

SELECTION AND MEMBER SERVICES COMMITTEE

Thursday, 25th November, 2021

2.30 pm

**Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall,
Maidstone**





AGENDA

SELECTION AND MEMBER SERVICES COMMITTEE

Thursday, 25 November 2021, at 2.30 pm Ask for: **Andrew Tait**
Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Telephone: **03000 416749**
Hall, Maidstone

Membership (8)

Conservative (5): Mr N J Collor (Chairman), Mr M C Dance, Mr R W Gough,
Mr C Simkins and Mr B J Sweetland

Labour (1): Dr L Sullivan

Liberal Democrat (1): Mr A J Hook

Green and Mr Lehmann
Independent (1):

Webcasting Notice

Please note: this meeting may be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's internet site or by any member of the public or press present. The Chairman will confirm if all or part of the meeting is to be filmed by the Council.

By entering the meeting room you are consenting to being filmed. If you do not wish to have your image captured please let the Clerk know immediately.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)

- 1 Substitutes
- 2 Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this meeting.
- 3 Minutes - 28 October 2021 (Pages 1 - 4)
- 4 Member KNet Pages (Pages 5 - 8)
- 5 Member Remuneration Panel Report -- Matters Arising (Pages 9 - 14)

- 6 Update from the Monitoring Officer
- 7 Other items which the Chairman decides are Urgent

EXEMPT ITEMS

(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)

Benjamin Watts
General Counsel
03000 416814

Wednesday, 17 November 2021

This page is intentionally left blank

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SELECTION AND MEMBER SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Selection and Member Services Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 28 October 2021.

PRESENT: Mr N J Collor (Chairman), Mr M C Dance, Mr R W Gough, Mr A J Hook, Mr Lehmann, Dr L Sullivan and Mr B J Sweetland

ALSO PRESENT: Mr G Cooke and Mr P J Oakford

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr B Watts (General Counsel), Mr T Godfrey (Scrutiny Research Officer) and Mr A Tait (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**16. Minutes - 2 September 2021**

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2021 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

17. Member Induction Survey

(Item 4)

(1) The General Counsel introduced the report by saying that 15 Members had responded to the Member Induction Survey. Of these, 12 had been newly-elected. The induction process adopted after the May 2021 elections had needed to take account of the restrictions still in place in response to Covid-19. The survey had therefore been immensely valuable as it would enable officers to prepare the induction process for 2025 when it was hoped that there would no longer be any restrictions.

(2) In response to Members' comments, the General Counsel said that training on the Kent Code in respect of Member behaviours would be provided following discussions within the Standards Committee as part of a series of training events over the next few months.

(3) Members of the Committee commented that the mentoring of new Members was clearly recognised as being beneficial and that an approach to this needed to be embedded to ensure that it happened in 2025. A start could be made by identifying experienced Members who, subject to being returned at the next election, would be willing to make themselves available. The General Counsel replied that some mentoring would be political in nature and would be most appropriately carried out within the political groups. New Members also needed to be made aware of who they should contact for assistance with an enquiry on behalf of their constituents or a more general request for information. He suggested that a paper on the mentoring of new

Members be prepared in a year's time setting out a proposal for the Committee's consideration.

(4) Members commented that due to the restrictions in place following the elections, new Members had not had the opportunity to meet and get to know their colleagues and officers.

(5) It was suggested that the LGA provided a mentoring scheme which the General Counsel could formally seek to access. Further surveys on Member induction and development could be made prominently available at meetings of the County Council once a year to ascertain whether Members felt confident that they were able to contribute to the debate within and the work of the Council. This should include equalities - related questions.

(6) In response to Members' comments, the General Counsel agreed that he would ask a project team within Governance, Law and Democracy (GLD) to consider how best to provide information to Members that had previously been contained in the Members Diary. This should include the identification of relevant officers and a general indication of how Teams within the Directorates fitted together. He also undertook to communicate the views expressed on the need for easily accessible information to the inter-Directorate Team whose role was to consider the information provided in the Members' section of KNET. A future meeting of the Committee would be invited to consider a report on Member information communication issues once the GLD project team had completed its work. He agreed the project team's work would involve those Members who wished to contribute.

(7) Members noted that there was usually a Showcase Day following the elections with a mid-term refresher. This had not taken place due to the pandemic. Something similar could be provided in the Spring of 2022. The General Counsel replied that some of the ideas which had informed the cancelled Member Development Conference in April 2020 could be revisited and that this matter would be considered by the GLD project team.

(8) The Committee agreed that the Minutes of the meeting would record its thanks to Mrs Jill Kennedy-Smith and the Member Hub Team for their work in arranging Member training under the most trying of circumstances.

