

LGBCE (24-25) 9th meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2024 at 10:00am
All Commissioners and officers attended the meeting via Teams

Commissioners present:

Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)
Amanda Nobbs OBE
Wallace Sampson OBE
Andrew Scallan CBE
Liz Treacy

LGBCE officers present:

Ailsa Irvine	Chief Executive
Kathryn Trower	Interim Director of Corporate Services
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
Ram Avtaar	GIS & Data Officer (for item 7)
Dean Faccini	Governance & Compliance Lead (for item 7)
Angela Hendry	HR Lead (minutes)

David Horne, the Independent Member of the Audit & Risk Committee, joined the meeting as an observer.

Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Steve Robinson.

Declarations of interest

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

Minutes of the LGBCE's meeting on 18 September 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 has been set out in the operational report, which also includes revised wording for the equalities statement for Commissioners to consider
- BCE – nothing further to update since last month

1. Chair's report

The Chair confirmed that representatives from the Commission will be attending the LGA conference.

The Chair reported that discussions are underway with MHCLG about succession planning.

The Chair proposed that the next Board effectiveness session be held on the Monday afternoon/evening prior to the February Board in-person meeting.

2. Operational report – LGBCE (24/25)069

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

- The Board agreed the request for an electoral review from Arun District Council, to be added to the 2025/26 programme.
- The Review Manager, Richard Buck, updated on progress with the Barnsley/Sheffield PABR Order, highlighting that the required debate in Parliament is planned for late-November. It is hoped that the Order will be signed by the Minister before the Christmas recess.
- The Board noted that the Commission's presentation to MHCLG colleagues on our work had been well-received.
- The Board noted the actions identified to fully embed our approach to EDI into the review process, and welcomed confirmation from the team of the timetable for completion of the actions, the majority of which will be in place by the next Board meeting. The Board agreed the updated wording for the equalities statement.
- The Chief Executive reported that four candidates have been shortlisted for the Director of Corporate Services role, with interviews taking place at the end of the month.

- The Board noted the awayday notes attached to the operational report.
- The Chair agreed the Lead Commissioners for the following reviews:
 - Amanda Nobbs – Maldon
 - Wallace Sampson - Broadland

3. Somerset Council Size – LGBCE (24/25)070

It had been agreed to review Somerset Council following the recent creation of the new unitary authority.

The current size of the Council is 110 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 decrease by 14, from 110 to 96 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, was minded to support a council size of 96 members. The Board also agreed to the request from the Council that this be a single-member division review.

Agreed

1. The Board agreed that a council size of 96 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.
2. The Board agreed to the Council's formal request that the review be conducted on the basis of securing a uniform pattern of single-member divisions.

4. Oadby & Wigston Council Size – LGBCE (24/25)071

It had been agreed to review Oadby & Wigston Council given the time that had elapsed since the last review. According to the latest available electoral figures, 20 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 26 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 26 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, was minded to support a council size of 26 members.

Agreed

The Board agreed that a council size of 26 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

5. Sevenoaks Council Size – LGBCE (24/25)072

It had been agreed to review Sevenoaks 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 54 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 decrease by 6, from 54 to 48 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, was minded to support a council size of 48 members.

Agreed

The Board agreed that a council size of 48 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

6. Shropshire Related Alteration – LGBCE (24/25)073

The Board considered the content of the Shropshire Council Related Alteration paper. It was minded to agree to the related alteration as the change proposed would either improve or have a neutral impact on electoral variances in the affected divisions. It would also aid effective and convenient local government, by providing for coterminous parish and division boundaries.

Agreed

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

7. Q2 performance report – LGBCE (24/25)074

The Chief Executive introduced the Q2 performance report, and provided an overview of the purpose of, and approach to, the new style reporting, incorporating KPI and financial reporting alongside other data and narrative, including reporting on performance against team plans.

The Interim Director of Corporate Services highlighted key points from the report, and the Board noted its content.

- The Board discussed the projected underspend of £88k and supported the proposals which had been put forward by the Leadership Team to proactively use this to progress other work.
- It was noted that the team plans underpinning the reporting are still being embedded and which, in time, should enable the report to focus more on strategic objectives rather than operational detail.
- On training spend, the Interim Director of Corporate Services confirmed that the identification of corporate training needs and the booking of courses had followed the end of year appraisal process in July, and that we should expect to see higher levels of spend emerge over the next quarter.

8. Any other business

There was no other business.