

## LGBCE (23-24) 6th Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 19 September 2023, at 10:00am. All Commissioners and officers attended the meeting via Teams.

### Commissioners Present

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

### LGBCE Officers Present:

Jolyon Jackson CBE	Chief Executive
Hayley Meachin	Communications & Engagement Manager
Alison Evison	Review & Programme Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Richard Otterway	Review Manager
Yemi Fagun	Review Officer (item 3)
Paul Kingsley	Review Officer (item 5)
Brendan Connell-French	Review Officer (item 6)
Paul Nizinskyj	Review Officer (item 7 & 8)
Mark Cooper	Review Officer (item 9)
Tom Rutherford	Review Officer (item 10)
Angela Hendry	Office Manager & HR Lead (minutes)

## Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Kathryn Trower and Wallace Sampson.

## Declarations of interest

The Chair declared an interest in item 4, Kirklees council size, and took no part in the discussion on that item.

Susan Johnson declared in interest in item 7, Sunderland draft recommendations, and took no part in the discussion on that item.

Steve Robinson declared an interest in item 10, Shropshire final recommendations, and took no part in the discussion on that item.

Amanda Nobbs declared in interest item 11, St Albans Related Alteration. and took no part in the discussion on that item.

## Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 15 August 2023

The minutes were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair subject to the following amendment:

- Susan Johnson to be listed as present for item 5, Gateshead council size.

## Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

- Availability of story maps for Commissioners to be followed up on a one-to-one basis.

## Actions from the previous Commission Board meeting

The following actions were reported on:

- Clarity on Corporate Plan Objectives is due in November 2023.
- Progression on Resilience & Retention has been deferred until after the relocation is determined.
- Value for money to be discussed in November 2023.
- Fees and Expenses Policy due in December 2023.

### 1. Chair's Report

The Chair informed the Board that Wallace Sampson has been appointed as Commissioner and will be attending the October Board meeting.

The Chair reported on the departure of Susan Johnson as Commissioner. He spoke about her considerable contributions and the meeting joined in expressing their appreciation for her work on the Board.

### 2. Operational Report – LGBCE (23-24)060

The Chief Executive presented the Operational Report for September, and the Board noted its content.

- The Commission was briefed on an issue with the new website in relation to the contact form. Messages had not been automatically forwarded to the reviews email inbox as envisaged and, consequently, those messages received via the contact form since the website went live in March had not been processed. These included 131 communications, 31 of which were

submissions associated with reviews and 1 was a FOI request. Others were more routine matters. A full report on the issue, and how it would be rectified, will be circulated to the Board and the Leadership Team were discussing the different ways that people can make submissions to us. The Board was assured that all the submissions concerned had been considered in detail and that none of the ones relating to completed reviews had raised proposals inconsistent with the final recommendations. Those relating to live reviews would now be fully included in our considerations and the FOI had already been resolved through a different route. It was agreed that ARC review the new website including value for money in early 2024.

- The Board agreed a one-month delay to the publication of the draft (and final) recommendations for Derbyshire.
- The Board agreed to delay consultation in North West Leicestershire, Breckland and Bromsgrove delayed in light of the the Policy & Crime Commissioner elections in May 2024.
- Stockton-on-Tees – The Commission Board were briefed on the changes to the audit process.
- It was noted that the Review Assistant Harry Latham is leaving the Commission and recruitment for his replacement will begin this week. The Board thanked Harry for his work at the Commission.

### 3. Canterbury Council Size – LGBCE (23-24)061

It had been agreed to review Canterbury Council given the high variances that exist.

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, it was minded to support a council size of 39 members.

#### **Agreed**

The Board agreed that a council size of 39 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

### 4. Kirklees Council Size – LGBCE (23-24)062

*The Chair, Colin Mellors, left the meeting and took no part in the discussion on this item. This item was chaired by the Deputy Chair, Andrew Scallan.*

It had been agreed to review Kirklees Council as part of the Periodic Electoral Review Programme. According to the latest available electoral figures, 13 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 69 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 69 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 69 members.