(9) RESOLVED that: -

- (a) the report be noted together with the outcome of the discussion summarised above;
- (b) the Member Development Sub-Committee be requested to take the report's findings into account when considering future induction periods; and
- (c) Mrs Jill Kennedy-Smith and the Member Hub Team be thanked for their work in arranging Member training under the most trying of circumstances.

18. Monitoring Officer's Update - Oral report *(Item 5)*

(1) The General Counsel introduced his report in his capacity as KCC's Monitoring Officer. He said that since the agenda papers had been published, Mr Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had expressed the strong view that virtual meetings could be part of the way in which Councils could conduct their business.

(2) The General Counsel continued by reminding the Committee that he had written to the Secretary of State on behalf of KCC in November 2020 setting out the view that decisions on whether a Council's meetings were held physically or virtually should most appropriately be taken by the Council itself.

(3) The General Counsel asked whether the Committee wished him to write again to the Secretary of State in the light of his recent statement, re-iterating the County Council's view.

(4) Mr Gough said whilst recognising that different Members held different opinions on the question of whether meetings should be virtual or physical, the course of action proposed would find widespread agreement from everyone as, if the necessary legislation were to come into force, it would enable KCC to take its own decisions on a case-by-case basis. The potential value of allowing Members to join a meeting virtually had been underlined during the recent fuel crisis.

(5) Mr Sweetland said that some Members, especially those with underlying health concerns, would find it easier to attend virtually. In addition, those who were self-isolating during the pandemic would be able to participate.

(6) The Committee then discussed arrangements for the County Council meeting on 4 November. Dr Sullivan noted that there would be some 90 people taking part in the County Council meeting in the Chamber and asked whether the requirement for Members to be physically present in order to vote could be interpreted in such a way that their presence in County Hall would suffice provided that they were in the Chamber when votes were cast.

(7) The General Counsel replied that this was one of the possibilities that was being considered. He would be holding conversations with each of the Group Leaders and other Members. It was his role to ensure that every elected Member was able to participate legally and without concern for their personal safety.

(8) In response to a question from Mr Cooke, the General Counsel agreed to consider any issues arising from changes to the arrangements for Lateral Flow Tests and to include his findings in the note to all Members before the County Council meeting.

(8) Mr Hook suggested that speakers should be allowed to remain in a sitting position during County Council meetings rather than standing up, as was usually the case. This would partially mitigate the risk of spreading the virus.

(9) The General Counsel explained that Corporate Directors would be in the building but not the Chamber during the County Council meeting. This, taken together with those Members who sent their apologies, would free up space in the

Chamber and enable the seating plan to be arranged so that Members were not crammed together during the meeting.

(10) The General Counsel replied to a question from Mr Lehmann by saying that he would investigate with the Director of Public Health whether it would be possible to make Lateral Flow tests available at an earlier time on the day of the County Council meeting.

(11) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the General Counsel be requested to write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities re-iterating KCC's views on meeting arrangements for the County Council, its Committees and Sub-Committees; and
- (b) the comments made by Members of the Committee on arrangements for the County Council meeting on 4 November be noted.

From: Ben Watts, General Counsel
To: Selection and Member Services Committee, 25 November 2021
Subject: Member KNet Pages
Status: Unrestricted

1. Introduction

- a) Following the discussion at this Committee on 28 October 2021 the Member KNet pages were reviewed to identify where there were gaps in the content currently published.

2. The Current Member KNet Pages

- a) In February 2021 a Member KNet editorial team was created and a redevelopment of the Member KNet pages was started in preparation for the induction of new Members in May 2021. In the months since the content on the Member KNet pages has been regularly updated, and new features have been added to the pages.
- b) One of the new features is a Members' Video Area and Presentation Library which contain the recordings of training, induction and briefing sessions, and the slides from briefings respectively. Links to these two areas can be found on the 'Resources' panel beneath the carousel of news stories on the Member KNet Page. The carousel is updated on a weekly basis to ensure the stories on rotation are relevant and up to date.
- c) On the right of the carousel, there are 9 tiles: Useful Contacts; Expenses; Useful Documents; Committee Calendar; Committees; KCC Consultations; Emergency Planning; The Information Point; and Member Development.
- d) Some of these tiles automatically redirect to a page outside of KNet which cannot be updated by the Member KNet editorial team. These are:
- Committee Calendar, which redirects to the modern.gov calendar which holds all formal and informal meetings, training sessions, and other relevant events.
 - KCC Consultations, which redirects to the Let's Talk Kent page which hosts all open consultations and consultation reports.
 - Member Development, which redirects to Delta, KCC's e-learning platform.
- e) The remaining tiles go through to a page hosted on KNet which contains further information on the topic. These tiles have been the focus of recent updates.

