



AGENDA

ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 12 March 2025, at 2.00 pm
Council Chamber, Sessions House, County
Hall, Maidstone

Ask for: **Joel Cook**
Telephone: **03000 41692**

Membership (9)

- Conservative (7): Mr A Kennedy (Chairman), Mr D Jeffrey (Vice-Chairman),
Mr N Baker, Mrs P T Cole, Mr J A Kite, MBE, Mr R C Love, OBE,
Mrs S Prendergast and Mr R J Thomas
- Liberal Democrat (1): Mr A J Hook
- Labour (1) Dr L Sullivan

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

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

- 1 Apologies & Substitutes
- 2 Declarations of Interest on any items on this agenda
- 3 Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2024 (Pages 1 - 4)
- 4 2025-26 County Scale of Election Fees and Expenses (Pages 5 - 14)
- 5 KCC Election Update 2025 (Pages 15 - 20)
- 6 Sheppey - Division name review

Benjamin Watts
General Counsel
03000 416814

Tuesday, 4 March 2025

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 15 October 2024.

PRESENT: Mr A Kennedy (Chairman), Mr D Jeffrey (Vice-Chairman), Mrs P T Cole, Mr R C Love, OBE and Mr A Brady

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr B Watts (General Counsel), Sian Connelly (Operational Delivery Officer), Ryan O'Connell (MBC – Democratic and Electoral Services Manager) and Joel Cook (Democratic Services Manager – Clerk)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

17. Substitutes

(Item 1)

Apologies were received from Dr Sullivan (Mr Brady substituting), Mr Hook, Mr Thomas and Mr Baker.

18. Declarations of Interest on any items on this agenda

(Item 2)

Mr Kennedy (Chair) declared that he was a paid political agent.

Mr Jeffrey declared that he was a paid political agent, Chair of the Kent Conservatives and a Member of the Association of Electoral Administrators.

19. Minutes - 27 March 2024

(Item 3)

RESOLVED the minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2024 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

20. Maidstone Borough Council Community Governance Review

(Item 4)

Maidstone Community Governance review

Ms Sian Connelly (Operational Delivery Officer – KCC) and Mr Ryan O'Connell (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager – Maidstone Borough Council) were in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Connelly provided background and context for the item, outlining the Community Governance Review undertaken by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) in 2022/23 which resulted in recommendations being considered and approved by Maidstone Council in September 2023 and relevant Governance Order coming into force in April 2024. Following the review, MBC had identified that some areas where Parish and County boundaries were no longer co-terminus. Consequently, MBC was consulting KCC via the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee on proposed alterations to remedy the issue. Any KCC views submitted would form part of the evidence submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), which would subsequently make a decision on any required changes.
2. Ms Connelly clarified that the benefit of the changes would be to reduce the number of separate registers which would be required at polling stations, would reduce the likelihood of polling errors and make the administration of the register more straightforward. Local Members had been consulted on the issue and one response had been received and responded to on technical points relating to the scope of the review.
3. Mr O'Connell provided further information relating to the proposed changes to the Langley area, noting while the current number of electors was low, there was a requirement to consider and scope electorate growth. Therefore, future housing developments had been taken into account in calculating the potential increase.
4. Ms Connelly, Mr Watts and Mr O'Connell responded to comments and questions from Members, including.
 - a) It was confirmed that the Parish changes had already been applied, with the relevant considerations regarding precepting boundaries. The proposals subject to the consultation at this stage involved minor changes to the divisional boundaries to align with the confirmed Parish boundaries. It was highlighted that local community views and community identity was taken into account as far as possible in finalising the Parish Boundaries.
 - b) On that basis, it was important to emphasise that the boundary changes, if approved by the LGBCE, would not take effect until the next election period.
 - c) Members commented on the benefits of advising electors of the changes at the earliest possible time. In terms of options for notifying electors prior to the requirement to send the required Poll Cards, Mr Watts confirmed that this issue could be explored separately.
 - d) It was clarified that the LGBCE would have to take a view on the elector growth projection, recognising that housing development and growth were challenging to predict accurately in terms of timescales and practical change.

