

LGBCE (23-24) 8 Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 14 November 2023, at 11:15am. 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:

Jolyon Jackson CBE	Chief Executive
Kathryn Trower	Interim Director of Corporate Services
Hayley Meachin	Communications & Engagement Manager
Alison Evison	Review & Programme Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Richard Otterway	Review Manager
Tom Rutherford	Review Officer (item 4)
Mark Cooper	Review Officer (item 5)
Jonny Ashby	Review Officer (item 6)
Paul Nizinskyj	Review Officer (item 7)
Dean Faccini	Governance & Compliance Lead (item 10)
Angela Hendry	HR Lead (minutes)

Apologies for Absence

There were none.

Declarations of interest

Alison Evison and Richard Otterway declared an interest in item 4, Essex Draft Recommendations, and took no part in the discussion on that item.

Wallace Sampson declared an interest in item 3, Wakefield Council Size, and item 5, Bradford Draft Recommendations, and took no part in the discussion on those items.

Colin Mellors declared an interest in item 5, Bradford Draft Recommendations, and took no part in the discussions of that item.

Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 17 October 2023

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:

- Clarity on Corporate Plan – The 1st Draft Corporate Plan is on the agenda.
- Progression on Resilience & Retention - This has been deferred until after the relocation is determined.
- Actions from the review undertaken by Sir Tony Redmond - Value for Money. The proposed session has now taken place and will be followed up over the coming period so that the immediate action is now complete.
- Fees and Expenses Policy – Due in December 2023.
- Review of website by ARC – Report to the February Commission Board meeting. Brief updates will be provided for December and January Board meetings on any immediate visible benefits from the website.
- Communication is on agenda for February 2024 Policy Session.

1. Chair's Report

The Chair reported on the handover that has begun with the new Chief Executive, Ailsa Irvine.

The Chair updated on the annual inter-commission meeting in a couple of weeks which will be attended by the Chair and Chief Executive. A brief report is being prepared for discussion at the event.

2. Operational Report - LGBCE(23/24)085

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

- The Commission Board was briefed about a request from Surrey Heath for an electoral review. The council had previously been reviewed in 2016-17. The Commission Board discussed the request and asked the Chief Executive to speak to the Chief Executive of Surrey Heath Council to elicit further details about request and to explain the review process and the basis on which they are undertaken. He would report back to the Board at the December meeting so that the Board could then make its decision about the request. Also,

Richard Buck would review the process of the previous review in order to assure the Board that the both the consultations and the evidence had been considered in accordance with the established framework.

- There is one FOI request, and our response will direct the requester to the information from our previous website which is held by the National Archives.
- A resignation has been received from Richard Otterway, Review Manager, and recruitment to the role will begin shortly. The new Chief Executive will chair the recruitment panel.
- The Commission Board noted the Chief Executive's external meetings.
- The Chief Executive reported that the Order for the Sheffield and Barnsley PABR has yet to be scheduled. There will be an update in the Operational Report to the Board at the December meeting.
- Lead Commissioner allocation of reviews – The Chair agreed Wallace Sampson as Lead Commissioner for Wirral.
- The Commissioner Induction process will be reviewed with input from Wallace Sampson.

3. Wakefield Council Size - LGBCE(23/24)086

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

It had been agreed to review Wakefield as part of the Periodic Electoral Review Programme. According to the latest available electoral figures, 6 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 63 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 63 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence, and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 63 members.

Agreed

The Board agreed that a council size of 63 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

Wallace Sampson returned to the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

4. Essex Draft Recommendations - LGBCE(23/24)087

Alison Evison and Richard Otterway left the meeting and took no part in the discussion on this item.

The review of Essex County Council had commenced on 21 March 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 30 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

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

At its meeting on 21 March 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 77. However, as a result of further consideration and, on the basis of the evidence, the Commission agreed to move away from its original opinion on council size and, instead, agreed to a council size of 78. This will provide for a division pattern that better meets the statutory criteria.

In preparing the draft scheme, the team had taken into consideration both the submissions it had received and the statutory criteria. 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 Essex County Council as presented.

Alison Evison and Richard Otterway returned to the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

5. Bradford Draft Recommendations - LGBCE(23/24)088

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

The review of Bradford Council had commenced on 20 June 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 23 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 20 June 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 90 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 30 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 Bradford Council as presented.

The Chair, Colin Mellors and Wallace Sampson returned to the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

6. County Durham Final Recommendations - LGBCE(23/24)089

The review of County Durham Council had commenced on 15 November 2022. According to the latest available electoral figures, 24 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent, 4 per cent had variances greater than 20 per cent. One division, Durham South, had an electoral variance of over 30 per cent.

At its meeting on 15 November 2022, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 98 and had subsequently, on 18 April 2023, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 300 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 9 three-, 29 two-, and 13 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 County Durham Council as presented.

Agreed

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

7. Dudley Final Recommendations - LGBCE(23/24)090

The review of Dudley Council had commenced on 13 December 2022. According to the latest available electoral figures, 4 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 13 December 2022, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 72 and had subsequently, on 20 June 2023, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 16 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 24 three-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 Dudley Council as presented.

Agreed

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

8. Cornwall Related Alteration - LGBCE(23/24)091

The Board considered the content of the Cornwall Council Related Alterations paper. It was minded to agree to the related alteration as the changes proposed would ensure coterminosity between the division boundaries and parish boundaries.

Agreed

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

9. Derbyshire Dales Related Alteration – LGBCE(23/24)092

The Board considered the content of the Derbyshire Dales Council Related Alterations paper. It was minded to agree to the related alteration as the changes proposed would ensure that ward boundaries match parish boundaries.

Agreed

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

10. Risk Register - LGBCE(23/24)083

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

- Risk 6A, Health & Safety – Fatality, injury or serious damage: This risk was last reviewed in October 2022 and no change was made to its score or trend status. The report includes a number of actions, and the risk will be reviewed again once the actions have been completed.
- Risk 1A, Order blocked in Parliament: This was last reviewed in January and no change was made to its score or trend status. The known risk, departure of Chief Executive, will be removed from the risk register due to the appointment of the new Chief Executive and the handover in place.
- The Commission Board agreed to sign off the Risk Register.

Agreed

The Commission Board noted the report and agreed to sign off the Risk Register.

11. 1st Draft Corporate Plan Update

The Interim DCS introduced the 1st Draft Corporate Plan Update and the Commission Board noted the refreshed version.

- The Leadership Team will consider a complete revamp when it is next due for review.
- Need to include references to value for money and evidence of working efficiently.
- It was suggested that, in terms of our work and the number of reviews started per year, we should explain that each review may take longer than a single financial year.
- It was also suggested that we show clarify the number of live reviews and highlight any workload implications.

12. Story Maps

The Review Manager, Richard Otterway, gave a verbal update and demonstration to the Commission Board on Story Maps and showed the two different options available to Commissioners to view the layer on maps. The Review Manager will follow up with Commissioners on a one-to-one basis.

13. Future Business

The Commission Board noted the Future Business document.

14. AOB

The Review Manager, Richard Buck, asked Lead Commissioners to complete the appropriate review evaluation forms. Review Officers will work more closely with Lead Commissioners on completing the review evaluation forms.

Close of Business