- The Useful Contacts page has been updated to include a section titled Useful Contacts by Directorate which contains a contact list for each directorate. These lists will be refreshed periodically.
- Useful Documents contains general information, as well as specific documents relating to IT Support, Member Grants, and most recently, information relating to Highways, Transport and Waste.
- The Expenses page contains all the information needed to submit an expenses claim.
- The Committees page has recently been created and contains direct links to the detail pages for each committee on the external KCC website.
- The Information Point page contains further information on the service they can provide.
- The Emergency Planning page gives an overview of KCC's role in emergency planning and contains contact information and KCC's emergency plans.

3. KNet content requests from Selection and Member Services

- a) The discussion at the previous Selection and Member Services Committee provided helpful feedback on the content that would be useful to have on KNet.
- b) The content requested fell into the following categories:
 - Contact information for officers:
 - An organogram to help locate the correct officer.
 - Signposting to website pages to find required information.
 - Other information previously included in the Member Handbook.
 - FAQs.
 - Recordings of training and induction sessions.
- c) Other discussions within Selection and Member Services around induction could also tie in with Member KNet in the future, such as mentoring - where KNet could be used as a hub for Members to register their interest in mentoring in the future, and for new Members to register their interest in being mentored.

4. KNet updates in progress

- a) Having reviewed the Member KNet pages and the previous Member Handbooks in view of the feedback provided, the following steps have been identified:
 - i. Where the requested information is not on the Member KNet pages currently but is available elsewhere on KNet, links will be added to the relevant sections of the Member KNet pages to signpost to it.
 - ii. Where the information is not currently on KNet at all, the content will be drafted and added to KNet in the coming weeks.

- b) A new Committees page has been created, which links to the webpages containing the contact information of each Committee's Chair and Democratic Services Support Officer, to replicate the information that was in the Member Handbook. In signposting to the pages rather than duplicating the information on KNet, this will reduce the likelihood of Members being provided out of date information.
- c) In the Useful Documents page, a Policies section has been added to provide links to the different sections of the Strategy and Policy register to make it easier to find policy and guidance documents. By providing a link to the Strategy and Policy register, rather than hosting the policies in the Member KNet pages, Members will always be directed to the most up to date version of the policy.
- d) The first document in a planned collection of Frequently Asked Questions, based on those in the Member Handbook, has been uploaded to KNet.

5. Future development of the Member KNet pages

- a) To continue the development of the Member KNet pages it is proposed that the Member KNet editorial team hold workshops with interested Members to gather further feedback on the KNet pages as they are and maximise the benefit of future development as a resource for Members to use, as well as a helpful induction resource for new Members.
- b) An MS Form has been created for Members to register their interest in taking part in these workshops. The Form is available here: <https://forms.office.com/r/T8gksZtKwA> and will automatically record your name. Alternatively, Members can register their interest by emailing member.enquiries@kent.gov.uk.

6. Recommendations

The Selection and Member Services Committee is asked to:

- a) Consider and note the report; and
- b) Agree that the information about registering interest in the KNet workshops be circulated to all Members.

7. Background Documents

None.

8. Report Author and Relevant Director

Ben Watts, General Counsel
03000 416814
benjamin.watts@kent.gov.uk

Siân Connelly, GLD Delivery Officer
03000418793
sian.connelly@kent.gov.uk

From: Ben Watts, General Counsel

To: Selection and Member Services Committee, 25 November 2021

Subject: Member Remuneration Panel Report – Matter Arising

Status: Unrestricted

1. Introduction

- a) On 4 November, County Council agreed its Members Allowances Scheme for 2021-25. As per the regulations, Members had before them a report of the independent Member Remuneration Panel (MRP). The MRP recommendations focused mainly on the detail of the Members Allowances Scheme. However, several issues came up during their work that they wished to draw to Members' attention and to ask the Members consider them.
- b) Along with agreeing matters directly related to the Members Allowances Scheme, County Council also agreed the following recommendations of relevance to this Committee¹:
- That Member attendance at meetings will be tabulated and published as soon as is practical;
 - That the Selection and Member Services Committee be asked to consider whether there is anything in how we operate which militates against a more diverse membership; and
 - That the Selection and Member Services Committee also be asked to consider what additional information could be published to give a more accurate picture of Member contribution as well as how to better promote the Dependents' Carers' Allowance.
- c) The Appendix to this report contains extracts from the MRP report most relevant to the above recommendations.
- d) The first one, on publishing Member attendance at meetings, is being progressed by staff in GLD. Practice in this regard varies across Councils and it is generally accepted that there is not a direct correlation between meeting attendance and the value of the work of an individual Member.

