

LGBCE (22-23)12 Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 13 December 2022, at 09:30am. All Commissioners and officers attended the meeting via Teams.

Commissioners Present

Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)
Susan Johnson OBE
Peter Maddison QPM
Amanda Nobbs OBE
Andrew Scallan CBE
Steve Robinson

LGBCE Officers Present:

Jolyon Jackson CBE	Chief Executive
Lynn Ingram	Director of Corporate Services
Glynn McDonald	Communications & Public Affairs Manager
Alison Evison	Review & Programme Manager
Richard Otterway	Review Manager
Mark Cooper	Review Officer (item 6 & 7)
Jonathan Ashby	Review Officer (item 8)
Ram Avtaar	GIS & Data Officer (item 13)
Dean Faccini	Governance & Compliance Lead (item 17 & 18)
Rafa Chowdhury	Finance Lead (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Richard Buck.

Declarations of interest

Susan Johnson declared an interest in item 7, Barnsley and Sheffield PABR Final Recommendations, and took no part in the discussions of that item.

Steve Robinson declared an interest in item 6, Redditch Final Recommendations, and took no part in the discussion of that item.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 15 November 2022

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

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Actions from the previous Commission Board meeting

The following actions were reported on:

- Health and Safety Policy – This was presented to ARC in November. Recommendations are being worked through.
- Issue of late responses to consultations – Recommendations have been included in the Operation Report.
- Council size – This was discussed by the EDI Working group in their meeting last week. Draft Report to be presented to the Board in February 2023.
- Assurance Framework - On today's agenda.

1. Chair's Report

The Chair updated the Board on the progress for recruiting a replacement Commissioner.

The Chair reported on the successful Inter-Commission meeting, which took place in Cardiff on 24 and 25 November.

The Chair placed on record his gratitude to Peter Maddison for all of his contributions to the work of the LGBCE during his tenure as Commissioner. Peter Maddison would be standing down in December.

2. Operational Report - LGBCE(22/23)116

The Chief Executive presented the Operational Report for November 2022, and the Commission Board noted its content.

- Related alterations and consents – The Board noted the related alterations and consents.
- Review Programme resilience – The Commission Board agreed to delay the publication of the draft recommendations for West Northamptonshire from January to February 2023.
- Statmap update – Training materials for Review Officers has been produced. The aim was to have to have all ROs trained and using Statmap by Easter 2023.

- Freedom of Information requests and complaints – The Board noted the complaints from Mole Valley. There is one FOI request.
- The Chair confirmed Amanda Nobbs as the Lead Commissioner for Walsall.

3. Tandrige Council Size - LGBCE(22/23)117

It had been agreed to review Tandrige Council as part of the Periodic Electoral Review Programme. According to the latest available electoral figures, 10% of wards had variances greater than 10%.

The current size of the Council is 42 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 42 members.

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

4. Staffordshire Council Size - LGBCE(22/23)118

It had been agreed to review Staffordshire Council as part of the Periodic Electoral Review Programme. According to the latest available electoral figures, 13% of wards had variances greater than 10%.

The current size of the Council is 62 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 62 members. The team did not consider the proposal from the Council for a council of 64 members was justified.

The Board considered all the available evidence, and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 62 members.

Agreed

The Board agreed that a council size of 62 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

5. Dudley Council Size - LGBCE(22/23)119

It had been agreed to review Dudley Council as part of the Periodic Electoral Review Programme. According to the latest available electoral figures, 4% of wards had variances greater than 10%.

The current size of the Council is 72 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 72 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence, and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 72 members.

Agreed

The Board agreed that a council size of 72 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

6. Redditch Final Recommendations - LGBCE(22/23)120

Steve Robinson left the meeting and took no part in the discussion on this agenda item.

The review of Redditch had commenced on 15 February 2022. According to the latest available electoral figures, 8% of wards had variances greater than 10%.

At its meeting on 15 February 2022, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 27 and had subsequently, on 19 July 2022, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 38 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 aspects and these changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Board for consideration.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 9 three-councillor wards in total.

The Board 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 Redditch Council as presented.

