

LGBCE (23-24) 4 Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 18 July 2023, at 10:00am. 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
Liz Treacy

LGBCE Officers Present:

Jolyon Jackson CBE	Chief Executive
Alison Evison	Review & Programme Manager
Hayley Meachin	Communications & Engagement Manager
Kathryn Trower	Interim Director of Corporate Services
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Richard Otterway	Review Manager
Tom Rutherford	Review Officer (item 5 & 9)
Yemi Fagun	Review Officer (item 6 & 10)
Nicole Holt	Review Officer (item 8)
Ram Avtaar	GIS & Data Officer (item 12)
Dean Faccini	Governance & Compliance Lead (item 15)
Angela Hendry	HR Lead (minutes)

Boundary Commission for England for item 1

Sir Peter Lane	Deputy Chair
Colin Byrne	Commissioner
Sarah Hamilton	Commissioner
Tim Bowden	Secretary to the Commission

1. Meeting with BCE – LGBCE(23/24)033

The Chair welcomed the Commissioners and staff from the Boundary Commission for England.

The Board and Boundary Commission for England Commissioners agreed the Memorandum of Understanding which will now be signed. The Chair (LGBCE) and

the Deputy Chair (BCE) will write to the Speaker of the House of Commons and the Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities to inform them of the Memorandum of Understanding.

Apologies for Absence

There were none.

Declarations of interest

Andrew Scallan, Amanda Nobbs and Jolyon Jackson declared an interest in item 4 (Surrey Draft Recommendations) and took no part in the discussions of that item.

There were declarations of interest in local authorities listed in the review programme.

- Susan Johnson declared an interest in Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire.
- Andrew Scallan declared an interest in Eastbourne.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 20 June 2023

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:

- Resilience needs to come after the office relocation project.
- Vision – CEO to discuss with the Chair and the Review & Programme Manager.

The following actions were reported on:

- Clarity on Corporate Plan objectives – CEO to discuss timescale with Interim DCS
- Future Commission Office accommodation requirements – Scope of project will come to the Board for discussion and agreement in August.
- Progress on resilience and retention – will follow after the office accommodation requirements are scoped as we will then be able to consider all the strategic issues that feed into the organisation.
- Actions from the review undertaken by Sir Tony Redmond:
 - Notes of Strategy Awayday including roles and responsibilities to be circulated to the Board.

- Vision was discussed during the Policy session. CEO to discuss next steps with the Chair and the Review Programme Manager.
- Value for money to be discussed at October Policy session.

2. Chair's Report

The Chair welcomed Kathryn Trower (Interim Director of Corporate Services) and Hayley Meachin (Communications and Engagement Manager) to their first meeting of the Board. It was also noted that Ben Russon had started in the role of Review Assistant.

The Deputy Chair and officers gave feedback on the LGA conference. The feedback was positive, and it was useful to engage with people in areas where we have completed, are currently undertaking, or are due to start electoral reviews. Feedback notes have been circulated to the Board.

3. Operational Report – LGBCE(23/24)034

The Chief Executive presented the Operational Report for July 2023 and the Commission noted its content.

- The Board noted the Related Alterations and consents.
- The Review Manager, Richard Otterway reported that the Stockton-on-Tees (Electoral Review) (Amendment) Order 2023 was laid on 11 July 2023. Stockton-on-Tees and Ingleby Barwick councils have been informed. Discussions have taken place with the review team to avoid this type of error occurring in the future. The CEO informed the Board that we are also awaiting the cost implications. It was agreed that a note would be prepared that could reassure the Board that appropriate actions had been taken to minimise the risk of the error happening again and which could be drawn upon, if needed, at the next meeting with the Speaker's Committee.
- The Review Manager, Richard Buck updated that the Castle Point Order had been made.
- The Review Manager, Richard Buck briefed the Board on a request from Sunderland Council for a two-week extension to the consultation which is ongoing. There is no impact on the report to the Board in September. The Board agreed to the extension to the consultation.
- The Review Manager, Richard Buck briefed the Board on the situation regarding Thurrock Council. We are waiting to hear the decision from the Secretary of State as to when an all-out election might be scheduled for the authority. Once this is clear, we can then consider whether to review Thurrock and when to schedule an electoral review.
- The Board noted the Lead Commissioner allocations. It was noted that Liz Treacy will be the Lead Commissioner for Thanet and Amanda Nobbs for Cheshire East. The Chair agreed the allocations.

