The Local Government Boundary Commission for England

LGBCE (26-27) 3rd meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2026 at 9.30am

All Commissioners and officers attended the meeting via Teams

Commissioners present:
Bev Smith (Chair)
Dame Gillian Guy
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 (from item 4)
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Hayley Meachin	Communication and Engagement manager
Jonathan Ashby	Senior Review Officer
Brendan Connell-French	Senior Review Officer
Ben Russon	Review Assistant (item 2)
Mark Cooper	Review Officer (item 3)
Yemi Fagun	Review Officer (item 4)
Angela Hendry	HR Lead (minutes)

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Alison Evison for the first part of the meeting.

Declarations of interest

Hayley Meachin declared an interest in relation to Warrington under item 3, and took no part in the discussion relating to that area.

Andrew Scallan and Richard Buck declared an interest in relation to East Sussex under item 5, and took no part in the discussion relating to that area.

Minutes of the LGBCE's meeting on 19 May 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

Both actions were noted as being addressed within items on the agenda for this meeting.

Chair's report

The Chair reported on the following:

- Attendance at the Local Councils Network regional event in Nottingham, which had provided a good opportunity to engage with leaders and chief executives from across the region.
- Ongoing work with the Chief Executive on the Board forward plan and preparations for the July in-person meeting and autumn strategic away day.
- A meeting with the Good Governance Institute, an organisation that works with boards across the UK supporting continuous improvement and sharing best practice, to discuss a strategic stocktake and support for a Board effectiveness session in October.

1. Operational report - LGBCE(26/27)013

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

The Board noted the summary document included at appendix A, outlining priority communications activity for 2026–27, aligned with the business plan and budget and the previously agreed communications strategy.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- The Chief Executive highlighted that the completion of the Annual Report and Accounts (ARA) has been slightly delayed due to external audit assurance work on pension data, which is a sector-wide issue and not organisation-specific. The ARA is now progressing to sign-off and is expected to be laid one week later than planned (on 25 June instead of 19 June), still ahead of summer recess.

- In response to a question on key messages for the LGA conference, it was noted that a briefing pack is being prepared which will tailor the high-level messaging outlined in the communications strategy for the local government audience. A more detailed discussion on review specific messaging, drawing on research insights and user feedback, is scheduled for the July Board meeting.
- An update on logistics for the LGA conference will be circulated to those attending.

2. Bristol Draft Recommendations – LGBCE(26/27)014

The review of Bristol City Council had commenced on 18 November 2025. According to the latest available electoral figures, 21 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 18 November 2026, the Board had been minded to agree that the authority have 36 councillors and the Draft Recommendations being considered had been prepared on the basis of that number of councillors.

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 7 three-, 26 two-, and 3 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 agree them.

Agreed
The Board agreed the Draft Recommendations for Bristol City Council as presented.

3. Warrington Draft Recommendations - LGBCE(26/27)014

Hayley Meachin left the meeting and took no part in the discussion on this item.

The review of Warrington Council had commenced on 16 December 2026. According to the latest available electoral figures, 18 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 16 December 2026, the Board had been minded to agree that the authority have 60 councillors. However, as a result of further consideration and on the basis of the evidence received, the team proposed that the Commission move away from its original opinion and instead agree that the council have 61 members, as this allows for a warding pattern that retains the strong boundary of the Manchester Ship Canal for all wards that border it and overall 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 13 three- and 11 two-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 agree them.

Agreed
The Board agreed Draft Recommendations for Warrington Council as presented.

Hayley Meachin returned to the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

4. Knowsley Draft Recommendations – LGBCE(26/27)015

The review of Knowsley Council had commenced on 21 October 2025. According to the latest available electoral figures, 20 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent.

At its meeting on 21 October 2025, the Board had been minded to agree that the authority have 45 councillors and the Draft Recommendations being considered had been prepared on the basis of that number of councillors.

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 15 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 agree them.

Agreed
The Board agreed the Draft Recommendations for Knowsley Council as presented.

5. Local Government Reorganisation – East Sussex consultation – LGBCE(26/27)017

Andrew Scallan and Richard Buck left the meeting and took no part in the discussion on this item.

The Director of Reviews, Strategy and Engagement presented the Commission's response to MHCLG's latest consultation on Local Government Reorganisation in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove.

The Board agreed that, as there are no new boundary changes or additional evidence relating to the previously proposed boundary changes, the response to the previous consultation still stands in setting out the Commission's observations on the proposals for these areas.

Agreed
The Broad agreed the consultation letter for submission to MHCLG.

Richard Buck and Andrew Scallan returned to the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

6. Review programming – LGBCE(26/27)018

The Review and Programme Manager presented the review programming report and the Board noted its content.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- The reviews proposed for deferral would still see preparatory work commencing in 2026/27 and be implemented in the same year (2030), but would have their formal start moved back into the first part of 2027/28.
- The authorities proposed for deferral have not yet been informed of our intention to carry out electoral reviews, with this having been previously agreed to follow the May 2026 elections.
- The high turnover of councillors and the number of new members with limited experience of local government will need to be taken into account in how the Commission engages with authorities and supports their involvement in the review process.
- Assurance was sought as to how staff capacity created by a further reduction in the review programme is being utilised and in particular how the activities being undertaken now are contributing to developing capacity and capability to ensure we are as well-placed as possible for the future peak in review activity following from LGR. The Chief Executive updated on some of the work that the additional staff capacity will support, including the website redevelopment project and priority areas of communications activity.

Agreed
The Board agreed to confirm the inclusion of seven authorities in the 2026/27 programme: Isles of Scilly, Manchester, Doncaster, Bexley, Croydon, Kensington & Chelsea and Leeds.

The Board agreed to defer the Birmingham, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Southwark and Redbridge reviews to the 2027/28 programme.

7. ARC membership – LGBCE(26/27)019

The Director of Corporate Services presented the report on ARC membership and the Board noted its content.

Agreed
The Board agreed the following:

- The re-appointment of Liz Treacy as Chair of ARC from 1 October 2026 for the remainder of her current term as a Commissioner, to 16 March 2027
- The re-appointment of David Horne as Independent Member of ARC for two years, from 23 August 2026
- The appointment of Gillian Guy and Janet Waggott as members of ARC for a three year term, effective immediately

The Chair recorded her thanks to outgoing and current members for their contributions to the Committee.

8. Commission Board workplan

The Board noted the workplan, including the proposed dates for meetings in 2027/28.

It was noted that a Remuneration Committee meeting will take place in July, aligned to the Board meeting.