2. Diversity

- a) The relevant extracts from the MRP report, pages 6 and 26, are as follows:

- Diversity – Greater ambitions for More Diverse Representation.** Our analysis of Kent demographics compared to the KCC Member population shows that the Kent population is significantly under-represented in terms of female participation, under-represented in the under-49 years age group and over-represented in the 65+ age group. Notwithstanding the efforts already in play to pursue equality and diversity objectives, the Panel believe it is in the interest of the electorate to be served by KCC Members more broadly aligned with the Kent population than is currently the case. The Panel feel these areas may therefore benefit from more focussed attention and recommend the Council consider establishing a dedicated ‘Lead Member’ role for Diversity to champion ambitions for Equality and Diversity, with a strong focus on creating a more inclusive working culture amongst Members. Whilst there is a view that better diversity is not necessarily within the control of Members, creating a more inclusive working environment, which encourages input from all Members at times and places to better suit those with for example family commitments and employment, will lead to better diversity longer term. Alternatively, we recommend the Council consider a Cabinet Member be given specific accountability for these initiatives and that this role be written into the Cabinet portfolio chosen. **(Detailed rationale provided on page 26)**

DIVERSITY - GREATER AMBITIONS FOR MORE DIVERSE REPRESENTATION

The following overviews a comparison of Kent county-wide demographic compared to that of Kent County Council Member. Dimensions of diversity used have been based on information in the public domain and therefore is limited on some aspects including gender definitions, sexual orientation, disabilities and religion. The following table shows the comparison covering age and gender*.

DIVERSITY PROFILE - KENT POPULATION V KCC MEMBERS (Percentages)								
POPULATION (18 Years +)	AGE			GENDER IDENTITY		ETHNICITY		DISABILITY
	UNDER 49	50 - 64	65+	MALE	FEMALE	WHITE	BLACK / MINORITY	
KENT GENERAL PUBLIC	48.3	25.6	26.2	49	51	93.7	6.3	
KCC MEMBER POPULATION	11.3	36.3	52.5	74	26			

The average age of Kent population (all ages) is 41.2. The average age of KCC Members is 63.5 (as at March 16, 2020)

The table shows the Kent population is significantly under – represented in terms of female participation and younger age groups. We feel it is in the interest of the Kent electorate to have the elected Member population as closely aligned with the general population demographic to ensure:

- The interests of all demographic groups in Kent are well represented and Members with first-hand experience of needs and concerns of various groups can provide informed contribution to Council activity
- KCC accesses and fully leverages the talent and experience present in all demographic groups
- Both the letter and the spirit of KCC’s Equality and Diversity policy principles are fully enacted

We note efforts already in play in various council activities to pursue equality and diversity objectives. However, whilst the Council’s policy emphasises equality and diversity issues are the responsibility of all Members, the KCC Constitution does not appear to make it clear which Cabinet portfolio takes the lead in co-ordinating effort and resource in this complex area.

We therefore recommend the Council consider establishing a dedicated ‘Lead Member’ role for Diversity to champion ambitions for Equality and Diversity and ensure focus and attention on these wide-ranging issues. We would envisage that a key accountability of the role would be to embed behaviours to promote a more inclusive culture amongst Members in their day-to-day activities to help attract and retain a more diverse Member profile and ensure that contribution is encouraged, respected and valued from such a diverse profile.

Illustratively, pending fuller evaluation, we have included an SRA for this role of £22,798 in our costings, equivalent to that of the Lead Member for Partnerships, (see table, page 28) to show that, inclusive of this SRA level, our overall proposals achieve a cost reduction.

Alternatively, the Council may wish to consider giving specific accountability for co-ordinating Equality and Diversity issues to a Cabinet Member and ensure that this role be written into the Cabinet portfolio chosen. Arguably this could be within the remit of the Cabinet Member for Communications, Engagement and People.

