

LGBCE (25-26) 12th meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2026 at 09:30am

Thames Room, 7th Floor, 3 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8YZ

Commissioners present:

Bev Smith (Chair)

Amanda Nobbs OBE

Wallace Sampson OBE

Andrew Scallan CBE

Liz Treacy

Janet Waggott

LGBCE officers present

Ailsa Irvine

Rachel Barker

Bipon Bhakri

Alison Evison

Richard Buck

Hayley Meachin

Brendan Connell-French

Jonathan Ashby

Rafa Chowdhury

Chief Executive

Director of Reviews, Strategy and Engagement

Director of Corporate Services

Review and Programme Manager

Review Manager (attended by Teams)

Communications and Engagement Manager

Senior Review Officer

Senior Review Officer

Finance Lead (minutes)

Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of the LGBCE's meeting on 20 January 2026

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

There were no outstanding actions.

1. Chair's report

The Chair thanked Commissioners and staff for their warm welcome and for the comprehensive induction that had been provided.

The Chair updated the Board that she had received a welcome letter from Alison McGovern, Minister for Local Government and Homelessness, and that she was now in the process of arranging a meeting with her.

2. Operational report - LGBCE(25/26)064

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

- The Review Manager updated on an issue which had been identified with the Essex Amendment Order which meant that it had to be withdrawn and would not now be able to be made in time to take effect at the May 2026 elections. The Order will now be re-laid after the May elections, and in the interim the team are engaging with the affected local authority. The Board discussed the actions being taken to mitigate the risk of similar issues arising in the future, and noted the importance of engaging with Government Legal Department to seek assurances on their checking processes.

Agreed

The Board agreed to the proposed approach to the Isles of Scilly review set out in the report.

The Board agreed to the allocation of Lead Commissioners to reviews for the 2026/27 programme as set out in the report.

3. Somerset Final Recommendations - LGBCE(25/26)065

The review of Somerset Council had commenced on 15 October 2024.

At its meeting on 15 October 2024, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 96 and had subsequently, on 20 May 2025, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 210 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 3 two- and 90 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 Somerset Council as presented.

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

4. GLA constituency boundary review – LGBCE(25/26)066

The Review Manager presented the paper, outlining the key considerations relevant to the Commission in determining whether and when to undertake a review of the GLA constituencies. The Board also considered the functionality of the current legislative framework and the changes that could be made to support the Commission in carrying out any future reviews.

The Board were supportive of the recommendations in the paper and for early dialogue to begin with MHCLG on the legislative framework, with conversations with the GLA to follow at an appropriate point after that. Consideration of the future form of a GLA review should not wait until after the May 2028 elections, with preparatory work undertaken in 2027/28 to ensure that any subsequent review can be initiated in a timely manner.

Agreed

The Board agreed that the Commission should not undertake a review of the GLA constituencies in advance of the scheduled elections in May 2028, and that the position should be revisited after those elections.

The Board agreed to initiating discussions with MHCLG on the changes that could be made to the legislative framework to support the Commission in carrying out any future reviews.

5. 2025 staff survey – LGBCE(25/26)067

The Director of Corporate Services presented the annual staff survey results. The overall results remain strong, albeit with some areas where there have been dips in scores from the previous year, and the Leadership Team have been working to identify and take forward actions to address the feedback that has been provided.

The Board noted the context of change, both internally and externally, against which the survey had been undertaken. The Chief Executive provided some reflections on the themes emerging from the survey, including in relation to bullying and harassment, workload and change.

The Board discussed the survey findings and noted the Leadership Team's proposed areas of focus for the coming year. The Board EDI Champion offered support with any activity related to inclusion and fair treatment. The feedback relating to the Board directly was noted, and will be used to inform ways of working going forward.

6. Commission Board workplan

The Board noted the forward workplan. The Chief Executive highlighted that the digital strategy has been deferred to the April Board meeting.