

## LGBCE (25-26) 13<sup>th</sup> meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2026 at 9:30am  
All Commissioners and officers attended the meeting via Teams.

### Commissioners present:

Bev Smith (Chair)  
Amanda Nobbs OBE  
Wallace Sampson OBE  
Andrew Scallan CBE  
Liz Treacy  
Janet Waggott

### LGBCE officers present

Ailsa Irvine	Chief Executive
Rachel Barker	Director of Reviews, Strategy and Engagement
Bipon Bhakri	Director of Corporate Services
Alison Evison	Review and Programme Manager
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Hayley Meachin	Communications and Engagement Manager
Brendan Connell-French	Senior Review Officer
Jonathan Ashby	Senior Review Officer
Mark Cooper	Review Officer (item 6)
Yemi Fagun	Review Officer (item 6)
Nicole Holt	Review Officer (item 6)
Paul Kingsley	Review Officer (item 6)
Paul Nizinskyj	Review Officer (item 6)
Tom Rutherford	Review Officer (item 6)
Dean Faccini	Governance and Compliance Lead (item 7)
Angela Hendry	HR Lead (minutes)

### Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

## Declarations of interest

Paul Kingsley declared an interest in relation to Cambridgeshire under item 6, and took no part in the discussion relating to that area.

Liz Treacy declared an interest in relation to Derbyshire and Derby under item 6, and took no part in the discussion relating to that area.

Nicole Holt declared an interest in relation to Devon, Plymouth and Torbay under item 6, and took no part in the discussion relating to that area.

Jonathan Ashby, Rachel Barker, Amanda Nobbs and Nicole Holt declared an interest in relation to Hertfordshire under item 6, and took no part in the discussion relating to that area.

Wallace Sampson declared an interest in relation to Kent and Medway under item 6, and took no part in the discussion relating to that area.

Bev Smith and Bipon Bhakri declared an interest in relation to Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland under item 6, and took no part in the discussion relating to that area.

Wallace Sampson and Bipon Bhakri declared an interest in Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Nottingham under item 6, and took no part in the discussion relating to those areas.

Hayley Meachin declared an interest in Oxfordshire under item 6, and took no part in the discussions relating to those areas.

Tom Rutherford declared an interest in Staffordshire under item 6, and took no part in the discussion relating to that area.

## Minutes of the LGBCE's meeting on 17 February 2026

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

There were no outstanding actions.

## 1. Chair's report

The Chair reported on the following:

- The session with the Speaker's Committee on 11 March 2026, which had focussed on our business plan and Main Supply Estimate as well as our role in relation to Local Government Reorganisation.
- The meeting with the Minister for Local Government and Homelessness, Alison McGovern, on 16 March, which was a positive introductory session. The intention is for this to be part of a regular programme of engagement, with the next meeting expected to take place before summer recess.
- The Inter Commissions dinner and meeting in Cardiff on 12 and 13 March, which had provided a good opportunity for engagement with colleagues from across the UK. The speakers were focused on communications and engagement, and the themes discussed aligned closely with our recent stakeholder research and will help to inform our emerging communications strategy.

## 2. Operational report - LGBCE(25/26)068

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

- In relation to a question on LGR and the observations on councillor numbers, it was noted that the same approach will be taken as for the previous tranche, with the moderation group considering the observations before the team finalise these and share them with MHCLG officials.
- On the issues relating to the Essex Amendment Order, there was an update on the contact that has been made with the local authority, including the offers to meet to discuss, with confirmation that a formal letter will be sent shortly.
- In response to a question on the 2025/2026 financial outturn, the background to the risk and resilience budget was discussed. It was noted that the underspend this year is largely due to changes to the work programme as a consequence of LGR, with the increase in underspend from Q3 being largely attributable to achieving value for money on project spend in relation to digital strategy and website.

## 3. Sheffield councillor numbers - LGBCE(25/26)069

It had been agreed to review Sheffield City Council as it met the criteria for an intervention review. According to the latest available electoral figures, 11 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 84 members.

Following receipt of information about future governance and representational arrangements, it was recommended by Commission officers that there was sufficient evidence to support the number of councillors remaining at 84 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, was minded to support the proposal that the Council be made up of 84 members.

The Board also considered the request from the Council to delay the initial consultation on warding patterns until after the elections scheduled for May 2026, and were content to agree to it.

