The Local Government Boundary Commission for England

LGBCE (26-27) 4th meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2026 at 9.30am

Thames Room, 7th Floor, 3 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8YZ

Commissioners present:
Bev Smith (Chair)
Dame Gillian Guy
Wallace Sampson OBE
Andrew Scallan CBE
Janet Waggott

LGBCE officers present:

Ailsa Irvine	Chief Executive
Rachel Barker	Director of Reviews, Strategy and Engagement
Bipon Bhakri	Director of Corporate Services
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Jonathan Ashby	Senior Review Officer
Brendan Connell-French	Senior Review Officer
Angela Hendry	HR Lead (minutes)

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Liz Treacy, Alison Evison and Hayley Meachin.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of the LGBCE's meeting on 16 June 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:

- Attendance at the LGA conference in Bournemouth, which had provided an excellent opportunity for engagement, particularly in relation to LGR and interim electoral arrangements. The Board recorded its thanks to the team involved in preparing for and supporting the event.

- The recent LGR announcements in relation to the tranche 3 authorities. The Board noted that those authorities will now be reminded of our offer to provide guidance and support as they develop their interim arrangements, and that work is also underway to determine what the decisions mean for our future work programme.

- Attendance at a session on stewardship in AI led by the Public Chairs Forum and Association of Chief Executives, which considered the role of Boards and Committees in overseeing AI. The Board supported a future session focussed around AI, considering from first principles what role it should play in the Commission, and addressing the ethics, possibilities and opportunities of AI alongside the existing skills and experience of Board members. The Digital Committee will consider further how and when this could be best delivered.

- The engagement of the Good Governance Institute to reflect on our current governance position and how we can learn from others to help us to continually improve. The Board and staff will have an opportunity to input to this work, with discussion on the findings forming part of the autumn strategic away days.

2. Operational report – LGBCE(26/27)020

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

There were two matters arising since the report was written:

- It was noted that we had provided the Speaker's Committee with a response to a Written Parliamentary Question relating to the guidance that we have provided in relation to interim electoral arrangements.

- On the Essex amendment order, it was noted that the order will now be laid in September, on the advice of the Government Legal Department, who are keen to seek further counsel's advice to help ensure the accuracy of the content.

On Lead Commissioner allocation, the Board suggested that in future these should take account of knowledge and experience within combined authority areas, while avoiding conflicts of interest. It was confirmed that notes of preliminary meetings with the chief executives of local authorities will be shared with the relevant Lead Commissioners.

Agreed

- The Board endorsed the approach to related alteration requests in the context of LGR as set out in the report.

- The Board approved the Chief Executive's signature of the licence to occupy for Bunhill Row for the period of 26 July 2026 to 25 July 2027 at a cost of £118,600 as set out in the report.

- The Board approved the updated Lead Commissioner allocations for the 2026/27 review programme as set out in the report.

3. Review messaging – LGBCE(26/27)021

The Director of Reviews, Strategy and Engagement presented the report, and the Board noted its content. The Board considered the proposed review messaging, which has been designed to support the communications strategy and aims to make the review process clearer, more accessible and easier for people to engage with.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- The Board noted the importance of ensuring messaging works for first-time users while still allowing for more detailed or technical information to be easily found by specialist users.
- It was suggested that further consideration is given to a supporting pillar explaining the outcomes people can expect from the review process.
- There was a suggestion to use graphics to bring the messaging to life.

Agreed

- The Board endorsed the approach to review messaging and the proposed next steps as set out in the report.

4. Q1 performance report - LGBCE(26/27)022

The Director of Corporate Services presented the Q1 performance report, and the Board noted its content.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- The Chief Executive updated on the current financial position and the work being undertaken by the Leadership Team to monitor and address the projected underspend. It was noted that there isn't currently any activity planned against the provision that was included for LGR. Further, it was confirmed that the work being considered as potential uses for the forecast underspend would support existing projects and priorities rather than creating new areas of activity, and that external support would be used where appropriate and to address capacity or skills shortages.
- The Board considered the purpose of the risk and resilience budget and the desirability of retaining equivalent provision for future financial years. It was agreed to return to this in November as part of the consideration of the budgeting assumptions to underpin the Main Supply Estimate for 2027-28.
- The Board welcomed the improved presentation of the report, and the inclusion of both cashable and non-cashable efficiencies.

5. KPIs/targets – LGBCE(26/27)023

The Director of Corporate Services presented the KPIs/targets paper and introduced the discussion.

The Board considered whether the current measures provide the right level of assurance of our progress against the strategic objectives. The discussion also explored what success looks like across each of the three strategic objectives, and how that could be translated into performance targets.

Further work will now be undertaken on defining what a high-quality review looks like, as well as on developing further proportionate measures to demonstrate our impact across the range of our activity. This work will inform the discussions at the autumn strategic away day sessions and the scheduled business planning items at the November and January Board meetings.

6. Commission Board workplan

The Board noted the Commission Board workplan. The addition of an extraordinary meeting on 8 September to agree the appointment of a supplier for the re-development of the website was highlighted.

Clarification was sought on the timing of in-person meetings over the coming year. It was noted that there will be one in-person meeting in the spring of 2027 and an in-person strategic meeting that autumn (in October), with the timing of the former to be confirmed.