator.

The actions would be removed from the log.

1. Operational Report - LGBCE (17)47

The Chief Executive presented the Operational Report for May 2017 and the Commission noted its content.

Highlights of the report included:

Review Programme

- The Chief Executive reiterated the guidance issued by the Cabinet Office with regards to the pre-election period and how this would apply to the Commission. It would mean a temporary suspension to full council briefings, meetings with Council Leaders and/or Chief Executives of any councils under review, or at the start of any periods of consultation.
- The Review and Programme manager had reviewed the current review programme and made changes to reviews directly affected by the general election. The chair gave his thanks to the Review and Programme Manager for the work put into updating the programme.
- It was recommended to the Commission that the initial consultation on warding patterns for West Berkshire District Council should be re-started due to representations challenging the electorate forecasts supplied to the Commission. The team would work closely with the council to obtain a new set of electoral data which would give a more accurate picture of the area. The Commission agreed.

New authorities potentially established in 2019

- A decision by the Secretary of State on potential mergers for East Suffolk, Taunton Deane and West Somerset, West Suffolk, and West Devon and South Hams would not be made until after the general election.
- Unitary proposals for Buckinghamshire and Dorset had been submitted to the Secretary of State.
- The Chief Executive advised that should these merged/unitary authorities be established, the review programme has capacity to undertake electoral reviews starting in early 2018.

2. Nottingham Council Size – LGBCE (17)48

It had been agreed to review Nottingham City Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 20 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with 15 per cent of wards being over 20 per cent. One ward, Wollaton East and Lenton Abbey, has a variance of 34 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.

3. Richmondshire Council Size – LGBCE (17)49

It had been agreed to review Richmondshire District Council at the request of the local authority. According to the latest available electoral figures, 25 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent. One ward, Hornby Castle, has a variance of 29 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 34 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 34 to 24 members. This number was below the lowest threshold as determined by the Cipfa data outlined in the report but, in spite of this, it was considered that the Council had made a strong case for reduction based on past and planned reductions to Committee membership and the transformation in the way in which residents interact with members. The Council also argued that the reduction reflected its wider corporate priority of providing a 'fit for purpose' council.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 24 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 24 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

4. Scarborough Council Size – LGBCE (17)50

It had been agreed to review Scarborough Borough Council at the request of the local authority. According to the latest available electoral figures, 32 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with 4 per cent of wards being over 20 per cent. One ward, Hertford, has a variance of 22 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 50 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 5 from 50 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. East Hampshire Council Size – LGBCE (17)51

It had been agreed to review East Hampshire District Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 34 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with 7 per cent of wards being over 20 per cent. One ward, Four Marks & Medstead, has a variance of 30 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 44 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 44 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 44 members.

Agreed

The Commission agreed that a council size of 44 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

6. Hertsmere Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (17)52

The review of Hertsmere Borough Council had commenced in August 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 33 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 20 December 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 39 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 nine three-member wards, and six 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 agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Hertsmere Borough Council as presented.

7. Test Valley Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (17)53

The review of Test Valley Borough Council had commenced in September 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 29 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with 17 per cent of wards being over 20 percent. One ward, St. Mary's, has a variance of 30 per cent.

At its meeting on 17 January 2017, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 43 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 three-member wards, seven two-member wards, 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.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Test Valley Borough Council as presented.

8. East Devon Final Recommendations – LGBCE (17)54

The review of East Devon District Council had commenced in June 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 22 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with 3 per cent of wards being over 20 per cent. One ward, Broadclyst, has a variance of 56 per cent.

At its meeting in September 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 60 and had subsequently, on 17 January 2017, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 62 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 had been judged that there was sufficient evidence to change the Draft Recommendations in two aspects and these changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission for consideration.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 12 three-member wards, six two-member wards, and 12 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 East Devon District Council as presented.

9. Allerdale Final Recommendations – LGBCE (17)55

The review of Allerdale Borough Council had commenced August 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 49 and had subsequently, on 17 January 2017, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 16 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 had been judged that there was sufficient evidence to change 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 nine three-member wards, eight two-member wards, and six 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 Allerdale Borough Council as presented.

10. Newcastle-Under-Lyme Final Recommendations – LGBCE (17)56

The review of Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council had commenced in May 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 13 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent. One ward, Keele, has a variance of 77 per cent.

At its meeting on 20 September 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 44 and had subsequently, on 17 January 2017, 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 six three-member wards, 11 two-member wards, and four 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 Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council as presented.

11. Horsham Final Recommendations – LGBCE (17)57

The review of Horsham District Council commenced in April 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 36 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with nine per cent of wards being over 20 per cent.

