

LGBCE (22-23)14 Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 20 February 2023, at 15:00pm. All Commissioners and officers attended the meeting via Teams.

Commissioners Present

Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)

Susan Johnson OBE

Amanda Nobbs OBE

Andrew Scallan CBE

Steve Robinson

LGBCE Officers Present:

Jolyon Jackson CBE

Lynn Ingram

Glynn McDonald

Richard Buck

Richard Otterway

Mark Cooper

Rebecca Pritchard

Johnny Ashby

Angela Hendry

Chief Executive

Director of Corporate Services

Communications & Public Affairs Manager

Review Manager

Review Manager

Review Officer (item 4)

Review Officer (item 5)

Review Officer (item 6)

Office Manager/HR Lead (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Alison Evison and Ben Meredeen.

Declarations of interest

Steve Robinson declared an interest in item 1 (Worcestershire) and took no part in the discussions of that item.

1. Worcestershire Council Size - LGBCE(22/23)144

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

It had been agreed to review Worcestershire County Council due to electoral imbalances and as part of the Periodic Electoral Review. According to the latest available electoral figures, 29 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 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 remain at 57 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 57 members.

Agreed

The Board agreed that a council size of 57 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

Steve Robinson returned to the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

2. Oxfordshire Council Size - LGBCE(22/23)145

It had been agreed to review Oxfordshire County Council as part of the Periodic Electoral Review. According to the latest available electoral figures, 34 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent. Two divisions (University Parks and Didcot West) had variances of over 30%.

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 increase by 6 from 63 to 69 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 69 members. The Board also agreed to the request for a single member review.

Agreed

The Board agreed that a council size of 69 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

Agreed

That the review proceed as a single-member division review.

3. Castle Point Final Recommendations - LGBCE(22/23)146

The review of Castle Point Borough Council had commenced on 25 April 2022. According to the latest available electoral figures, 14 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 25 April 2022, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 39 and had subsequently, on 20 September 2022, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 43 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 13 three-member 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 Castle Point as presented.

Agreed

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

4. Harlow Final Recommendations - LGBCE(22/23)147

The review of Harlow District Council had commenced on 25 April 2022. According to the latest available electoral figures, 46 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 25 April 2022, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 33 and had subsequently, on 20 September 2022, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 25 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 Harlow.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 11 three-member 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 Harlow District Council as presented.

Agreed

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

'Secretary's Note: It was subsequently discovered that one submission on the Draft Recommendations had been inadvertently omitted and, therefore, the Final Recommendations had been withdrawn prior to publication so that the Commission Board could re-consider the recommendations afresh informed by the totality of submissions at their March meeting.'

5. Epping Forest Final Recommendations - LGBCE(22/23)148

The review of Epping Forest District Council had commenced on 25 April 2022. According to the latest available electoral figures, 16 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 25 April 2022, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 54 and had subsequently, on 20 September 2022, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 30 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 Epping Forest.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 18 three-member 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 Epping Forest Council as presented.

Agreed

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

6. Brentwood Final Recommendations - LGBCE(22/23)149

The review of Brentwood Borough Council had commenced on 25 April 2022. According to the latest available electoral figures, 13 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 25 April 2022, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 39 and had subsequently, on 20 September 2022, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 10 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 13 three-member 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 Brentwood Council as presented.

Agreed

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

7. Website Update Project - LGBCE(22/23)150

The Communications and Public Affairs Manager gave an update on the progress of the development of the new website and a walk through of a review page on the live version.

The Commission Board noted the update report and the key steps to be delivered by the next Board meeting in March.

It was noted that we will inform stakeholders of our new website, including councils that have live reviews and those who have made submissions on the old website.

The Board noted the additional piece of work being done by Versantus on the submission process, which will bring about efficiencies and time saving for the Review Officers and Review Assistants.

The Board welcomed the presentation and expressed their appreciation for all of the work that was going into the construction of the new website.

AOB

There were no other items.

Close of Business