RESOLVED to note, comment on and endorse the proposed alterations to County Division boundaries in the Maidstone area.

21. County Scale of Election Fees and Expenses update - 2024-2025 (Item 5)

1. Ms Connelly provided an overview of the item, highlighting the previous decision of the Committee to approve the prior scale of fees for 24/25 which was intended to align the scale of fees for all elections by following changes brought in by the Department for Housing, Levelling Up and Communities (DHLUC) at the time. Districts and Boroughs had also aligned their fees to match the same approach. However, since the last decision by the Committee in March 2024, DHLUC had updated its scale of fees and these had been used for the PCC election and general election. Therefore an updated scale of fees, now in line with the final DHLUC scales, had been produced for consideration and approval by the Committee.
2. Members discussed the cost implications should overnight counts be progressed for County elections. With comments made to support the implementation of arrangements to incentivise and support overnight counts being undertaken. Mr O'Connell commented from an election delivery perspective that overnight counts presented additional staffing challenges including recruitment and operational resilience, recognising that it involved some staff working over 24 hours straight.
3. Mr Watts, as County Returning Officer, advised that in view of the reliance of KCC on the work of the District and Borough Councils in delivering the elections, consideration of an overnight count would have to be subject to careful discussion with them as key partners. Mr Watts confirmed that delivery of a safe and proper election was the priority and the technical arrangements all had to support this priority. He noted that should an overnight count be viable, the consideration to how to recognise the unsocial hours element would be appropriate and necessary.
4. Responding to comments regarding the superannuation of the Deputy Returning Officer payments, Mr Watts advised that under Securing Kent's Future, full costing of this would be required before any agreement could be sought.
5. Mr Watts confirmed, recognising the comments from Members, that the DRO pay element and the update on the overnight count consideration, would be brought back to the Committee as part of consideration of the 25/26 scale of fees.

RESOLVED that the updated County Scale of Election Fees and Expenses 2024/25 be agreed.

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From: Ben Watts, County Returning Officer

To: Electoral & Boundary Review Committee, 12 March 2025

Subject: 2025/26 County Scale of Election Fees and Expenses

Status: Unrestricted

1. Introduction

- a) At its meeting on 8 March 2010, this Committee agreed that it would annually authorise and approve the County Scale of Fees and Expenses for Kent County Council elections (KCC Scale of Fees). This is consistent with the powers delegated to the Committee by County Council and recorded in the Constitution.
- b) In January 2022, KCC received a request from the Kent Association of Electoral Registration Officers and Staff (Kent AEROS) for the KCC Scale of Fees to be merged with the Kent AEROS Scale of Fees for District/Borough and Parish Council elections and Neighbourhood Referendum (Kent AEROS Scale of Fees). KCC responded to say this would be something that it would be happy to explore ahead of the 2025 KCC election but it was currently prioritising the review and settlement of the KCC 2021 election claims.
- c) In the intervening period, the then Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has introduced a pay banding system for election staff at UK Parliamentary elections, Police and Crime Commissioner elections and national referenda. These are elections funded by the UK Government and claims relating to them are administered through the DLUHC's Elections Claims Unit.
- d) The KCC and the Kent AEROS Scales of Fees were broadly aligned to the DLUHC pay banding system for 2024/25.

2. Proposed Changes to KCC's Scale of Fees

- a) In a meeting with the Kent AEROS in December 2024, as part of KCC's election preparations, it was raised that there were elements of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) [formerly known as DLUHC] 2025/26 Pay Bands that were not explicitly stated in the KCC Scale of Fees. These roles had previously been covered by the overarching heading of payments to the District/Borough Council for the use of Council staff in the conduct of the election. The Kent AEROS requested that we review and incorporate these in the next update to the Scale of Fees.
- b) This request has been actioned and a draft proposal for the 2025/26 KCC Scale of Fees is set out in Appendices 1 and 2.