Agreed

The Board agreed to the laying of a draft Order before Parliament giving effect to its final recommendations for Redditch Council.

Steve Robinson returned to the meeting.

7. Barnsley and Sheffield PABR Final Recommendations - LGBCE(22/23)121

Susan Johnson left the meeting and took no part in the discussion on this agenda item.

The PABR of Barnsley Council and Sheffield City Council had commenced on 21 June 2022.

At its meeting on 12 September 2022, the Board agreed the 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 had been judged that there was insufficient evidence to change the Draft Recommendations, and therefore, they were proposed as the Final Recommendations for Barnsley and Sheffield.

The Board 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 Barnsley Council and Sheffield City Council as presented.

Agreed

The Board agreed to publish the Final Recommendations and submit them to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Susan Johnson returned to the meeting.

8. East Suffolk Related Alteration - LGBCE(22/23)122

The Board considered the content of the East Suffolk Related Alterations paper. It was minded to agree to the related alteration.

Agreed

The Board agreed to the making of an Order implementing the related alteration.

9. Broadland Related Alteration - LGBCE(22/23)123

The Board considered the content of the Broadland Related Alterations paper. It was minded to agree to the related alteration.

Agreed

The Board agreed to the making of an Order implementing the related alteration.

10. Draft ARC November Minutes - LGBCE(22/23)124

Noted the minutes of the November meeting

11. People Survey

The Director of Corporate Services presented the overall findings of the People Survey 2022.

The Board discussed the findings and noted the following points:

- Responses were less positive in some areas than those in the previous survey in 2021, with an average decrease of 3% in positive scores. There was a notable movement from “agree” to “neither/nor”. However, the results remained comparable with, or better than, Civil Service 2021 scores, except in the area of staff engagement and learning & development.
- It was felt that results had been impacted by wider external economic/political/social circumstances. Also, there had been less staff turnover. After a period of changing schedules due to the pandemic, review workload had settled, and this may have reduced previous negative comments about peaks of heavy workload.
- It was agreed that it was important to ensure a good understanding of Commissioner and the Board responsibilities, and the central role of the Leadership Team in promoting effective and collaborative working.
- It was also felt that it would be helpful to better understand the factors that had led to both positive and less-positive responses so that we can build on the former and address the latter., so that they could be maintained and developed further.
- Areas for further examination included: Learning and Development and the opportunity for staff advancement/development, which can be difficult in a small organisation. The Commission noted the next step proposals.

Agreed

- 1) The Commission Board noted the report and the follow up actions.
- 2) Further discussion to be had to address the issues raised

12. Website Update - LGBCE(22/23)125

The Commission Board noted the Website Update report from the Communications and Public Affairs Manager.

Agreement about website structure and functionality was progressing well. An audit copy of the current site was required to deliver the technical specification for the new site, but this had been completed late. The technical specification and project plan for the building of the new site has, therefore, not yet been delivered. Risk 2A Delivery: Supplier fails to deliver, has been raised from green to amber pending delivery of the full specification and plan.

The Commission Board noted the report.

13. Universities and Electoral Reviews - LGBCE(22/23)126

The report provided background information, data and individual case material on the impact of students on the electorate and how this impacts the Commission's work.

As a result of the research, the following three actions were identified:

- When identifying authorities to review – where authorities trigger the criteria it should be considered whether there are significant student areas and, if so, how far this factor had contributed to meeting the intervention criteria.
- As soon as an authority is in the review programme - During preliminary period of review in a 'university authority', work with the authority under review to ensure that electorate forecasting is as accurate and reasonable as possible.
- Monitor 'university authorities' - The team will specifically identify which are authorities with potentially large numbers of student electors and monitor the accuracy of their forecasts.

The Commission Board observed that:

- It would be helpful to liaise closely with the Electoral Commission about the issue, including factors likely to affect student electoral registration.
- ONS forecasting inaccuracies could be assessed further.

The Commission Board noted the Report and thanked those involved for the level of data and detail in the report.

14. Good Quality Reviews - LGBCE(22/23)127

The Chief Executive introduced the report on 'Good Quality Reviews', which centred around how we might define, and measure, a 'good quality' review.

