

## LGBCE (24-25) 15th meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2025 at 9:30am  
Thames Room, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor, 3 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8YZ

### Commissioners present:

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

### LGBCE officers present:

Ailsa Irvine	Chief Executive
Kathryn Trower	Interim Director of Corporate Services
Alison Evison	Review & Programme Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Hayley Meachin	Communications and Engagement Manager
Jonathan Ashby	Senior Review Officer
Brendan Connell-French	Senior Review Officer
Nicole Holt	Review Officer (for item 4)
Tom Rutherford	Review Officer (for item 5)
Yemi Fagun	Review Officer (for item 6)
Dean Faccini	Governance & Compliance Lead (for items 8 & 9)
Angela Hendry	HR Lead (minutes)

### Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

### Declarations of interest

Jonathan Ashby declared an interest in Solihull Final Recommendations (item 7), and took no part in the discussion of that item.

Minutes of the LGBCE's meetings on 21 and 22 January 2025

An amendment was made to the minute of the 22 January meeting, on item 2, Corporate plan and Main Supply Estimate, to reflect that the Board had noted comments and agreed to minor amendments being made to the draft plan.

The minutes were agreed as a correct record, subject to the above amendment.

## Matters arising

It was noted that the Plymouth, East Riding of Yorkshire, Sandwell, North East Lincolnshire and Portsmouth reviews had not proceeded to the next stage of consultation. The status of these reviews will instead be considered further as part of the English Devolution White Paper discussion later in the agenda.

## Actions from previous Commission Board meetings

The following actions were reported on:

- BCE to be invited to a future Commission Board meeting – Commissioners have now been reappointed, and contact will be made at the UK Commissions' meeting at the end of February.
- The Commissioner induction checklist is available on SharePoint.
- The Board will receive a briefing on ESRI sweet. A slot will be identified for the summer.

## 1. Chair's report

The Chair reported that the UK Commissions' meeting is taking place on 27-28 February 2025.

The Chair reported on the Board effectiveness feedback meeting which took place on 17 February. The report from the facilitator will come to the Board in April to agree how to take any actions forward.

The Chair reported on a meeting with Simon Lightwood, MP for Wakefield & Rothwell, in relation to the final recommendations for Wakefield.

## 2. Operational report - LGBCE(24/25)115

The Chief Executive presented the operational report for February and the Commission Board noted its contents.

- The Board discussed the categorisation of costs relating to the Licence to Occupy (LTO) for Bunhill Row further to the feedback received from the NAO subsequent to the interim audit. The Board agreed to sign a revised LTO, running for a period of 12 months to July 2025.
- The Interim Director of Corporate Services reported on the re-development of our SharePoint site. By 31 March, we will have rebuilt the framework on the

new Modern platform and data migration will be complete, although it is possible that the finance data will remain on the old SharePoint site until after year end. Phase 2 of the project will be focussed on the user experience and exploring what the new platform can enable us to do. It was noted that Commissioners will be involved in user testing in the second phase of the project.

### 3. Cotswold Council Size - LGBCE(24/25)116

It had been agreed to review Cotswold Council following a request from the council. According to the latest available electoral figures, 10 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 34 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 34 to 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 was minded to agree a council size of 37 for Cotswold Council.

### 4. Southend Draft Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)117

The review of Southend-on-Sea Council had commenced on 18 September 2024. According to the latest available electoral figures, 12 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 18 September 2025, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 51 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 17 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 Southend-on-Sea Council as presented.

## 5. Westmorland & Furness Draft Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)118

The review of Westmorland & Furness Council had commenced on 20 August 2024. According to the latest available electoral figures, 50 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 65 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-, 13 two-, and 12 single-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 Draft Recommendations for Westmorland & Furness as presented.

## 6. Bassetlaw Final & Further Draft Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)119

The review of Bassetlaw Council had commenced on 13 February 2024. According to the latest available electoral figures, 28 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 13 February 2024, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 48 and had subsequently, on 16 July 2024, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 36 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 and Further Draft Recommendations put to the Board for consideration.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 7 three-, 6 two-, and 13 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 agreed them in principle.

The Board also considered the proposed Further Draft Recommendations in some areas and agreed Further Draft Recommendations focusing on the areas of Beckingham, Clarborough, Everton, Ranskill and Sutton.

