

LGBCE (22-23)11 Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 15 November 2022, at 09:30am. All Commissioners and officers attended the meeting via Teams.

Commissioners Present

Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)

Peter Maddison QPM

Susan Johnson OBE

Amanda Nobbs OBE

Andrew Scallan CBE

Steve Robinson

LGBCE Officers Present:

Jolyon Jackson CBE

Chief Executive

Lynn Ingram

Director of Corporate Services

Glynn McDonald

Communications & Public Affairs Manager

Alison Evison

Review & Programme Manager

Richard Otterway

Review Manager

Tom Rutherford

Review Officer (item 5&6)

Ben Meredeen

Review Officer (item 7)

Rebecca Pritchard

Review Officer (item 8)

Paul Nizinskyj

Review Officer (item 9)

Angela Hendry

OM / HR Lead (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Richard Buck.

Declarations of interest

Susan Johnson declared an interest in item 2, paragraph 5 (Cambridgeshire) of the Operations Report and took no part in the discussion on that item.

Steve Robinson declared an interest in item 6, Shropshire Council Size and took no part in the discussion on that item.

Peter Maddison declared an interest in item 5, North Northamptonshire Council Size and item 3 Durham Council Size and took no part in the discussion on those items.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting including the Closed Session on 18 October 2022

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:

- Health & Safety was discussed by ARC at its meeting on 14 November 2022.
- Universities and electoral reviews planned for the November has been moved to the December meeting
- Health & Safety Incident Report was considered by ARC on 14 November 2022.
- The issue of late responses to consultations will be discussed by the Leadership Team in December.
- Council size and the effect on distribution/pattern will be discussed at the next EDI Working Group .
- There will be a presentation to the December Board meeting on the Assurance Framework.

1. Chair's Report

The Chair updated the Board on the progress for recruiting a replacement Commissioner.

The Chair reported on the successful policy session held the previous week with the Board and Leadership Team.

The Board noted the meeting of the UK's Boundary Commissions which will take place on 24 and 25 November 2022 in Cardiff.

It was noted that Cat Smith, MP for Lancaster has been appointed by the Speaker to speak on our behalf in Parliament. The Chair would write to her welcoming her to the role.

2. Operational Report – LGBCE (22/23) 099

The Chief Executive presented the Operational Report for October 2022, and the Commission noted its content.

- The Board noted the related alterations and consents. If needed, the Board agreed to consider related alterations out of committee between now and December. The work on related alterations would be included in the Annual Report and Accounts.
- The Board noted that Harlow council are considering changing their electoral cycle from thirds to 'all-out'. The Board agreed to ask the council to wait until final recommendations are published before they discuss their electoral cycle.
- The Board noted the complaint from Mole Valley and agreed to try to brief the MP.
- The Board agreed to delay the draft recommendations for Shropshire from April 2023 to May 2023.
- The Board agreed to write to the Leader of Fenland to confirm the Commission's approach to an electoral review of Cambridgeshire council.
- The Board agreed to remove Tower Hamlets from the electoral review programme as they no longer trigger an intervention.
- The Board confirmed its agreement that the Wychavon final recommendations and Order should reflect that there are 7 parish councillors representing Elmley Lovett parish.
- The Chair confirmed Steve Robinson as the Lead Commissioner for Bradford.

3. County Durham Council Size – LGBCE 100

Peter Maddison left the meeting and took no part in the discussion on this agenda item.

It had been agreed to review Durham Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 24 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent. 4 per cent had a variance greater than 20 per cent with one ward, Durham South being over 30 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 126 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 decrease by 28 from 126 to 98 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 98 members.

Agreed

The Board agreed that a council size of 98 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

Peter Maddison returned to the meeting.

4. Northumberland Council Size – LGBCE 101

It had been agreed to review Northumberland Council due to electoral imbalance . According to the latest available electoral figures, 26 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with one ward, Kitty Brewster being over 30 per cent. The current size of the Council is 67 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 67 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 67 members. The Board noted the request from the council for a single member division review and formally accepted it.

Agreed

The Board agreed that a council size of 67 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

That the review be conducted as a single-member division review

5. North Northamptonshire Council Size – LGBCE 102

Peter Maddison left the meeting and took no part in the discussion on this agenda item.

It had been agreed to review North Northamptonshire due to the establishment of it as a new authority. According to the latest available electoral figures, 15 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 78 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 decrease by 8 from 78 to 70 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 70 members.

Agreed

The Board agreed that a council size of 70 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

Peter Maddison returned to the meeting.

6. Shropshire Council Size – LGBCE 103

Steve Robinson left the meeting and took no part in the discussion on this agenda item.

It had been agreed to review Shropshire Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 27 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with two wards, Shifnal North, and Shifnal South & Cosford having variances of over 30 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 74 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 74 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 74 members. The Board noted the request from the council for a single member division review and formally accepted it.

Agreed

The Board agreed that a council size of 74 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

That the review be conducted as a single-member division review

Steve Robinson returned to the meeting.

7. Cannock Chase Draft Recommendations – LGBCE 104

The review of Cannock Chase Council had commenced on 15 March 2022. According to the latest available electoral figures, 20 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 15 March 2022, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 36 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-member wards in total.

The Board considered the recommendations in detail informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the advice of officers and the submissions received.

It agreed the Draft Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Draft Recommendations for Cannock Chase as presented.

