

## LGBCE (24-25) 8th meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2024 at 1:30pm in the Thames Room,  
7<sup>th</sup> Floor, 3 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8YZ

### 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
Alison Evison	Review & Programme Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Hayley Meachin	Communications and Engagement Manager
Jonathan Ashby	Review Officer and Mapping Lead
Tom Rutherford	Review Officer and Review Process Lead
Nicole Holt	Review Officer (for item 4)
Ram Avtaar	GIS & Data Officer (for item 6)
Dean Faccini	Governance & Compliance Lead (for item 8)
Rafa Chowdhury	Finance Lead (minutes)

### Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

### Declarations of interest

Colin Mellors and Wallace Sampson declared an interest in item 3, North Yorkshire Council Size, and took no part in the discussion of that item.

### Minutes of the LGBCE's meeting on 20 August 2024

The minutes were agreed as a correct record, and were signed by the Chair.

## Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

## Actions from previous Commission Board meetings

The following actions were reported on:

- EDI statement – progress is continuing, and a further update will be provided at the next Commission Board meeting.
- Relocation – The common wording has been finalised, and so the action has now been completed.
- BCE invitation to Commission Board meeting – the BCE Commissioners were unable to attend the November or December Board meetings. It was agreed that this would be followed up if/when the Commissioners' terms were renewed, which was expected to be confirmed in October.

### 1. Chair's report

The Chair recorded his thanks to the Chief Executive, Interim Director of Corporate Services and HR Lead for organising the Board/Leadership Team away day, and all those who took part.

The Chair reported on various meetings he and the Chief Executive have had with MHCLG to explore areas of mutual interest.

### 2. Operational report – LGBCE (24/25)062

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

- The Commission agreed to allow an extension to Cherwell for their council size submission, with the Board's consideration consequently moving from January 2025 to March 2025.
- The tendering exercise to source new internal auditors for the next four years has commenced. A draft invitation to tender document has been prepared and shared with the Independent Member of ARC for input. This is due to be finalised and issued by the end of the week.
- The Records Management Project will go live on 1 October 2024. An update on progress will be provided to ARC in November 2024.
- The Chair agreed that Andrew Scallan be the Lead Commissioner for Hyndburn.

### 3. North Yorkshire Council Size – LGBCE (24/25)063

*Colin Mellors and Wallace Sampson left the meeting and took no part in the discussion on this item, which was chaired by Andrew Scallan.*

It had been agreed to review North Yorkshire Council following its establishment as a unitary authority.

The current size of the Council is 90 members.

Five submissions had been received proposing council sizes ranging from 89 to 108 members. Following discussions with the Lead Commissioner, further information had been obtained from the Council relating to its devolution agenda with the parish tier.

The team had carefully considered the information provided in the submissions regarding the future governance and representational arrangements for the authority, as well as the further information relating to parish devolution. It was recommended by LGBCE officers that there was sufficient evidence to support a decrease in the size of the Council by 1, from 90 to 89 members, as proposed by North Yorkshire Council.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, was minded to support a council size of 89 members.

### **Agreed**

The Board agreed that a council size of 89 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

*Colin Mellors and Wallace Sampson returned to the meeting at the conclusion of this item.*

## **4. Southend Council Size – LGBCE (24/25)064**

It had been agreed to review Southend Council given the time that had elapsed since the last review. According to the latest available electoral figures, 12 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 proposed that the existing council size of 51 be retained and the Conservative Group proposed that the size of the Council be reduced by six, to 45 councillors. At its August 2024 meeting, the Board deferred a decision on this item to allow time to obtain further information about the recent LGA peer review of the authority.

The team had carefully considered the information provided in the submissions regarding the future governance and representational arrangements for the authority, as well as the further information obtained from the Council relating to the peer review. It was

recommended by LGBCE officers that there was sufficient evidence to retain the existing council size of 51, as proposed by the Council.

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.

## 5. Wiltshire Related Alterations – LGBCE (24/25)065

The Board considered the content of the Wiltshire 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.

## 6. 2025-26 Review Programme – LGBCE (24/25)066

The Commission Board was invited to agree the authorities proposed for inclusion in the 2025/26 review programme.

The team recommended including three intervention reviews in the 2025/26 programme at this stage: Stroud, Hastings and Rugby.

The team had also identified six authorities which it recommended for inclusion in the 2025/26 programme as periodic electoral reviews (PERs): Broadland, Bristol, Knowsley, Peterborough, Sheffield and Warrington.

This is in addition to the eight (PER) authorities already included in the Commission's 2025/26 programme, taking the total number at this stage to 17.

The team proposed populating the remainder of the 2025/26 programme later in 2024, to enable the final recommendations to take account of the discussions on the Commission's future approach to review programming which had taken place at the Board/Leadership Team away day on 17 September.

**Agreed**

The Commission Board agreed to include the above authorities in the 2025/26 review programme.

## 7. New Commission policies – LGBCE (24/25)067

The Board considered the draft new HR policies on dignity at work and hybrid working.

The Board supported the approach to hybrid working, and welcomed the commitment to revisit the policy after six months of operation, to take account of how it had worked in practice.

Board members proposed that the dignity at work policy be simplified and reorganised, before being brought back for approval.

### **Agreed**

The Commission Board approved the hybrid working policy.

## 8. Risk – LGBCE (24/25)068

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

- 1A: Order blocked in Parliament - To date, no order has been blocked in Parliament. The Risk Management Group considered that a more appropriate rating for the risk was Unlikely/Catastrophic, resulting in an overall risk score of 4.
- 2B: Failure to have a resilient workforce – No changes were made to the current risk score of Possible/Major.

## 9. Any other business

The Board will be asked for its availability for additional meeting slots for November and February/March to ensure there is sufficient time available for all business to be considered.