

## LGBCE (24-25) 4th meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2024 at 10:00am  
All Commissioners and officers attended the meeting via Teams

### Commissioners present:

Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)  
Amanda Nobbs OBE  
Steve Robinson  
Wallace Sampson OBE  
Andrew Scallan CBE

### LGBCE officers present:

Ailsa Irvine	Chief Executive
Kathryn Trower	Interim Director of Corporate Services (for items 1-2 and 10-13)
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Alison Evison	Review & Programme Manager
Jonathan Ashby	Review Officer and Mapping Lead
Tom Rutherford	Review Officer and Review Process Lead
Yemi Fagun	Review Officer (for item 3)
Nicole Holt	Review Officer (for item 5)
Paul Kingsley	Review Officer (for item 6)
Mark Cooper	Review Officer (for item 7)
Dean Faccini	Governance & Compliance Lead (for item 13)
Angela Hendry	HR Lead (minutes)

### Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Liz Treacy, Hayley Meachin and Paul Nizinskyj.

### Declarations of interest

There were none.

### Minutes of the LGBCE's meeting on 21 May 2024

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

## Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

## Actions from previous Commission Board meetings

- The Commission Board noted the outstanding actions.

### 1. Chair's report

The Commission Board recorded thanks to the team for the quick action taken to address the impact of the announcement of the general election on the review programme. The revised programme would be considered at the July meeting.

The Chair indicated that he proposed that Steve Robinson would continue as Chair of ARC for a further year and that he had asked Amanda Nobbs to act as Board lead for customer experience and EDI.

The Chair noted that he had represented the Commission at a memorial service for Paul Rowsell on 10 June.

### 2. Operational report – LGBCE(24/25)024

The Chief Executive presented the operational report for June and the Commission Board noted its content.

- There will be a further update to the July Board meeting on the impact of the general election on the review programme, when revised timetables will be provided for agreement. In the interim, the Board agreed to the publication of the final recommendations agreed at last month's Board meeting and the launch of consultations for Middlesbrough, Newcastle upon Tyne, Swindon and Vale of White Horse in the week following the election.
- The Board agreed to the request from Plymouth City Council to delay the start of its review to allow it to consult on changing its electoral cycle over the summer.
- The Chief Executive noted that we are still awaiting explanation from the GPA on their reason for their requirement for payment for remainder of the lease after we have vacated Windsor House.
- The DCS provided an update on the relocation project. The Board asked that an agreed form of words be developed that both the Commission and the Electoral Commission can use to describe our occupation of space within Bunhill Row in order to clarify that we are separate and independent organisations.

*Kathryn Trower left the meeting at the end of the discussion on this item.*

### 3. Newcastle Upon Tyne Draft Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)025

The review of Newcastle Upon Tyne Council had commenced on 16 January 2024. According to the latest available electoral figures, 31 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 16 January 2024, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 78 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 26 three-member wards.

The Board considered the recommendations in detail, informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the advice of officers and the submissions received, and was minded to support them.

#### **Agreed**

The Board agreed the Draft Recommendations for Newcastle Upon Tyne as presented.

### 4. Thurrock Draft Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)026

The review of Thurrock Council had commenced on 16 January 2024. According to the latest available electoral figures, 45 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 16 January 2024, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 49 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 9 three-member and 11 two-member wards.

The Board considered the recommendations in detail, informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the advice of officers and the submissions received, and was minded to support them.

#### **Agreed**

The Board agreed the Draft Recommendations for Thurrock Council as presented.

### 5. Worcestershire Final Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)027

The review of Worcestershire Council had commenced on 20 February 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 29 per cent of divisions 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 57 and had subsequently, on 12 December 2023, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 243 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all 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 4 two-member and 49 single-member divisions.

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, and was minded to agree them.

### **Agreed**

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

## **6. Derbyshire Final Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)028**

The review of Derbyshire County Council had commenced on 21 March 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 20 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent, with one division being over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on 21 March 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 64 and had subsequently, on 12 December 2023, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 229 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all 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 64 single-member divisions.