8. Maidstone Final Recommendations – LGBCE 105

The review of Maidstone Council had commenced on 18 January 2022. According to the latest available electoral figures, 31 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 18 January 2022, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 48 and had subsequently, on 21 June 2022, agreed to move away from its original opinion on council size and agreed Draft Recommendations on a council size of 49 as this provided for better electoral equality.

Following publication, 68 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all of 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 8 three-, 11 two-, and 3 single-member wards in total.

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.

It agreed the Final Recommendations as presented.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Maidstone Council as presented.

Agreed

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

9. Slough Final Recommendations – LGBCE 106

The review of Slough Council had commenced on 20 January 2022. According to the latest available electoral figures, 13 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 20 January 2022, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 42 and had subsequently, on 21 June 2022, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 48 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all of 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 21 two-member wards in total.

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.

Agreed

Final Recommendations for Slough Council as presented.

Agreed

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

10. Dartford Related Alteration – LGBCE 107

The Board considered the content of the Dartford Related Alterations paper. It was minded to agree to the related alteration as the changes proposed would promote effective and convenient local government.

Agreed

The Board agreed to the making of an Order implementing the related alteration.

11. Middlesbrough Related Alteration – LGBCE 108

The Board considered the content of the Middlesbrough Related Alterations paper. It was minded to agree to the related alteration as the changes proposed would promote effective and convenient local government.

Agreed

The Board agreed to the making of an Order implementing the related alteration.

12. Ashford Related Alteration – LGBCE 109

The Board considered the content of the Ashford Related Alterations paper. It was minded to agree to the related alteration as the changes proposed would promote effective and convenient local government.

Agreed

The Board agreed to the making of an Order implementing the related alteration.

13. West Suffolk Related Alteration – LGBCE 110

The Board considered the content of the West Suffolk Related Alterations paper. It was minded to agree to the related alteration as the changes proposed would promote effective and convenient local government.

Agreed

The Board agreed to the making of an Order implementing the related alteration.

14. East Cambridgeshire Related Alteration – LGBCE (22/23) 111

The Board considered the content of the East Cambridgeshire Related Alterations paper. It was minded to agree to the related alteration as the changes proposed would promote effective and convenient local government.

Agreed

The Board agreed to the making of an Order implementing the related alteration.

15. Bassetlaw Related Alteration - LGBCE (22/23) 112

The Board considered the content of the Bassetlaw Related Alterations paper. It was minded to agree to the related alteration as the changes proposed would promote effective and convenient local government.

Agreed

The Board agreed to the making of an Order implementing the related alteration.

16. ARC Chair's Report

The Chair of the Audit & Committee highlighted key items from the meeting that took place on 14 November 2022.

- It was the first ARC meeting for the newly-appointed Independent Member.
- Discussion on annual training and the need for an organisational training plan. ARC discussed the need for a mix of face-to-face and virtual/online training and how the corporate days and all team policy sessions could be used for training.
- IT report which included the forthcoming tendering exercise for IT support provision.
- Discussed the Health & Safety Policy and the incident report.

- Discussed the Assurance Framework and a presentation will be given to the December Board meeting.
- Considered the internal audit reports.
- Discussed the update on the progress with implementation of the new website.

17. 1st Draft of Corporate Plan – LGBCE (22-23) 113

The Director of Corporate Services introduced the 1st Draft of the Corporate Plan.

The Board made some recommendations for amendments to the plan. Further work will be done on the plan and a final draft will be circulated to the Board in January 2023 for comments before coming to the January 2023 Board meeting for approval.

18. Website Update – LGBCE (22-23) 114

The Commission Board noted the Website Update report from the Communications and Public Affairs Manager.

- The report was presented to ARC on 14 November 2022. ARC raised a concern about the absence of a full project plan, and it was noted this was agreed at the start of the process. We expect to have a project plan shortly.
- It was noted that the risks flagged as amber were largely a reflection of where we are in the project.
- The Commission Board accepted the format of the report which will include milestones and progress as we move forward with the project.
- It was noted that the 'Go Live' date has been identified as 13 February 2023 and this builds in flexibility as the contract with the existing provider does not come to an end until 31 March 2023.

19. Risk Register – LGBCE (22-23) 115

The Governance and Compliance Lead introduced the report. Details regarding the Risk Management Group's November meeting were provided.

- 4A Failure to manage the budget including poor VfM, monitoring contracts, suppliers and services – This risk was last reviewed in May 2022 and there was no change to its current risk score of Unlikely/ Catastrophic / 4, or to its trend status of 'Stable'. Two actions were agreed by the RMG as set out in the report. The RMG increased the risk score to Possible / Catastrophic / 8 and to set the trend status to 'Rising'.
- 2B Review Programme resilience - This was last reviewed in April 2022 and there was no change to its current risk score or trend status. The RMG acknowledged that the review programme had entered a stable period, and the pressures that caused this risk to be added to the register had subsided but agreed to keep the risk on the risk register on a permanent basis.

- The Commission Board asked that we incorporate in the risk register, as appropriate, any issues relating to risk that we discuss at our policy sessions.
- It was noted that we need to consider periodically the longer-term external factors that can impact on our resilience. The RMG will consider the risk categories going forward.

Agreed

The Commission Board noted the report.

20. AOB

The Commission Board agreed that from January, there would be a pre-meeting of Commissioners from 08:30 to 09:30 with the Commission Board starting at 10:00. This will be initially for the first three months of 2023.

Close of Business