- c) As with the 2024/25 KCC Scale of Fees, it is proposed that KCC adopt the MHCLG fees in their entirety except for Poll Clerks and Presiding Officer fees which are capped at the midpoint of the pay band for single elections. This is to safeguard against significant costs to KCC if all districts decided to implement the maximum amount payable for these roles in a single election.
- d) There is also a further exception to this, where the MHCLG fees include bookkeeping costs which KCC has previously taken the decision not to pay.
- e) The draft KCC Scale of Fees in Appendix 1 cover items not included in MHCLG's 2025/26 Pay Bands. These items are based on the then DLUHC's Expense Guidance for Returning Officers (February 2024). The additional payment to the District/Borough Council for the use of Council staff in the conduct of the election, which has previously been included in KCC's Scale of Fees, has been removed. This payment was designed to capture any incurred costs which did not fit under the heads before the specified roles in the 2024/25 MHCLG pay bands were implemented. Appendix 2 contains the MHCLG's 2025/26 Pay Bands in its entirety.
- f) The alignment to the MHCLG's 2025/26 Pay Bands, introduces an enhanced night rate for count and verification staff which was requested by this Committee in October 2024. It also includes a provision for:
 - Fringe areas to London, as defined by MHCLG, subject to the discretion of the CRO, to uplift each pay band by a maximum of 5%.
 - Holiday pay of up to 12.07% to be available for contracted hours of work
 - Core staff can claim overtime at their contracted rate where the tasks undertaken are part of their contracted duties and necessary. For all other staff, overtime where reasonably worked ..can be claimed up to 1.5x of the hourly daytime rate unless the overtime takes place on a Sunday or bank holiday in which case the uplift can be up to 2x the hourly daytime rate.
- g) MHCLG will update their pay bands on an annual basis to reflect changes to the national minimum wage and average public sector pay.
- h) All other costs listed in the 2025/26 KCC Scale of Fees are proposed to be reimbursed as actual costs or by a percentage increase relating to the Deputy Returning Officer Costs section. Historically, the KCC Scale of Fees has been uplifted annually using the average NJC pay award for local government. However, since 2021/22, the KCC Scale of Fees, have been uplifted using different methods due to an absence of an NJC pay award ahead of this Committee meeting to agree the KCC Scale of Fees. It is proposed that for the 2025/26 Scale of Fees, the Deputy Returning Officer Costs will be updated by 3% based on the increased uplift to grades KSF – KSR in the 2025/26 Kent Pay Scheme as agreed at Budget County Council on 13 February 2025.

3. Recommendation

The Electoral & Boundary Review Committee is asked to approve the proposed County Scale of Election Fees and Expenses for 2025/26.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Proposed KCC Scale of Election Fees and Expenses 2025-26
- Appendix 2 – MCHLG's 2025/26 Pay Bands

Background Documents

County Council, 13 February 2025

[Agenda for County Council on Thursday, 13th February, 2025, 9.30 am](#)

Electoral & Boundary Review Committee, 8 March 2010

[Agenda for Electoral and Boundary Review Committee on Monday, 8th March, 2010, 1.00 pm](#)

Electoral & Boundary Review Committee, 27 March 2024

[Agenda for Electoral and Boundary Review Committee on Wednesday, 27th March, 2024, 10.00 am](#)

Report Authors

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PROPOSED COUNTY SCALE OF FEES AND EXPENSES UPDATE 2025/26

KCC has adopted the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) 2025/26 pay bands in its entirety with the exception of the following roles:

- Poll Clerks and Presiding Officer fees are capped at the midpoint of the 2025/26 pay band for single elections as detailed in the 'Polling Station Staffing Costs' section.
- Bookkeeping fees are unable to be reimbursed (see Note 2)

The items below are not included in MHCLG's 2025/26 Pay Bands. With the exception of 'Deputy Returning Officer Costs' & 'Other Costs' sections, these items are based on the then Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' (DLUHC) Expense Guidance for Returning Officers (February 2024).