**Agreed**

The Board agreed that a council size of 69 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

*The Chair, Colin Mellors, returned to the meeting at the conclusion of this item.*

**5. South Tyneside Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (23-24)063**

The review of South Tyneside Council had commenced on 18 April 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 22 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 18 April 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 54 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 18 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 South Tyneside Council as presented.

**6. Gloucestershire Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (23-24)064**

The review of Gloucestershire Council had commenced on 21 March 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 32 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 21 March 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 55 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 55 single-member divisions 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 Gloucestershire Council as presented.

7. Sunderland Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (23-24)065

*Susan Johnson left the meeting and took no part in the discussion on this item.*

The review of Sunderland Council had commenced on 18 April 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 20 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 18 April 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 75 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 25 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 Sunderland Council as presented.

*Susan Johnson returned to meeting at the conclusion of this item.*

8. Oxfordshire Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (23-24)066

The review of Oxfordshire Council had commenced on 20 February 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 34 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 20 February 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 69 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 69 single-member divisions 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 Oxfordshire Council as presented.

9. Northumberland Final Recommendations – LGBCE (23-24)067

The review of Northumberland Council had commenced on 15 November 2022. According to the latest available electoral figures, 26 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent with one division being over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on 15 November 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 67 and had subsequently, on 18 April 2023, moved away from its minded to decision and agreed Draft Recommendations based on a council size of 69 since this allowed for a pattern of divisions that better reflected the statutory criteria..

Following publication, 214 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 69 single-member divisions 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 Northumberland Council as presented.

**Agreed**

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

10. Shropshire Final Recommendations – LGBCE (23-24)068

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

The review of Shropshire Council had commenced on 15 November 2022. According to the latest available electoral figures, 27 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent with three divisions being over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on 15 November 2022, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 74 and had subsequently, on 18 April 2023, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 209 submissions had been received commenting on the Draft Recommendations which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

The Review Officer had made amendments to the recommendations outlined in the long report and these amendments were shared as part of the presentation. The Board agreed them without amendment.

Taking all of the submissions into account, for the reasons highlighted in the team's report and the amendments reflected in the presentation, 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 2 two-, and 70 single-member divisions 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 Shropshire Council as presented.

### **Agreed**

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

*Steve Robinson returned to the meeting at the conclusion of this item.*

## 11. St Albans Related Alteration – LGBCE (23-24)069

*Amanda Nobbs left the meeting and took no part in the discussion on this item.*

The Board considered the content of the St Albans Council Related Alterations paper. It was minded to agree to the related alteration as the changes proposed would provide a clearer and more identifiable boundary in the area of Sandridge parish.

## **Agreed**

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

*Amanda Nobbs returned to the meeting at the conclusion of this item.*

### **12. Confirmation of ARC Rotation up to 31 July 2024 – LGBCE (23-24)-70**

The Chief Executive presented the report on Audit and Risk Committee membership to 31 July 2024 and the Board noted its content.

The Board agreed the proposal for ARC membership up to 31 July 2024, as set out in the report.

The Board agreed to review how ARC members and the ARC Chair are selected, and their terms of office.

### **13. Initial Review of Communications Channels – LGBCE (23-24)071**

The Communications and Engagement Manager presented the Initial review of communications channels, and the Commission Board noted its content.

The Board discussion raised the following points:

- Tone of voice and how we communicate to gain confidence of our audience is a really important strand of our work.
- Do we need to look at how we consult and our timelines for consulting. There may be a need to have tailored approaches for some local authorities.
- Social media such as Facebook and Twitter could be explored more as many people get information from their local authority through these channels.
- Need to communicate clearly to lay people. Include some narrative on what we do on maps.
- Need to ensure the work we do is achievable and sustainable and there is value for money in terms of outputs.
- Develop a work plan and report back every three months.
- Communications to be an agenda item for the policy session in February 2024.

The Board thanked the Communications and Engagement Manager for her report.

### **14. Future Business – LGBCE (21-22)072**

The Board noted the Future Business Plan.

**AOB**



There were no other items.

Close of Business