

## LGBCE (24-25) 16th meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2025 at 9:30am  
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  
Liz Treacy

### LGBCE officers present:

Ailsa Irvine	Chief Executive
Kathryn Trower	Interim Director of Corporate Services
Bipon Bhakri	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
Mark Cooper	Review Officer (for item 8)
Dean Faccini	Governance & Compliance Lead (for items 13 & 14)
Rafa Chowdhury	Finance Lead (minutes)
Kylie ap Garth	Communications Officer

### Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

### Declarations of interest

Colin Mellors and Wallace Sampson declared an interest in North Yorkshire Draft Recommendations (item 7) and took no part in the discussion of that item.

## Minutes of the LGBCE's meeting on 18 February 2025

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

### Matters arising

Item 11, bullet point 9 of the February Board minutes noted that the Commission had agreed to pause the review of Swale, pending further information being received relating to council size. However, as a result of resolving an issue around the CIPFA nearest neighbour data that the original submission had been considered against, and on further consideration by the team and the Lead Commissioner, a recommendation has now been made, and this will be considered under item 5, Swale Council Size.

### Actions from previous Commission Board meetings

The following actions were reported on:

- BCE to be invited to a future Commission Board meeting – awaiting response from BCE Commissioners regarding their availability to attend either the April or May Commission Board meeting.
- ESRI Sweet demonstration – Nothing further to update since last month; a slot will be identified for the summer.

### 1. Chair's report

The Chair reported on his introductory meeting with Frances Kirwan, MHCLG Deputy Director.

He also updated on the successful UK Boundary Commissions' meeting which took place in London on 27-28 February 2025.

The Chair welcomed Bapon Bhakri and Kylie ap Garth to their first Commission Board meeting.

He also thanked Kathryn Trower for her work at the Commission as the Interim Director of Corporate Services.

### 2. Operational report - LGBCE(24/25)123

The Chief Executive updated the Board on the work that is underway to revise the main survey used to gather feedback on the work of the Commission from stakeholders. This is on track for completion in time to go live in April 2025. It was

agreed that a draft of the survey be shared with the Chair and the EDI and Customer Experience Champion for input ahead of its launch.

It was noted that the Leadership Team are scheduled to confirm the scope and timing of an evaluation of the hybrid working policy following 6 months of its operation. The DCS is leading on this work, and will liaise with Liz Treacy, as the lead Commissioner for the relocation project, on the scope of the exercise.

*Kathryn Trower left the meeting.*

### 3. West Oxfordshire Council Size - LGBCE(24/25)124

It had been agreed to review West Oxfordshire Council given the time that had elapsed since the last review. It had also been agreed to review West Oxfordshire Council because, according to the latest available electoral figures, 44 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with one ward having a variance of over 30 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 49 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 49 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, was minded to support a council size of 49 members.

#### **Agreed**

The Board was minded to agree a council size of 49.

### 4. Hinckley & Bosworth Council Size - LGBCE(24/25)125

It had been agreed to review Hinckley & Bosworth Council given the time that had elapsed since the last review. According to the latest available electoral figures, 12.5 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 remain at 34 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, was minded to support a council size of 34 members.

#### **Agreed**

The Board was minded to agree a council size of 34.

## 5. Swale Council Size - LGBCE(24/25)126

It had been agreed to review Swale Council because, according to the latest available electoral figures, 33 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 47 members.

Following receipt of information about future governance and representational arrangements, it was recommended by LGBCE officers that the council size increase by 8, from 47 to 55 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence but, whilst noting the case made for an increase, felt that there was insufficient information to reach a decision on the council size for Swale at this stage.

## 6. Great Yarmouth Council Size - LGBCE(24/25)127

It had been agreed to review Great Yarmouth Council given the time that had elapsed since the last review. According to the latest available electoral figures, 24 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 39 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 39 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, was minded to support a council size of 39 members.

### **Agreed**

The Board was minded to agree a council size of 39.

## 7. North Yorkshire Draft Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)128

*Colin Mellors and Wallace Sampson left the meeting and took no part in the discussion on this item.*

The review of North Yorkshire Council had commenced on 18 September 2024.

At its meeting on 18 September 2024, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 89 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 team considered that the evidence justified departing from a uniform pattern of single-member divisions in two cases in order to effectively balance the statutory criteria. The Draft Recommendations proposed a pattern of 85 single-councillor divisions and two two-councillor divisions.

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 Yorkshire Council as presented.

*Colin Mellors and Wallace Sampson returned to the meeting at the conclusion of this item.*

## **8. Wirral Draft Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)129**

The review of Wirral Council had commenced on 20 August 2024. According to the latest available electoral figures, 5 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 66 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 22 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 Wirral Council as presented.

## **9. Bromsgrove Draft Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)130**

The review of Bromsgrove had commenced on 12 March 2024. According to the latest available electoral figures, 27 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 31 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 3 two- and 25 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 the Draft Recommendations for Bromsgrove Council as presented.

*Andrew Scallan left the meeting at 12:50pm.*

*Kathryn Trower re-joined the meeting.*

## **10. Approved ARC November 2024 minutes - LGBCE(24/25)131**

The Commission Board noted the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee's November meeting.

## **11. ARC Chair's February 2025 report - LGBCE(24/25)132**

The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee highlighted the key items considered at the Committee's meeting on 24 February 2025.

- The NAO had presented the year-end plan, and also their short guide to the Commission. It was noted that the NAO are undertaking a study of the proportionality for smaller bodies of reporting, governance and monitoring, the outcomes of which will be published in summer 2025.
- Updated versions of the Corporate Governance Framework, Business Continuity Plan and Code of Conduct Policy were considered and endorsed.
- The Committee noted the content of the two new draft sections (sustainability and value for money) of the Annual Report and Accounts.
- The Draft ARC Annual Report to the Board was considered.

- The regular, standing items were discussed, including updates on IT, health and safety, and risk and assurance.
- The key changes arising from the Procurement Act were outlined.
- The Committee formally ratified the award of the internal audit contract.

## 12. Corporate governance framework - LGBCE(24/25)133

The Interim Director of Corporate Services updated the Board on the review of the framework, and reported that only minor amendments have been made, mainly associated with corporate style and to enhance clarity. Updates had also been made to reflect decisions reserved to the Remuneration Committee, as reflected in its terms of reference.

The following comments were made:

- It was suggested that a definition, of four weeks, be included for the shorter period referred to in section 4.7 in relation to deputising arrangements for the CEO.
- The appointment of the Independent Member of ARC is not currently referenced and should be added to section 4.3 as a decision reserved to the Commission Board.
- A new paragraph should be added under 'Responsibilities of individual Commissioners' to reflect that champions may be appointed from time-to-time to support specific aspects of the Commission's work and to provide support and advice to the Board and the wider team on their agreed remit.

### **Agreed**

The Commission Board approved the Corporate Governance Framework, subject to the above amendments.

## 13. Review of policies: code of conduct - LGBCE(24/25)134

The Governance and Compliance Lead presented the updated policy and outlined the key changes that have been made.

### **Agreed**

The Commission Board approved the updated policy.

## 14. Risk - LGBCE(24/25)135

The Governance and Compliance Lead presented the risk report for March, and the Board noted its content.

- Risk 3B: Inadequate engagement from the local authority – it was noted that the Government's White Paper on English Devolution continues to create uncertainty, and that the Risk Management Group had identified two key strategic considerations relating to this. The group had agreed to maintain the current risk score at Possible / Major (6).
- Risk 3C: Failure of external contracts and business systems - The group had agreed to maintain the current risk score at Unlikely / Catastrophic (4).

## 15. Annual Report and Accounts: update - LGBCE(24/25)136

The Interim Director of Corporate Services provided an update on progress with the 2024/25 Annual Report and Accounts. It was noted that no issues had been raised at the interim audit, and that we are continuing to work towards approval of the Annual Report in May.

The Board provided feedback on the draft performance report, which will be reflected in the updated version to be brought back to the Board for further consideration in April.

## AOB

In-person meetings are currently intended to take place in July, September, December and February. Updated calendar appointments will be circulated to reflect this, with the approach to these meetings to be considered as part of the April agenda item on Board effectiveness.