

LGBCE (24-25)13th meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 21 January 2025, at 10am. All Commissioners and officers attended the meeting via Teams.

Commissioners present:

Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)
Andrew Scallan CBE
Wallace Sampson OBE
Liz Treacy

LGBCE officers present:

Ailsa Irvine	Chief Executive
Hayley Meachin	Communications & Engagement Manager
Alison Evison	Review & Programme Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Brendan Connell-French	Senior Review Officer
Jonathan Ashby	Senior Review Officer
Tom Rutherford	Review Officer (item 5)
Nicole Holt	Review Officer (item 6)
Paul Kingsley	Review Officer (item 7)
Paul Nizinskyj	Review Officer (item 8)
Rafa Chowdhury	Finance Lead (minutes)

Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Amanda Nobbs, Steve Robinson and Kathryn Trower.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of the LGBCE meeting on 17 December 2024

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:

- BCE – nothing further to update since last month.

1. Chair's report

The Chair updated the Board on the arrangements for the upcoming UK Boundary Commissions' meeting which will take place 27-28 February.

The Chair reminded Board members and the Leadership Team to complete the Board effectiveness questionnaire.

2. Operational report - LGBCE(24/25)104

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

- The Commission Board agreed to Somerset Council's request to extend the current consultation by six weeks.
- The Chair agreed the following Lead Commissioner allocations:
 - Liz Treacy - Peterborough
 - Liz Treacy - Sheffield

3. South Holland Council Size – LGBCE(24/25)105

It had been agreed to review South Holland Council given the time that had elapsed since the last review. According to the latest available electoral figures, 11 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 37 members.

Following receipt of information about future governance and representational arrangements, it was recommended by LGBCE officers that the council size remain at 37 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, was minded to support a council size of 37 members.

Agreed

The Board agreed that a council size of 37 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

4. Plymouth Council Size - LGBCE(24/25)106

It had been agreed to review Plymouth 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 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 increase by 3, from 57 to 60 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, was minded to support a council size of 60 members.

Agreed

The Board agreed that a council size of 60 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

5. East Riding of Yorkshire Draft Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)107

The review of East Riding of Yorkshire Council had commenced on 25 April 2024. According to the latest available electoral figures, 23 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 25 April 2024, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 67 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 11 three- and 17 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 agree them.

Agreed

The Board agreed the Draft Recommendations for East Riding of Yorkshire Council as presented.

6. Sandwell Draft Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)108

The review of Sandwell Council had commenced on 21 May 2024. According to the latest available electoral figures, 13 percent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 21 May 2024, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 72 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 24 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 agree them.

Agreed

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

7. North East Lincolnshire Draft Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)109

The review of North East Lincolnshire Council had commenced on 20 August 2024. According to the latest available electoral figures, 27 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 20 August 2024, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 42 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 12 three- and 3 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 agree them.

Agreed

The Board agreed the Draft Recommendations for North East Lincolnshire Council as presented.

8. Portsmouth Draft Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)110

The review of Portsmouth Council had commenced on 20 August 2024. According to the latest available electoral figures, 14 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 20 August 2024, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 42 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 14 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 agree them.

Agreed

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

9. Swindon Final Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)111

The review of Swindon Council had commenced on 12 December 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 23 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 12 December 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 57 and had subsequently, on 21 May 2024, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 95 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 10 three-, 12 two- and 3 single-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 Swindon Council as presented.

10. North West Leicestershire Final Recommendations -
LGBCE(24/25)112

The review of North West Leicestershire Council had commenced on 12 March 2024. According to the latest available electoral figures, 39 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 12 March 2024, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 38. At its meeting on 20 August 2024, the Board agreed to move away from its original opinion on council size and instead agreed to a council size of 39 since this allowed for a better warding pattern. It also agreed Draft Recommendations at that meeting.

Following publication, 66 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 39 single-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 North West Leicestershire as presented.

11. English Devolution White Paper: implications for review
programme

The Commission Board discussed the implications of the Government's English Devolution White Paper for the Commission's review programme. The Board agreed:

- That the reviews of Colchester, Ipswich, Melton and Wealden, considered at the December 2024 Board meeting, continue to be paused, with this decision kept under review

- In respect of the reviews considered at this meeting:
 - that the South Holland review be paused and that this decision be kept under review
 - that the Plymouth, East Riding of Yorkshire, Sandwell, North East Lincolnshire and Portsmouth reviews proceed to the next stage of consultation as planned, subject to a further check ahead of publication.
 - that the final recommendations for Swindon and North West Leicestershire be published as planned.
- In respect of reviews scheduled to be considered at the February and March 2025 Board meetings, that these be prepared for decision as planned, at which point the Board will consider the next steps for these reviews.