4. Sefton Council Size - LGBCE(23/24)035

It had been agreed to review Sefton Council given the time that had elapsed since the last review. According to the latest available electoral figures, 5 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 66 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 66 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence, and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 66 members.

Agreed

The Board agreed that a council size of 66 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

5. Surrey Draft Recommendations - LGBCE(23/24)036

Amanda Nobbs, Andrew Scallan and Jolyon Jackson left the meeting and took no part in the discussion on this agenda item.

The review of Surrey County Council had commenced on 21 February 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 16 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 21 February 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 81 and that the review should be a single-member division review. 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 81 single-member wards in total.

The Board 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 Surrey County Council as presented.

Amanda Nobbs, Andrew Scallan and Jolyon Jackson returned to the meeting.

6. Staffordshire Draft Recommendations – LGBCE(23/24)037

The review of Staffordshire Council had commenced on 13 December 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 13 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 13 December 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 62 and that the review should be a single-member division review. 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 62 single-member wards in total.

The Board 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 Staffordshire County Council as presented, subject to the Lead Commissioner approving the parish electoral arrangements section. Note – Lead Commissioner approval for this section was agreed on 21 July 2023

7. North Tyneside Further & Final Draft Recommendations – LGBCE(23/24)038

The review of North Tyneside Council had commenced on 23 August 2022. According to the latest available electoral figures, 20 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 23 August 2022, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 60 and had subsequently, on 17 January 2023, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 320 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 of the district and these changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Board for consultation.

It was considered that there was sufficient evidence to undertake a period of further limited consultation focusing on the proposals for the Northwest of North Tyneside area before the Board published its Final Recommendations.

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 to a period of further limited consultation focusing on the Northwest of North Tyneside.

Agreed

Final Recommendations with a period of further limited consultation focusing on the Northwest of North Tyneside.

**8. Nuneaton & Bedworth Final Recommendations -
LGBCE(23/24)039**

The review of Nuneaton & Bedworth had commenced on 23 August 2022. According to the latest available electoral figures, 35 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 23 August 2022, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 38 and had subsequently, on 17 January 2023, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 14 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 19 two-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 Nuneaton & Bedworth as presented.

Agreed

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

9. Rossendale Final Recommendations – LGBCE(2324)040

The review of Rossendale Council had commenced on 20 September 2022. According to the latest available electoral figures, none of the wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 20 September 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 30 and had subsequently, on 21 February 2023, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 15 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 10 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 Rossendale Council as presented.

Agreed

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

10. West Northamptonshire Final Recommendations – LGBCE(23/24)041

The review of West Northamptonshire Council had commenced on 23 August 2022 following the establishment of the unitary authority. According to the latest available electoral figures, 19 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 23 August 2022, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 77 and had subsequently, on 21 February 2023, moved away from its minded to decision and agreed Draft Recommendations based on a council size of 76.

Following publication, 138 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-, 15 two-, and 7 single-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.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for West Northamptonshire as presented.

Agreed

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

11. Review Programme Intervention Reviews – LGBCE(23/24)042

The Review & Programme Manager presented the Review Programme Intervention Review report and the Board noted its content.

The Board discussed how authorities not reviewed since the early 2000s might be brought forward slightly earlier in the programme before intervention in 2027.

The Board discussed the issues relating to student accommodation, how development and the impact on variances is monitored and reported and the potential desirability of showing whether an authority met the intervention criteria in previous years.

The Board agreed the recommendation to include the following areas in the 2024/25 programme:

- Cotswold
- Cherwell
- Swale
- Wealden

12. Qtr. 1 Finance & KPIs – LGBCE(23/24)043

The Interim Director of Corporate Services and Business Project Leads presented the Qtr. 1 Finance & KPI Outturn report, and the Board noted its content.