		2024/25 Update	2025/26 Update
Stationery & Equipment Costs			
1	Printing and publishing all notices, forms and other documents, providing stationery and sundries, and other miscellaneous expenditure	Actual Cost	Actual Cost
2	Stationery and equipment at each polling station, including depreciation		
3	Hire of any building or room for the purpose of the election and the expenses attending the use of any building or room, including temporary polling stations if necessary		
4	Fitting-up polling stations including the provision, transport and erection of voting compartments, the hire of necessary furniture (where this is not otherwise available) and the return to store afterwards		
5	Production and printing of Ballot Papers		
6	Printing and providing copies of the Electoral Register		
7	Production and printing of official poll cards and postal vote packs		
8	Elections Management Software	50% of annual licence fee to be shared equally at a combined election	25% of annual licence fee to be shared equally at a combined election

Polling Station Staffing Costs			
1	Presiding Officer– single election	£15.68-£17.64 p/h [DLUHC Pay Band C Rate] (see Note 3)	£16.07 - £18.08 [MHCLG Pay band C rate] (see Note 3)
2	Presiding Officer– combined election or difficult station due to local circumstances (at discretion of DRO)	£17.65-£19.60 p/h [DLUHC Pay Band C Rate] shared equally at a combined election (see Note 3)	£18.09 - £20.09 [MHCLG Pay band C rate] (see Note 3)
3	Presiding Officer who acts as a supervisor in a Polling Place where there are a number of polling stations (additional).	PO taking on additional responsibilities can be paid an additional £25 on top of the PO fee [DLUHC Rate]	PO taking on additional responsibilities can be paid an additional £25 on top of the PO fee
4	For each Poll Clerk at a Polling Station – single election	Minimum of National Living Wage up to £13.28 p/h [DLUHC Pay Band A Rate] (see Note 4)	£12.21 - £13.86 [MHCLG Pay band A rate] (see Note 4)
5	For each Poll Clerk at a Polling Station – combined election or difficult station due to local circumstances (at discretion of DRO)	£13.29 - £15.12 p/h [Pay Band A DLUHC Rate] shared equally at a combined election (see Note 4)	£13.87 - £15.50 [MHCLG Pay band A rate] (see Note 4)
7	Standby Polling Station Staff Fee	£50 (max) to be shared equally at a combined election	£50 (max) to be shared equally at a combined election
Verification and Count Staffing Costs			
1	Night Rate	N/A	Up to 1.5x the hourly daytime rate shown in the pay bands
2	Refreshments for staff at the verification and count	Maximum £5 per head	Maximum £6 per head

Deputy Returning Officer Costs			
1	Contested single election – payment to DRO for the management and conduct of the election – for each 1000 electors or part	£57.76	£59.49
2	Contested combined election – payment to DRO for the management and conduct of the election – for each 1000 electors or part	Shared equally at a combined election, up to a maximum of £39.89	Shared equally at a combined election, up to a maximum of £41.09
3	Payment to District/Borough Council for the use of Council staff (including the provision of a DRO) at an uncontested election – for each 1000 electors or part	£38.02	£39.16
Other Costs			
1	Additional expenses (if any) involved in and about the conduct of the election including (a) professional, clerical and other assistance, (b) professional and legal advice, (c) additional costs associated with a recount of the votes and (d) other disbursements	<p>Up to £1000 per single item to be approved by the County Returning Officer under delegation from the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee and be reported back to Committee at the appropriate time.</p> <p>Over £1000 per single item to be approved by Electoral and Boundary Review Committee at the appropriate time.</p>	Up to £1000 per single item to be approved by the County Returning Officer under delegation from the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee and be reported back to Committee at the appropriate time.

Definitions:

1. Single election means a poll for the County Council election or by-election only.
2. Combined election means a poll that is conducted at the same time as the County Council poll, which could be a District or Parish election or by-election or a national poll, such as a parliamentary election or a referendum.

Notes:

1. The Deputy Returning Officer Costs are calculated on the number of local government electors on the register of electors and entitled to vote at the last day for publication of the notice of election.
2. KCC is only able to make payment in accordance with its Scale of Fees and Expenses. There is no provision for the following costs, so these are unable to be reimbursed:
 - registration costs including printing and postage related to absent voting
 - completion of claim form/bookkeeping costs
 - DRO superannuation costs
3. Up to a maximum of 18 hours: 16 hours on polling day plus 2 additional hours for the collection and drop-off of polling station equipment and attendance at a Presiding Officer briefing in advance of polling day
4. Up to a maximum of 16 hours for Poll Clerks and 16.5 hours for Polling Station Inspectors
5. Fringe areas to London, as defined by MHCLG, can uplift, subject to the discretion of the CRO, each pay band by a maximum of 5%.
6. Holiday pay of up 12.07% is available for contracted hours of work
7. Core staff can claim overtime at their contracted rate where the tasks undertaken are part of their contracted duties and necessary. For all other staff, overtime where reasonably worked ..can be claimed up to 1.5x of the hourly daytime rate unless the overtime takes place on a Sunday or bank holiday in which case the uplift can be up to 2x the hourly daytime rate.