### **Agreed**

The Board agreed the Further Draft Recommendations for the areas of Beckingham, Clarborough, Everton, Ranskill and Sutton. The Board agreed in principle the Final Recommendations for the remaining areas of Bassetlaw.

## **7. Solihull Final Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)120.**

The review of Solihull Council had commenced on 15 August 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 12 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 51 and had subsequently, on 16 January 2024, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 158 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 17 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 Solihull as presented.

## **8. Risk - LGBCE(24/25)121**

The Governance and Compliance Lead joined the meeting and presented the risk report for February. The Board noted its content.

- Risk 2A: Operational resilience - The Risk Management Group (RMG) had identified the English Devolution White Paper as having an impact on this risk and noted the various mitigations in place to manage it. The RMG changed the score on this risk to Likely /Major (9).
- Risk 2B: Failure to have a resilient workforce – The RMG considered the mitigations in place and agreed to maintain the current risk score.

## 9. Risk appetite statement - LGBCE(24/25)122

The Governance and Compliance Lead presented the draft risk appetite statement for 2025-26 and the Board considered its content.

- The Board discussed the updated scoring methodology and felt that, given the definitions now being used, further work was required to reflect more accurately the Board's position on risk across some of the risk categories.
- In relation to Health & Safety, the Board suggested redefining the description of this risk.

The team undertook to update the draft risk appetite statement accordingly, and to bring it back to a future Board meeting for approval.

## 10. Staff survey - LGBCE(24/25)123

The Chief Executive presented the annual staff survey results and the Board noted their contents.

- The Board noted that we have processes and practices in place which support staff and mental health & wellbeing.
- The Board noted comments on the questions about the Board and suggested these be considered in the design of the 2025 survey.
- The Board noted the Leadership Team's proposed areas of focus for the coming year.

## 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:

- To lay Orders in Parliament for the following unitary and metropolitan authorities that have not been invited to submit unitary proposals: Barnsley, Bradford, Kirklees, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, South Tyneside, Swindon, Sunderland and Wakefield.

- To not lay Orders in Parliament at the current time for those authorities in areas that have been issued with an invitation to submit unitary proposals: North West Leicestershire and Vale of White Horse.
- To take decisions, publish final recommendations and lay Orders in Parliament for those unitary and metropolitan authorities that have not been invited to submit unitary proposals: Cheshire East, Middlesbrough, Milton Keynes and Solihull.
- To bring Final recommendations for Breckland, Dacorum and Thanet to be brought to the Board. At that point, the Board will make a decision on whether or not to publish the final recommendations. Orders will not be laid for these reviews.
- For those unitary and metropolitan authorities that have not been invited to submit unitary proposals, and have draft recommendations that have been agreed or are due to be agreed by the Board, to take decisions and publish draft recommendations: Cumberland, East Riding of Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, Sandwell, Somerset, Westmorland & Furness and Wirral.
- For those authorities in areas that have been issued an invitation to submit unitary proposals and where the team has prepared recommendations, to take a decision on those recommendations. After this, the review will be paused and the recommendations not published: Bassetlaw, Colchester, Melton, North East Lincolnshire, Portsmouth and Southend.
- For those authorities in areas which have been issued with an invitation to submit proposals and where consultation has closed but substantive work on developing recommendations has not yet begun, to write up and consider the recommendations but not publish them: Bromsgrove, North Warwickshire, Oadby & Wigston and Sevenoaks.
- For those authorities in areas that have been invited to submit unitary proposals, to take decisions on council size where the required information is available and then inform the council that we are pausing the review: Cotswold, Great Yarmouth, Hinkley & Bosworth, Ipswich, Plymouth, South Holland, Wealden and West Oxfordshire.
- To pause the reviews of Cherwell, Hyndburn and Swale, where information is pending on council size.
- To continue with the preliminary stages for those areas that have not been invited to submit unitary proposals: Bristol, Knowsley, Sheffield and Warrington.
- For those authorities in areas that have been issued an invitation to submit unitary proposals, to not continue with the preliminary stage and pause the review: Adur, Arun, Broadland, Burnley, Chelmsford, Hastings, Maldon, Peterborough, Rugby, Spelthorne, Staffordshire Moorlands, Stroud, Tamworth and Worthing.

- To consider options for populating the remainder of the programme for 2025-26 in April.