

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, 9 March 2023.

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

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P J Oakford

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

3. Minutes

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2022 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chair.

4. Member Remuneration Panel: Arrangements and Terms of Reference

(Item 4)

1) Tristan Godfrey, Senior Governance Manager, outlined the report.

2) Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted:

- A benchmarking exercise had been undertaken with the conclusion that no one approach was taken by other councils to Member remuneration where a four-year scheme would start in relation to a Council term.
- It was noted that the current arrangement of agreeing the scheme after an election meant that that decisions were not taken in, or near, the pre-election period.
- Agreeing a scheme before an election could allow candidates more financial certainty, which in turn may potentially encourage a more diverse pool of candidates.
- The issue was raised around Members who were planning not to stand in the next election voting on allowances for the next term. It was noted that these Members would have experience of how allowances worked but would not benefit from the scheme.

- Making the decision after an election had the advantage of being less contentious but also meant asking newly elected Members to make a decision without having had prior experience of the scheme.
- The transitional arrangements for Option 2 as outlined in the report were discussed. For Option 2, County Council would agree a one-year scheme after the election, and then agree a four-year scheme starting the following spring, April 2026.

3) RESOLVED to agree option 2 as the preferred option on the start point of the next four-year allowances scheme and to recommend to County Council that the Terms of Reference of the Member Remuneration Panel be amended as set out in the appendix.

5. Member ICT Policy

(Item 5)

1) Ben Watts, General Counsel, introduced the report. Members were asked to feedback on behalf of their groups. Updates to the Policy would be brought to the committee.

2) Thanks were given to Cantium Business Solutions' VIP Support for the assistance they had provided to Members with their devices.

3) Members had been provided with the same devices as it was easier to ensure that they all had access to the same software, as well as being easier to maintain and upgrade. Another reason for Members to be provided with devices is cyber security which was becoming increasingly important.

4) It was appreciated that Members sometimes had to 'juggle' working with a number of devices depending on what other roles they had whether at lower tier authorities or in workplaces.

5) RESOLVED to note the report and group leaders to promote the policy within their groups.

6. Monitoring Officer Update

(Item 6)

1) Ben Watts, General Counsel gave an update.

2) Members were updated regarding proposals for 'going paperless' and advice was to be sent out to all Members. It was recognised that some Members, due to reasons recognised by The Equality Act would need special assistance to access their papers.

3) A report was to be brought to the next meeting of Selection and Member Services Committee regarding proportionality. A by election had been announced but it was not known whether this would take place on the same date as other local elections taking place on 4 May 2023.

4) Members were given an update regarding work that was being undertaken following the Annual Governance Statement. Updates were to be brought to future

meetings. Members were advised that they could expect to notice some changes in meetings. A team had been appointed to work on the actions and areas of work included:

- A review of the 'decision making journey', how advice was provided around the decision making processes and how to make the decision making journey as effective as possible;
- Minimisation of need for urgent decisions by making sure advice is sought early in the process and consideration of how the decision making process fed into the Cabinet Committee cycle of meetings.
- Assessment of operational level governance and the working of informal working parties.

5) It was noted that positive steps were being taken following the issuing of the Annual Governance Statement and the work on improvement was continuous, akin to the painting of the Forth Bridge.