### **Agreed**

The Board agreed that 84 councillors should be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

The Board agreed the Council's request for a delay to the initial consultation on warding patterns until after the May 2026 elections.

## **4. Dorset councillor numbers – LGBCE(25/26)070**

It had been agreed to review Dorset Council given the time that had elapsed since the last review. According to the latest available electoral figures, 31 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 82 members.

Following receipt of information about future governance and representational arrangements, it was recommended by Commission officers that there was sufficient evidence to support the number of councillors remaining at 82 members.

The Board considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, was minded to support the proposal that the Council be made up of 82 members.

### **Agreed**

The Board agreed that 82 councillors should be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

## **5. LGR consultation responses – LGBCE(25/26)071**

The Board discussed the Commission's approach to responding to the Government's consultations on the proposals for local government reorganisation in the devolved priority programme areas.

The Board considered consistency of approach and how the Commission's analysis of the available evidence had been presented. Further to a discussion on protected landscapes, Amanda Nobbs undertook to follow up with relevant officers with more

detailed feedback to help ensure the accuracy and consistency of our approach across all relevant areas.

The Board then considered the individual responses in turn, with the relevant Review Managers and Lead Commissioners providing summaries of the proposals and our observations on the available evidence.

A number of minor amendments were discussed and agreed to the responses relating to:

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- Derbyshire and Derby
- Kent and Medway
- Lancashire, Blackpool and Blackburn
- Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland

Subject to the agreed amendments being completed by the team, the Board were content to agree the LGR consultation responses for all areas and for those to be submitted to MHCLG ahead of the consultation deadline.

### **Agreed**

The Board agreed the LGR consultation responses for all areas, subject to the agreed amendments being addressed, and for these to be submitted to MHCLG ahead of the consultation deadline.

## **6. Strategic risk register – LGBCE(25/26)072**

The Governance and Compliance Lead presented the strategic risk register 2026/27 and the Board noted its content.

It was noted that further reviews of the strategic risk register will be informed by the Board's next consideration of risk appetite, which is scheduled for the autumn at the outset of the next year's business planning process.

In discussion on the cyber security risk, there was a suggestion that it could be expanded to move more explicitly beyond the likelihood and triggers of any such risk to more clearly address the recovery should the risk materialise, linked to organisational risk and business continuity.

### **Agreed**

The Board agreed the strategic risk register for 2026/2027 as presented.

## **7. ARC minutes – November 2025 – LGBCE(25/26)073**

The Director of Corporate Services presented the key highlights from the ARC November 2025 minutes, and the Board noted their content.

## 8. ARC Chair's report

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee provided an update on the meeting that took place on 23 February 2026 and highlighted the following key areas.

- Corporate manslaughter training is being organised for Board members, which will likely take place in July
- There was an update on IT performance and recent activity, including a discussion on the SharePoint project and Commissioner engagement in it
- There was a risk deep dive into strategic objective 2, focussed around the Commission's communications and engagement
- The Committee considered the draft ARC annual report to the Board
- On Internal Audit, the plan for this year is on track, and the Committee also discussed proposed areas of focus for 2026/27
- The Committee were updated on progress with annual report and accounts and preparations for the year-end audit by NAO
- It was noted that the business continuity policy will now be brought to ARC at the July meeting, following further work in this area by the team

The Chair of ARC was invited to include reflection on what has worked well over the past year and any areas that could be enhanced going forward, for consideration with the Committee's annual report to the Board.

## 9. Annual Report and Accounts: update

The Director of Corporate Services presented an update on the progress with the Annual Report and Accounts, and the Board noted the timetable for completion and laying in Parliament.

## 10. Commission Board workplan

The Chief Executive presented the updated workplan, including amendments to scheduling to reflect forward business and Commissioners' discussions on ways of working in February, and the Board noted its content.

The Board supported the approach set out in the workplan. Calendar invites will now be updated and issued accordingly. It was noted that the strategic awayday will take place in October, and Commissioners will be asked for their availability shortly in order that dates can be confirmed.

Further work will be done on the workplan for 2027/28 to explore the potential to move to a 6-weekly pattern of meetings.

## 11. AOB

In relation to the updated lines to take on EDI in council briefings, Commissioners were invited to give any feedback on how this has been working to the Board EDI and Customer Experience Champion.