

## LGBCE (24-25) 7th meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 August 2024 at 10:00am  
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
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Hayley Meachin	Communications and Engagement Manager
Jonathan Ashby	Review Officer and Mapping Lead
Paul Nizinskyj	Review Officer (for item 9)
Dean Faccini	Review Officer (for item 10)
Rafa Chowdhury	Finance Lead (minutes)

## Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Alison Evison and Tom Rutherford. Wallace Sampson had sent apologies for being unable to attend the start of the meeting.

## Declarations of interest

Colin Mellors and Wallace Sampson declared an interest in North Yorkshire council size, which was referenced in the operational report, and undertook to take no part in any discussions on that matter.

Wallace Sampson noted his engagement in work in Kent, as recorded on the register of interests.

## Minutes of the LGBCE's meetings on 16 July 2024 and 18 July 2024

An amendment was made to item 5, Qtr 1 Finance and KPI Report of the minutes of the 16 July meeting, to remove the words 'related to'.

The minutes of both meetings were agreed as a correct record, subject to the above amendment.

### Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

### Actions from previous Commission Board meetings

The Chief Executive provided an update on progress with the following:

- EDI statement – actions for completion before the wording can be updated have been identified, and the EDI group will review progress at their next meeting.
- Relocation (development of common wording) – wording is in development and will be finalised once relevant Electoral Commission colleagues have returned from summer holiday.
- BCE – potential dates for their attendance at the Board have been identified, and the Chair has issued an invitation to their Commissioners to attend either the November or December meeting.
- Relocation risks – the risks associated with the one-year licence to occupy have now been captured in the risk register, and so the action is complete.

### 1. Chair report

Two Commissioners have terms that will conclude in November next year, with the Chair's term also ending in December 2025. The Chair and Chief Executive have had initial discussions with MHCLG and the Speaker's Committee clerk on the recruitment processes.

The Chair noted the successful office move into our new premises in Bunhill Row which had taken place since the last meeting, and thanked the team for their hard work to enable this.

### 2. Operational report – LGBCE (24/25)052

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

- The review programme has been revised and updated further to the feedback provided at the last Board meeting. In order to facilitate the updated programme, an additional Board meeting will be required to be held between

the February and March Board meetings. Commissioners welcomed the circulation of updated timetables for their reviews and requested that a link to this information to be added to the Commissioners' site on SharePoint.

- The Colchester review is continuing to act as a test case for the trialling of different communications approaches, with some of these already being incorporated into our approach to other reviews, including a new-style press release which uses more straightforward language.
- Initial conversations have taken place with the agency that has been appointed to run the recruitment for a permanent Director of Corporate Services, and the advert has now gone live.

*Wallace Sampson joined the meeting.*

### 3. Portsmouth Council Size – LGBCE (24/25)053

It had been agreed to review Portsmouth Council given the time that had elapsed since the last review. According to the latest available electoral figures, 14 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 42 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 42 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, was minded to support a council size of 42 members.

#### **Agreed**

The Board agreed that a council size of 42 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

### 4. Southend-on-Sea Council Size – LGBCE (24/25)054

It had been agreed to review Southend-on-Sea Council given the time that had elapsed since the last review. According to the latest available electoral figures, 17 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 51 members.

Two submissions had been received: the Council itself proposed that the existing council size of 51 be retained; and the Conservative group on the Council proposed that the number be reduced by six, to 45 members.

The Board considered the evidence received about future governance and representational arrangements, and agreed that further information was required to support the making of a decision on the future council size for Southend-on-Sea.

This particularly related to a recent peer review of the authority which had been undertaken by the Local Government Association and the Council's action plan in response to the review.

### **Agreed**

The Board agreed that further information should be sought before agreeing the council size to be used as the basis for the preparation of Draft Recommendations.

## **5. Westmorland & Furness Council Size – LGBCE (24/25)055**

It had been agreed to review Westmorland & Furness Council as, according to the latest available electoral figures, 50 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent. Interim warding arrangements had been put in place in order to facilitate the establishment of the new authority.

The current size of the Council is 65 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 65 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, was minded to support a council size of 65 members.

### **Agreed**

The Board agreed that a council size of 65 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

## **6. Wirral Council Size – LGBCE (24/25)056**

It had been agreed to review Wirral Council given the time that had elapsed since the last review. According to the latest available electoral figures, 5 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 66 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 66 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, was minded to support a council size of 66 members.

### **Agreed**

The Board agreed that a council size of 66 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

## 7. North East Lincolnshire Council Size – LGBCE (24/25)057

It had been agreed to review North East Lincolnshire Council given the time that had elapsed since the last review. According to the latest available electoral figures, 27 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 42 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 42 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, was minded to support a council size of 42 members.

### **Agreed**

The Board agreed that a council size of 42 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

## 8. North West Leicestershire Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (24/25)058

The review of North West Leicestershire Council had commenced on 12 March 2024. According to the latest available electoral figures, 39 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 12 March 2024, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 38. However, as a result of further consideration and on the basis of the evidence, the team proposed that the Commission move away from its original opinion on council size and instead agree a council size of 39, which provides for a ward pattern that better reflects 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 Draft Recommendations proposed a pattern of 39 single-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 North West Leicestershire as presented.

## 9. Thanet Draft Recommendations – LGBCE (24/25)059

The review of Thanet Council had commenced on 12 March 2024. According to the latest available electoral figures, 13 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 12 March 2024, the Board had been minded to agree a council size of 42 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 3 three-, 16 two- and 1 single-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 Thanet as presented.

#### **10. Risk – LGBCE (24/25)060**

The Governance and Compliance Lead joined the meeting and presented the risk report for August.

- The Risk Management Group had completed a deep dive on two risks at its August meeting:
  - Risk 1C: Failure to gain support from Speaker's Committee – the risk score remained at Possible/Catastrophic/8.
  - Risk 2A: Operational resilience – the risk score remained at Possible/Major/6.
- The risks and associated mitigations in relation to LGBCE's annual licence to occupy have now been captured in the risk register.

#### **11. June ARC minutes – LGBCE (24/25)061**

The Commission Board noted the minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee's June meeting.

#### **12. ARC Chair's report (July meeting) – LGBCE (24/25)062**

The Chair of ARC gave an update on the Committee meeting which took place on 29 July 2024.

- The standing items on risk, the governance assurance framework, health & safety report and IT had been considered.
- The Committee discussed the team's proposal for an updated approach to how risk and governance assurance are considered by ARC and the Board,

and will return to the matter in November following discussions with the whole Board in the autumn.

- The Committee approved the driving at work policy and the ARC terms of reference.
- The key stages of activity to enable the Commission to have internal auditors in place for the start of the next financial year were considered.
- The draft internal audit report on the governance assurance framework was presented.

### 13. Any other business

There was no other business.