

LGBCE (24-25) 2nd meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2024 at 2:30pm
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
Kathryn Trower	Interim Director of Corporate Services (for item 1)
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Alison Evison	Review & Programme Manager
Hayley Meachin	Communications & Engagement Manager
Jonathan Ashby	Review Officer and Mapping Lead
Tom Rutherford	Review Officer and Review Process Lead
Mark Cooper	Review Officer (for item 4)
Yemi Fagun	Review Officer (for items 6 & 7)
Angela Hendry	HR Lead (minutes)

Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Declarations of interest

Amanda Nobbs and Jonathan Ashby declared an interest in item 2, Dacorum Council Size, and took no part in the discussion of that item.

Colin Mellors and Wallace Sampson noted their respective engagement in work across Yorkshire, as recorded on the register of interests.

Wallace Sampson declared an interest in item 5, Wakefield Draft Recommendations, and took no part in the discussion of that item.

Colin Mellors and Wallace Sampson declared an interest in item 6, Calderdale Draft Recommendations, and took no part in the discussion of that item.

Amanda Nobbs and Andrew Scallan declared an interest in item 7, Surrey Final Recommendations, and took no part in the discussion of that item.

Tom Rutherford declared an interest in item 8, Staffordshire Final Recommendations, and took no part in the discussion of that item.

1. Operational report

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

- North Warwickshire – it was noted that we continue to engage with the local authority on its electoral forecast. The Commission Board agreed the recommendation to delay the start of the initial consultation on warding patterns by one month.
- Hinkley & Bosworth – the Commission Board agreed to the recommendation that the decision on council size be delayed until October 2024.
- Thurrock – The Commission Board noted a letter from the Minister to the Council confirming the laying of an Order in Parliament changing its electoral cycle to whole council elections.
- Relocation – The Commission Board noted the progress that had been made in engaging with the Electoral Commission, and welcomed that we remain on track to have a signed agreement in place by the end of May 2024.

2. Dacorum Council Size - LGBCE(24/25)007

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

It had been agreed to review Dacorum Council given the time that had elapsed since the last review. According to the latest available electoral figures, 24 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 51 members.

Following receipt of information about future governance and representational arrangements, LGBCE officers considered that there was insufficient evidence to support the Council's proposal that the number of councillors increase by two to 53 members. LGBCE officers, in consultation with the lead Commissioner, therefore recommended that the council size remain at 51 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, was minded to support a council size of 51 members.

Agreed

The Board agreed that a council size of 51 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

Amanda Nobbs and Jonathan Ashby returned to the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

3. East Riding of Yorkshire Council Size - LGBCE(24/25)008

It had been agreed to review East Riding of Yorkshire Council given the time that had elapsed since the last review. According to the latest available electoral figures, 19 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 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, was minded to support a council size of 67 members.

Agreed

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

4. Barnsley Draft Recommendations - LGBCE(24/25)009

The review of Barnsley Council had commenced on 17 October 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 19 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 17 October 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 63 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 21 three-member wards.

The Board considered the recommendations in detail, informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the advice of officers and the submissions received, and was minded to support them.

Agreed

The Board agreed the Draft Recommendations for Barnsley Council as presented.

5. Wakefield Draft Recommendations – LGBCE(24/25)010

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

The review of Wakefield Council had commenced on 14 November 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 29 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 14 November 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 63 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 21 three-member wards.

The Board considered the recommendations in detail, informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the advice of officers and the submissions received, and was minded to support them.

Agreed

The Board agreed the Draft Recommendations for Wakefield Council as presented.

6. Calderdale Final Recommendations – LGBCE(24/25)011

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 Calderdale Council had commenced on 16 May 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, no wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 16 May 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 54 and had subsequently, on 17 October 2023, agreed Draft Recommendations.

Following publication, 95 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, it had been judged that there was insufficient evidence to change the Draft Recommendations and, therefore, they were proposed as the Final Recommendations for Calderdale Council.

The Final Recommendations proposed a pattern of 18 three-member wards.

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

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

7. Staffordshire Final Recommendations – LGBCE(24/25)012

Tom Rutherford left the meeting and took no part in the discussion on this item.

The review of Staffordshire County Council had commenced on 13 December 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 13 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 13 December 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 62 and had subsequently, on 18 July 2023, agreed Draft Recommendations.

At its meeting on 16 January 2024, the Board agreed to a period of further limited consultation focusing on the area of Lichfield, and agreed in principle the Final Recommendations for remaining areas of the county.

Following publication of the Further Draft Recommendations, 31 submissions had been received which had been considered carefully in the context of the statutory criteria.

Taking all the submissions into account, it had been judged that there was insufficient evidence to change the Further Draft Recommendations and, therefore, they were proposed as the Final Recommendations for the Lichfield area of Staffordshire County Council.

The Final Recommendations for Staffordshire County Council as a whole proposed a pattern of 62 single-member divisions .

The Board considered the Final Recommendations, informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the submissions received following publication of the Draft and Further Draft Recommendations, and was minded to agree them.

Agreed

The Board agreed the Final Recommendations for Staffordshire County Council as presented. The Board agreed to the laying of a draft Order before Parliament giving effect to its final recommendations for Staffordshire Council.

Tom Rutherford returned to the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

8. Surrey Final Recommendations – LGBCE(24/25)013

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

The review of Surrey County Council had commenced on 21 February 2023. According to the latest available electoral figures, 16 per cent of divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 21 February 2023, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 81 and had subsequently, on 18 July 2023, agreed Draft Recommendations.

At its meeting on 16 January 2024, the Board agreed to a period of further limited consultation focusing on the area of Elmbridge, and agreed in principle the Final Recommendations for remaining areas of the county.

Following publication of the Further Draft Recommendations, 44 submissions had been received 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 Further Draft Recommendations for Elmbridge and to move back to the original Draft Recommendations in this area, and these changes were reflected in the Final Recommendations put to the Board for consideration.

The Final Recommendations for Surrey County Council as a whole proposed a pattern of 81 single-member divisions.

The Board considered the Final Recommendations, informed by the statutory criteria and taking into account the submissions received following publication of the Draft and Further Draft Recommendations, and was minded to agree them.

Agreed

The Board agreed the Final Recommendations for Surrey County Council as presented.

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

Amanda Nobbs and Andrew Scallan returned to the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

9. Any other business

There was no other business.