The Board considered the final recommendations in 7 of the 8 districts in Derbyshire in detail, informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the submissions received following publication of the Draft Recommendations, and was minded to agree them. The Board noted that the extended consultation in the South Derbyshire district part of the county will close on 21 June 2024, and that the final recommendations for this area will be presented to the Commission Board at its July meeting.

### **Agreed**

The Board agreed in principle the Final Recommendations for 7 of the 8 districts in Derbyshire County Council.

## **7. Gateshead Final Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)029**

The review of Gateshead Council had commenced on 15 August 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 14 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 15 August 2024, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 66 and had subsequently, on 16 January 2024, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 89 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all 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 22 three-member wards.

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, and was minded to agree them.

### **Agreed**

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

## **8. Walsall Final Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)030**

The review of Walsall Council had commenced on 15 August 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 20 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 15 August 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 60 and had subsequently, on 16 January 2024, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 111 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all 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 20 three-member wards.

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, and was minded to agree them.

### **Agreed**

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

## **9. Mid Devon Related Alterations - LGBCE(24/25)031**

The Board considered the content of the Mid Devon District Council Related Alterations paper. It was minded to agree to the related alterations as the changes proposed would promote effective and convenient local government by ensuring coterminous district wards, county divisions and parish boundaries, in addition to reflecting community identities.

### **Agreed**

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

*Kathryn Trower rejoined the meeting for the following items.*

## **10. ARC Chair's report from meeting on 17 June 2024**

The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee highlighted the key items considered at the Committee's meeting on 17 June 2024.

- ARC members had their annual meeting with the internal and external auditors without officers present. The year-end audit was discussed with the NAO, including the significant changes in personnel which had impacted on the audit. The Board noted the increase in the annual audit fee.

- ARC considered the annual report and accounts, along with the audit completion report and letter of representation, and were content to recommend them to the Board for approval.
- ARC discussed the internal audit report for 2023-24 and the audit plan for 2024-25. The internal audits for 2024-25 will look at the governance assurance framework, value for money, contract management and boundary reviews.

## 11. ARC annual report to the Commission – LGBCE(24/25)032

The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee presented the Committee's annual report to the Commission and the Board noted its content.

- The Board noted that ARC will consider risk management and internal controls at its July meeting.

## 12. Annual Report and Accounts approval – LGBCE(24/25)033

The Interim Director of Corporate Services presented the Annual Report and Accounts.

- The Board noted an adjustment to the lease liability from the position presented to the Board in April 2024.
- The Board noted the delay to the remuneration report from the Civil Service pension provider, and the implications for the Annual Report.
- The Board approved the Annual Report and Accounts and agreed to delegate completion and signing of the final version to the Accounting Officer.
- The Board approved the letter of representation being signed by the Accounting Officer.
- The Board expressed thanks to the officers involved in the work on the Annual Report and Accounts and the year-end audit.

## 13. Risk report – LGBCE(24/25)034

The Governance & Compliance Lead joined the meeting and presented the risk report for June. He updated that the Risk Management Group had assessed the impact of the general election on each of the risks in our risk register.

Risk 6A Fatality, injury or serious damage (Health & Safety risk)

- The Risk Management Group (RMG) had conducted a deep dive review on the health & safety risk. The RMG agreed that the mitigations in place are appropriate and that reducing the score of this risk to Unlikely / Catastrophic 4 would accurately reflect our health & safety status.
- The Board discussed officers working remotely and the arrangements in place to monitor their wellbeing. It was noted that we have a lone working policy which covers travelling on Commission business. In relation to working from

home, while managers keep in regular contact with their teams, the Board asked the team to confirm whether there is anything more we should be doing, in particular to demonstrate the steps we take in relation to their health and safety. The team were specifically asked to confirm that the workstation assessments completed by all staff cover both working from home and working in the office.

- The Board asked that corporate manslaughter training for Commissioners is considered in the context of what we do, and that the induction for new Commissioners ensures that they receive all the necessary training.

### Any other business

- The Chief Executive updated on the arrangements for the Board/Leadership Team away day and in-person whole-team session in September.
- The Chief Executive updated on progress with recruiting for a permanent DCS.