

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 11 December 2017.

PRESENT: Mr G K Gibbens (Chairman), Mr A H T Bowles, Mrs P T Cole, Mr D Farrell (Substitute for Mr T Dhesi), Ida Linfield, Mr G Lymer (Substitute for Mrs P A V Stockell), Mr M D Payne and Miss C Rankin (Substitute for Mr P C Cooper)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr B Watts (General Counsel), Mr J Lynch (Head of Democratic Services), Ms L Adam (Scrutiny Research Officer) and Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

2. Membership

RESOLVED that Members note that Mrs Cole will fill the conservative vacancy on the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee.

3. Election of Vice-Chairman

(Item 2)

1. The Chairman asked for nominations for Vice-Chairman of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee.
2. Mrs Cole nominated Mr Bowles and Mr Payne seconded the nomination. No other nominations were received.

RESOLVED that Mr Bowles be duly elected as Vice-Chairman of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee.

4. Minutes

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 2 February 2017 and the 25 May 2017 be agreed as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

5. Review of 2017 Kent County Council Election

(Item 5)

1. Mr Watts introduced the report which set out the steps taken by the Council in the planning, provision and operation of the County Council election on 4 May 2017.
2. This had been Mr Watts' first election as County Returning Officer and he had worked closely with Deputy Returning Officers and Electoral Services Managers in the 12 District Councils and listened to feedback about the process in 2013 including what could work better and the areas which had worked well. Mr Watts

praised the tremendous work from colleagues in KCC and the District Councils and he had been ably supported by Ms Adam as Deputy Returning Officer (KCC). A meeting had been held after the election with the District Councils at which colleagues expressed satisfaction about how the election had been run. There was still work to be done but a plan was in place for the County Election in 2021. There was a need to develop resilience and succession planning and Ms Adam would be undertaking some training to develop her role of Deputy Returning Officer, this was particularly important since Mr Watts had, on occasion, found it challenging to discharge the duties of two statutory posts, County Returning Officer and Monitoring Officer.

3. The Chairman offered his sincere thanks to the elections team; he had not been made aware of any issues arising from the election. He asked for confirmation that the relevant officers would be remunerated for their work on the election and Mr Watts confirmed that this would be done.
4. A number of Members endorsed the comments of the Chairman and commended the focus on looking to the future and building extra resilience.
5. In response to a query from a Member about the increase in estimated costs from the election Mr Watts explained that the estimate tended to be higher than the final figure, this was also the case in 2013. There would be approximately a £200,000 increase in cost of the 2017 election compared to the 2013 election. This was in part due to the increased use of postal votes and the associated cost, the increase in scale of fees and increased electorate. Officers were satisfied that the returns were reasonable and queries were raised with the District Councils where necessary.
6. In response to a query about the 3 outstanding spending returns and declarations Members were reassured that none of the outstanding returns were from successful candidates and the Electoral Commission would now decide whether to take further action regarding the returns that had not yet been submitted.
7. A Member commended the arrangements made with regards to the nomination process.

RESOLVED that the Committee note and endorse the actions of the County Returning Officer in conducting the 2017 County Council election.

6. County Scale of Election Fees and Expenses 2018/19

(Item 6)

1. Mr Watts introduced the report which set out the County Scale of Election Fees and Expenses for KCC elections for 2018/19. The Scale of Fees would be uplifted annually using the average NJC pay award for local government which was expected in February/March 2018.

RESOLVED that the Committee approve the uplifting of County Scale of Fees and Expenses, by the average NJC pay award for local government in 2018/19, for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

7. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council - Community Governance Review
(Item 7)

1. Ms Adam introduced this report which was for information only. Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council had conducted a Community Governance Review of parish electoral boundaries. A minor amendment to County division boundaries was made to ensure they were coterminous with the new parish boundary. This change to KCC's boundary did not affect any electors or residential properties and would come into effect for the 2021 County Council election.
2. Rather than convene a special meeting of the Electoral and Boundary Committee Members had previously considered and approved the recommendation via email.
3. In response to a question Ms Adam confirmed that if there was a Community Governance Review which affected KCC boundaries it would be reported to the Electoral and Boundary Committee.

RESOLVED that the Committee note the alternations to the boundaries of the county electoral divisions of Malling Central and Malling Rural East which will come into effect on the day of the next County Council election in 2021.