*Population data derived from: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/population-and-census#tab-1>

*Age data derived from: https://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0019/14725/Mid-year-population-estimates-age-and-gender.pdf

3. Transparency

a) The relevant extracts from the MRP report, pages 6 and 27, are as follows:

- **Transparency Issues.** We consider it important that KCC is as transparent as possible with information it maintains regarding Member workload - particularly in relation to attending formal Council meetings. Though this in no way reflects the total contribution Members make, it is information that should be available to the public in an easily accessible format. Our benchmarking indicates that KCC is out of step in terms of making attendance information available to the public.
Given this information is already held by KCC but is simply not displayed, we recommend that KCC website is updated to include this information. **(Further details provided on page 27)**

TRANSPARENCY ISSUES

One of the considerations of the Panel has been the matter of Member workload. Throughout our discussions and interviews we have considered the actual time that elected Members spend on their duties, whether they hold positions of special responsibility or not.

Though Member workload has an inherent form of recognition through Special Responsibility Allowances, this obviously does not apply to Members who do not hold such roles. A backbench Member could be one of the most active on the authority, but this is not measured or acknowledged in any particular way within the Allowances scheme.

However, we recognise Member workload is challenging to quantify in this respect, given the various elements that can comprise core Member duties - from attending formal Council meetings, to meeting with residents, organisations and dealing with casework. It is not possible, nor indeed practicable, to adopt a policy which would directly link Allowances to such a complex web of duties and responsibilities.

However, we do consider it important that the authority is as transparent with the information it does maintain about Member workload - particularly in relation to attending formal Council meetings. Though this in no way reflects the total contribution Members make, it is information that should be available to the public in an easily accessible format. During the course of benchmarking information between other authorities and Kent, it became apparent that the authority is out of step in terms of making attendance information available to the public.

Out of the 12 districts/borough councils in Kent, 10 provide clearly tabulated information on Member meeting attendance on their respective Modern.gov*/Member pages only Ashford, Dartford and Medway (a unitary authority) do not. Such information is also provided by the neighbouring county authorities in East Sussex and Surrey. In order to locate the same level of information in Kent, residents would have to manually search the minutes of every authority meeting for each Member, which would be incredibly time-consuming.

Given this information is already held by the authority but is simply not displayed, we recommend that Kent County Council's website is updated to include this information, which can be easily integrated into the Modern.gov system. It is a simple but effective measure of transparency which reveals, at least in part, an element of a Member's workload and commitment to the authority, an example of which is adopted by Surrey County council. *

*Example of 'Mod.gov good practice: Surrey County Council's [Member page](#)

- b) The link to the Member pages at Surrey referred to in the extract is:
<https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/mgFindMember.aspx>

4. Dependents' Carers' Allowance

- c) The relevant extracts from the MRP report, pages 5 and 21, are as follows:
- **Dependent Carer's Allowance.** Our review of the Peer Group showed that KCC are broadly within the range paid by other Councils, and we do not therefore make any recommendations for change on the hourly amount claimable. However, given the low take-up of the Allowance, we recommend raising the level of awareness of claim amongst prospective Members as part of the roadshow on 'Becoming a Councillor' and amongst new Members through the Induction process, and ensure that the Allowance is appropriately highlighted in these initiatives. **(Further details provided on page 21)**

DEPENDENT CARER'S ALLOWANCE

Most Councils in the Peer Group examined, offer Dependent Carer's Allowance and Childcare Allowance. Hourly rates published varied between the range from £5.50 to £15.57 (for childcare) and from the minimum hourly wage to £20.24 for adult care. The ability to claim was consistently prescriptive and required receipts based on actual expenditure. KCC are broadly in the range, so we do not make any recommendations for changes to the hourly amount claimable.

A minority of Councils capped the Allowance. This ranged from £50.33 per day to £3621 (Childcare) and £7654 (Dependant). However, it appears a cap is somewhat irrelevant when considering that few Members claim the Allowance, either in Kent County Council or elsewhere ² (One KCC Member did so FY19-20) and we decided against recommending the introduction of any cap.

We therefore recommend:

- To raise awareness of the existence of the claim availability amongst Members through the New Member Induction process.
- There should be exclusions on claiming dependency Allowance for adult care in the event a Councillor receives a Carer's Allowance from the Department for Work and Pensions.

5. Recommendation

The Selection and Member Services Committee is asked to:

- a) Note that Member attendance at meetings will be tabulated and published as soon as is practical;
- b) Consider what additional information could be published to give a more accurate picture of Member contribution;
- c) Consider whether there is anything in how the Council operate which militates against a more diverse membership; and
- d) Consider how to better promote the Dependents' Carers' Allowance.

6. Background Documents

Full report of the Member Remuneration Panel:

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s106957/Appx%20%20MRP%20Report.pdf>

7. Report Author and Relevant Director

Ben Watts, General Counsel

03000 416814

benjamin.watts@kent.gov.uk

Tristan Godfrey, Strategic Governance Manager

03000 411704

tristan.godfrey@kent.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank