

## LGBCE (25-26) 8th meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2025 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  
Liz Treacy

### LGBCE officers present:

Ailsa Irvine	Chief Executive
Rachel Barker	Director of Reviews, Strategy & Engagement
Bipon Bhakri	Director of Corporate Services
Alison Evison	Review & Programme Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Hayley Meachin	Communications & Engagement Manager
Brendan Connell-French	Senior Review Officer
Jonathan Ashby	Senior Review Officer
Yemi Fagun	Review Officer (item 3)
Rafa Chowdhury	Finance Lead (minutes)

### Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

### Declarations of interest

Amanda Nobbs declared an interest in relation to Wiltshire under item 4, 2026/27 programme, and took no part in the discussion relating to that area.

Liz Treacy declared an interest in relation to Manchester under item 4, 2026/27 programme, and took no part in the discussion relating to that area.

### Minutes of the LGBCE's meeting on 16 September 2025

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 following action was reported on:

- MHCLG and the use of terminology in relation to wards/divisions – the action is now complete; the letter has been finalised and sent to MHCLG.

### 1. Chair's report

The Chair provided an update on progress with the recruitment of new Commissioners.

The Chair noted progress with the work to support LGR, and expressed thanks to the team for their contributions to date.

The Chair placed on record the Commission's gratitude to Steve Robinson for his contributions to the work of the LGBCE during his tenure as Commissioner. Steve's term of office concludes in November.

### 2. Operational report - LGBCE(25/26)042

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

- Review programming – The Commission Board approved the adjustments to the timetable for Knowsley and Bristol, to mitigate the risk that Ordnance Survey (OS) will be unable to keep pace with the current review programme. The draft recommendations for Knowsley and Bristol will now be considered by the Board in June 2026 instead of in April 2026 and May 2026 respectively. The final recommendations for both will then be published two months later than originally scheduled, in January 2027 and February 2027 respectively. The Commission Board approved these adjustments to the timetable.
- The Board raised concerns about the capacity of OS and the potential risks for the Commission's ability to deliver its work programme, both now and into the future, particularly taking into account the risks of potential peaks of activity for OS resulting from the work of the BCE. In the short-term, the team will work with OS to seek further assurances, and will consider expressing concerns more formally if needed. The team was asked to consider more generally the capacity of other suppliers, and how equivalent risks might be managed, given the lumpiness of the review programme going forward.
- Data (Use and Access) Act – A Commissioner raised the potential for training for Commissioners on its impact. The DCS acknowledged the suggestion and

undertook to consider whether there was relevant training that should be provided.

### 3. Knowsley councillor numbers - LGBCE(25/26)043

It had been agreed to review Knowsley Council given the time that had elapsed since the last review. According to the latest available electoral figures, 20 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 45 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 45 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, was minded to support a council size of 45 members.

#### **Agreed**

The Board agreed that a council size of 45 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

### 4. 2026/27 programme - LGBCE(25/26)044

The Review & Programme Manager presented the paper on the 2026-27 review programme and the Board noted its content.

The Board discussed in detail the recommendations to add local authorities to the programme in line with the Commission's approach to undertaking periodic electoral reviews (PERs) and intervention reviews.

The Board agreed to add the following authorities to the 2026/27 programme as PERs:

- Hackney
- Kensington & Chelsea
- Tower Hamlets
- Bexley
- Croydon
- Redbridge
- Southwark
- Birmingham
- Isles of Scilly

For the Isles of Scilly, the Board supported the team exploring the potential for a modified approach to the review process to recognise their specific circumstances, and to bring this back to the Board for consideration.

In relation to intervention reviews, the Board proposed that more information be obtained to support their decision making. It was agreed that the team should engage with Manchester Council and Wiltshire Council to understand more about their variances before the Board determine whether they should be included in the programme. An update on progress will be brought to the November Board.

## 5. Q2 performance report - LGBCE(25/26)045

The Director of Corporate Services presented the Q2 performance report and the Board noted its contents.

In discussion, Board members noted the themes emerging from the stakeholder survey responses, including that there are some respondents who expressed a view that their views were not acted upon or indicated a low level of trust in the review process. The Chief Executive noted that this also reflects the themes emerging from the website survey which were discussed at the last meeting. Leadership Team are considering how this feedback can be addressed, with a focus on the feedback loop and how we can demonstrate that views have been taken into account, including giving further consideration to the role that examples and case studies could play.

## 6. Strategic finance update - LGBCE(25/26)046

The Director of Corporate Services presented the strategic finance update report and the Board noted its contents.

The report proposed the return of the £500,000 provision secured to support work on Local Government Reorganisation to HM Treasury in November, through the supplementary estimate process. This additional provision had been intended to ensure there was sufficient flexibility to add capacity or expertise, as and when required, to enable the Commission to respond positively and swiftly to requests for assistance. LGR-related activity has in fact been able to be accommodated within the Commission's existing core resources without the need to use this provision. This has been possible by making effective use of capacity within the review teams, created by a reduced review programme following the Commission's decision to pause activity in areas invited to submit proposals for new unitary authorities, and related savings in areas such as mapping.

### **Agreed**

The Commission Board approved the return of the £500,000 LGR provision by way of the supplementary estimate process.

## 7. AOB

There was no other business.