

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### **ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of a meeting of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee held in the Wantsum Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 21 June 2011.

PRESENT: Mr G K Gibbens (Chairman), Mr J F London (Vice-Chairman), Mr A R Chell, Mr K A Ferrin, MBE, Mr M J Harrison, Mr T Prater, Mr M V Snelling and Mrs P A V Stockell

#### **UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

##### **1. Declarations of Interest on any items on this agenda**

*(Item 1)*

There were no interests declared by Members of the Committee in any item on the agenda.

##### **2. Minutes - 8 March 2010**

*(Item 2)*

(1) It was noted that this Committee should meet as soon as possible following the announcement of the recommendations concerning the review of Parliamentary boundaries in September 2011, to discuss any implications for the County's boundaries and electoral divisions.

(2) Mr Harrison asked the Committee not to lose sight of his request to review two-Member divisions.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

##### **3. Review of the County Election Arrangements and the County Returning Officer's Fee**

*(Item 3)*

(1) The Director of Governance and Law introduced the report, stating that over the previous 18 months he had overseen a rigorous examination of the various procedures and processes involved in the County Council elections, which had involved extensive consultation and negotiation with District/Borough Councils. He added that the elections function had transferred to his control from April 2011 as a result of the implementation of Change to Keep Succeeding and that his review had examined every aspect of the elections function, including funding of the elections and remuneration for those individuals most closely involved, with a view to achieving much more objectivity and Member-level control than had existed hitherto.

(2) There was a discussion about the legal position relating to the payment of election fees and expenses, with particular reference to the method of calculation and

authorisation of the fee for the County Returning Officer and the Deputy Returning Officers (paragraphs 1.5-1.6 and 2.1 of the report refer).

(3) Mr Prater proposed that the County Council should seek urgent advice on the recovery of the payments made to the County Returning Officers in 2005 and 2009, on the basis that they were not permitted in law. Other Members thought that it was more important to place the fee arrangements on a firmer footing going forward, than to seek to recover monies already paid in previous years, particularly as there was no suggestion at the time that the payments made were not lawful. Mr Prater's proposal was not seconded and fell.

(4) The Director of Governance and Law stated that the proposals contained in the report represented a proper way forward, not just in relation to the proposed amounts set out in KCC Scale of Fees, but also in relation to the role of this Committee in formally reviewing the fees and charges on an annual basis.

(5) Mr Ferrin stated that the Committee should accept the recommendations in the report, in case there was a by-election in the near future, but that further work needed to be done by the officers to establish the mechanism in each District/Borough Council in Kent for the Deputy Returning Officer (normally the Chief Executive) to be remunerated for his or her role at County Council elections. He also proposed that KCC should investigate alternative methods of running County Council elections as a matter of urgency.

After further discussion, it was:

Resolved: that (1) the proposed KCC Scale for 2011 as set out in Appendix 2 of the report be adopted and that it be reviewed annually by the Committee thereafter;

(2) the arrangements for the payments to Deputy Returning Officers be approved as set out in the table in paragraph 2.5;

(3) KCC staff undertaking duties in respect of KCC elections should have those duties embedded within the job descriptions and for these to be evaluated to reflect the additional duties, as described in paragraph 3.2;

(4) Officers be requested to contact all of the District/Borough Councils in Kent to establish whether the Chief Executives (or other officers) are remunerated separately for their role as Deputy Returning Officer for County Council elections and, if so, how and at what level; and

(5) Officers investigate alternative methods of running County Council elections and report back to this Committee at its next meeting.