- There was a brief discussion about the Customer Satisfaction KPI and why the sample size was smaller this quarter. Team to consider the higher number of satisfactory responses against the lower volume of survey responses.
- It was noted that we have had an increase in visits to our new website in the first quarter of this year.
- In relation to social media, there was a question about using Threads and it was noted that some of the hard-to-reach audiences are not on social media and this is something we will need to consider.

- Personal acknowledgement of submissions – It was agreed to keep this KPI live for Qtr. 2.
- It was noted that the Leadership Team monitor the sickness absence and health and wellbeing.

The Interim Director of Corporate Services presented the Qtr. 1 Financial Outturn, and the Board noted its content.

- The Board noted the variances as set out in the report.
- There was a brief discussion on the Risk & Resilience budget which we will need to draw on to meet the requirements in relation to our expenditure.
- There was a brief discussion on depreciation and an oral update will be given at the August Board meeting.

13. Draft ARC Minutes of 15 May 2023 – LGBCE(23/24)044

The Interim Director of Corporate Services updated on the May ARC minutes. ARC Committee effectiveness review tool has now been circulated to ARC. The review tool looks at value for money which is on the agenda for the October Policy Session. The Board noted that the accounts were laid on 8 June 2023.

14. ARC Chair's report on meeting of 17 July 2023

The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee highlighted key items from the meeting that took place on 17 July 2023.

- Standing items on Assurance Framework, IT, Risk, Health & Safety.
- The Committee asked the IT & Contracts Lead for a more concise report on H&S in future as the current format is quite complex.
- In relation to the IT report, we need to move forward with an IT strategy and how we move forward with cyber plus which will be shared with Commissioners in Autumn.
- The Committee approved the following policies which had been reviewed:
 - Anti-Fraud
 - Whistleblowing
 - Risk
 - Information Management, Security & Personal Data
- Work will begin on the effectiveness of ARC.

15. Risk Register – LGBCE(23/24) – LGBCE(23/24)045

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

There has been a recent change to the top 3 risks.

- The Risk 2B, Failure to have a resilient workforce has been rescored to a possible, major 6, which is a reduction to its risk score. This is due to the successful recruitment to vacant posts in April and May 2023. It was noted

that the office relocation and the ways we work may have an impact on workforce resilience.

- 1C Failure to gain support from Speaker's committee – This was last reviewed in September 2022. There was no change to its current risk score or trend status.
- 5A Failure to manage the budget including poor VfM, monitoring of contracts, suppliers, and services – This was last reviewed in November 2022 and the risk score was raised to possible, catastrophic 8. The group felt it would be inappropriate to reduce the current risk score.

16. Business Plan – LGBCE(23/24)046

The Commission Board noted the Business Plan and each of the project leads presented their project update to the meeting.

There was a brief discussion about having a Lead Commissioner listed against each of the Business Plan projects. To be followed up from the notes of the awayday on 29 June 2023.

- Induction process - updated induction pack for new Commissioners and hub on intranet homepage. Next steps to look at staff induction pack and process and we will look to make a similar induction hub for staff.
- Corporate Training Plan – Training from the appraisals will be collated to form the corporate training plan.
- Governance Review – some work will be done to consider where the various elements of governance come to the different meetings. Team to consider a different title for this project.
- ESRI Sweet – Project will be complete by the end of the month.
- Improving external involvement – looking at initial materials we give to local authorities and asking questions about who their community champions are.
- Replacement Review Programme – training ongoing.
- Relocation – outline paper to August Board meeting.

17. Future Business Plan

The Board noted the Future Business Plan.

- Apologies from Susan Johnson and Alison Evison for the August Board meeting.
- September meeting will not have any governance items as the Director of Corporate Services is on leave.
- October Board meeting will be in person followed by the policy session.

18. Any Other Business

Discussion to be held with officers and Commissioners on story maps in a washup session at the end of the August Board.