At its meeting on 20 September 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 47 Draft Recommendation

Following publication, 18 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, for the reasons highlighted in the team's report, it was felt that there was sufficient evidence to move away from the Draft Recommendations in some areas and these changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Commission for consideration. The Commission had a detailed discussion regarding the team's recommendation to move away from the draft recommendations around Broadbridge Heath. The Commission agreed that there was a strong argument to retain the draft recommendations in the area but on balance decided to make the amendment. The Commission noted that the boundary had been created by the team in the draft recommendations and that there was a strong argument received to move to the parish boundary as proposed locally, including by the Council.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of six three-member wards, 14 two-member wards, and two 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 Horsham District Council as presented.

12. Ashford Final Recommendations – LGBCE (17)57

The review of Ashford Borough Council had commenced February 2016. According to the latest available electoral figures, 43 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with four per cent of wards being over 20 per cent.

At its meeting in June 2016, the Commission had been minded to agree a council size of 47 and had subsequently, in December 2016, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 19 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 0 three-member wards, eight two-member wards, and 31 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 Ashford Borough Council as presented.

13. Chair's Report

The Chair updated the Commission on the Commissioner recruitment. The forthcoming general election would mean a delay to the progress of appointing two new Commissioners. The Chair also noted that this delay would have the potential to cause future meetings to be inquorate, specifically the meeting in November. It was agreed that the Future Business document would be reviewed to try and reframe future meeting agendas to prevent this from happening.

14. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive provided an update to the Commission on the roles of Commissioners and Staff. The Commission noted the contents of the paper and agreed there was some further work to ensure it was implemented in full.

The Chief Executive provided an update to the Commission on the process review. The Commission acknowledged that some of the recommendations set out in the paper had been implemented, some would not be implemented and further work was required on partial reviews.

15. Director of Finance Report

Highlights of the Director of Finance and Resources update included:

- The National Audit Office (NAO) is still working on some aspects of the final accounts audit.

- The final draft of the Annual Report and Accounts would be formally presented to be agreed at the Commission meeting in June.
- An update was given on the IT security measures in place to protect the Commission from malware attacks. Instructions had been provided to the Commissioners and staff on what to do in the event of a suspected security breach. It was noted that in the event of a breach, any loss of data would only equate to one day's worth of work.
- Online information security training would be rolled out to all staff and commissioners in due course.

16. Audit & Risk Committee Chair's Report

The Audit and Risk Committee Chair provided an update on the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held earlier that morning.

The update included:

- The Audit & Risk Committee Terms of Reference would be reframed and updated in time for the next Audit & Risk Committee meeting in June.
- The Risk Register would also be reframed. The internal auditor had been invited to a future risk management working group meeting to assist in this exercise.
- Our former internal auditor, RSM, had written a letter to advise that they would not provide the Commission with an annual report. The Audit & Risk Committee Chair noted on record her disappointment over this decision.
- It was noted that the existing Audit Recommendations Log is on track.
- The Director of Finance and Resources had presented the draft Annual Report to the Committee.
- The Whistleblowing Policy was approved. It was agreed that Commissioners would now be included in the Whistleblowing Policy.
- The Commission's Code of Conduct was reviewed. It was recommended that it should be sent to the Commission for final approval.
- A progress report was received from the Equalities Working Group. The Committee agreed the Equalities Impact Assessment for carrying out reviews but noted that the document had some gaps. The Equalities Working Group would re-examine the assessment and provide a further update in June.

17. Future Work Programme – LGBCE (17)60

The Review and Programme manager recommended a programme of review work for the three year period 2018 to 2021. This included a departure from undertaking reviews only in those areas which meet the Commission's intervention criteria.

The team recommended that the Commission considered formally adopting a five-year review programme and would provide a draft five-year programme at the June Commission meeting.

The Commission agreed the 2018/19 programme subject to responses from the authorities who would be invited to consider whether there is any development that means they are likely to fall out of the intervention criteria.

18. Business Plan 2017/18 – LGBCE (17)61

The Director of Strategy and Communications presented the Business Plan 2017/18, which sets out the Commission's mission statement, vision, values and strategic objectives.

Agreed

The Commission endorsed the Business Plan 2017/18.

19. Future Business – LGBCE (17)62

Following on from the Chair's report, the Chair asked the Review and Programme Manager to send out the Review Programme for 2017/18 and 2018/19 so to identify in advance which reviews Commissioners would need to declare an interest in. If it emerged that any declarations made would make future Commission meeting inquorate, the Chair would ask the team to revise the Commission's meeting agendas.

AOB

The Chair noted the minutes of the Relocation Steering Group and asked that from now on, minutes from this group are added to the agenda for discussion at future Commission meetings.

Close of Business 16:30