The Commission Board made the following comments:

- In terms of inclusion – Are we currently reaching the totality of communities, and are there further methods that would expand our 'reach'?
- Whilst the components are well structured in terms of what the Commission is trying to define as good quality, there is inevitably a subjective element in that there may be a different understanding by others. The Commission's definition of a 'good quality' review could differ from someone who belongs to another stakeholder group.
- It was observed that a review might be considered as 'high', 'acceptable', or 'low' quality, depending on the perspective of the respondent and, therefore, what constituted a 'good quality review' could similarly differ.
- Accordingly, it would probably be helpful if the Commission set out its own view of what a good quality review looked like. That interpretation could then be compared with other stakeholders, in order to grasp whether our understanding resonates with other perspectives.
- The Commission can only contribute towards a good quality review since there are elements that are not within our direct control.
- The Chief Executive agreed that this work would be integrated with the Post Review Analysis

15. Future Working - LGBCE(22/23)128

The Chief Executive introduced the report on Future Working, which highlighted the several conversations Commissioners and Staff have had about Future Working and a way forward.

- Future – The first paragraph referred to “our primary purpose is to carry out reviews and, within that, we have to ensure good governance including spending our money appropriately”. This would be located as a separate bullet point.

Principle 1. Customer/Organisational stakeholder expectations – How we can enable our 'customers' to engage with us in a positive and beneficial way through enhancement of our digital engagement, and how we can support local authorities to ensure effective engagement. What we need to do to ensure organisational stakeholders remain supportive of the LGBCE. Package of support for officers in authorities under review (as discussed earlier as part of the Ops report) to be included as part of this principle.

Principle 2. Organisational Effectiveness - The way we operate to understand how we can continue to deliver value for money

Principle 3. Our People's Aspirations - Ensure that we construct a hybrid model that is best for the whole organisation. There is work in hand to get a clear purpose of

why people should come into the office and Staff/Commissioner time together. Further work would identify options and a business plan for new offices.

16. Having regard for the statutory criteria - LGBCE(22/23)129

The Commission has a number of statutory criteria that it balances when making recommendations. The 'three statutory criteria' that we generally refer to are not the only criteria to which we must have regard during a review, but they are common to every review and, therefore, are highlighted in reports, briefings and meetings. However, the Commission is also explicit in guidance and presentations to officers and members that, where relevant, there are other statutory criteria to which we must have regard and these are also considered alongside our other 'three statutory criteria'.

17. Assurance Framework

The Governance and Compliance Lead gave a detailed presentation on the new Assurance Framework and outlined the process, purpose, and benefits to the organisation.

There were no comments.

Agreed

- 1) The Board noted and welcomed the presentation and the work that underpinned it.
- 2) Presentation slides to be circulated to Commission Board members

18. Risk Register - LGBCE(22/23)130

The Governance and Compliance Lead introduced the report. Details regarding the Risk Management Group's December meeting were provided.

- 3B Inadequate engagement from local authorities - No change was made to the current risk score or trend status, but the group agreed to monitor this situation.
- 3A Changes in demand outside scope of current resources - No change was made to the current risk score or to the trend status.
- Future risk activity - The Risk Register has undergone several changes to reflect the reframing of the Review Programme Risk and to take into account the feedback received at previous Commission Board meetings.
 - New overarching risk: Resilience - The Risk Register now has an overarching resilience risk which will oversee the management of two specific risks: Risk 2A Operational Resilience and Risk 2B Failure to have a resilient workforce.
 - New overarching risk: External risks - The Risk Register now includes an area for Leadership Team and the Commission Board to consider

risks that fall outside the scope of the Commission's influence and control.

- RMG Analysis - The Risk Register has been expanded to include a new RMG Analysis section.

Agreed

The Commission Board noted the report.

19. Future Business

Future Business Programme from August onwards will be populated with Reviews once the Introductory meetings have taken place.

Two-day Commission Board/Leadership team meeting in July 2023 to be rescheduled as the dates clash with the LGA Conference. Dates to be confirmed with Commissioners in due course.

AOB

There were no other items.

Close of Business