Pay Bands 2025/26 (with effect from April 2025)

Pay Band A			
Roles			
Casual admin support	£12.21	-	£15.50
Polling station - ballot box/equipment issuing assistants			
Postal vote - prep and issue assistant			
Postal vote - opening and checking assistant			
Ballot box receipt assistant			
Poll card - prep and issue assistant			
Poll clerks			
Count setup/take down assistant			
Count and verification assistants			
Count security			
Postal vote security			
Reception staff			
Poll card – printing			
Printing coordinator (e.g. printing of letters)			

Pay Band B			
Roles			
Polling station - ballot box/equipment issuing supervisors	£13.78	-	£18.37
Postal vote - prep and issue supervisor			
Postal vote - opening and checking supervisor			
Ballot box receipt supervisor			
Poll card - prep and issue supervisor			
Count staff - IT support			
Postal vote - IT support (signature verification)			
Count setup/take down supervisor			
Count and verification team leader			
Unused ballot papers checking and verification			
Collection and prep of equipment			

Pay Band C			
Roles			
Presiding officer	£16.07	-	£20.09
Count and verification supervisor			
Staff payments/payroll			
Poll card, postal votes and ballot papers - running data, checking and proofing			
Postal vote - signature adjudicators			
Top table assistant/data officer			
Media handling/comms			

Pay Band D			
Roles			
Count manager	17.22	-	£29.85
Polling station inspector			
Postal vote – opening session manager			

Other Rates			
Type			
Poll card (hand) delivery (per poll card)	£0.20	-	£0.39
Travel up to 10 miles		£4.50	
Travel between 10-20miles		£9	
Travel of 20 miles or more	£9	-	£18
Mileage rate		£0.45	
Training per member of staff (up to a maximum) **		£43.56	
Training Prep & Delivery (per session)	£102.50	-	£153.75
Bookkeeping capped at a maximum (prior approval required)		£410	

** Note that ROs can choose to pay at any fixed rate up to this maximum amount. The rate, however, will need to reflect the duration and complexity of the training.

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From: Ben Watts, County Returning Officer

To: Electoral and Boundary Review Committee, 12 March 2025

Subject: Kent County Council Election Update – May 2025

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary This report asks the Committee to note the update about the Kent County Council election.

1. Introduction

- a) The Kent County Council (KCC) election will be taking place on Thursday 1 May 2025.
- b) The County Returning Officer (CRO), Ben Watts, is personally responsible for the conduct of the KCC election. The CRO works in partnership with the 12 borough, city and district councils who administer the KCC election in their area on behalf of the CRO. The CRO has appointed a Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) in each district to carry out his functions.
- c) The CRO is supported by the Deputy CRO, Lizzy Adam and the Elections Team: Siân Connelly, Isabella Wilson, Anna Ballara & Linda Elsalakhy from within Governance, Law & Democracy's (GLD) Operational Delivery team. The Elections Team is responsible for the coordination and delivery of KCC elections. It has a longstanding positive working relationship with the districts in delivering KCC elections. It has specialist and technical knowledge, expertise and experience in electoral legislation and processes.
- d) An Election & Member Induction Project Team has also been established with representatives from Democratic Services, Governance and Operational Delivery teams in GLD. The Project Team meets weekly to discuss and update on the key activities relating to the election, member induction and the pre-election period.

2. Devolution Priority Programme

- a) Following the English Devolution White Paper, published on 16 December 2024, inviting councils to apply for priority status, KCC and Medway Council formally asked the government to be included in its Devolution Priority Programme (DPP). The Leader of KCC also submitted a request at the same time for the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution to consider postponing the KCC election scheduled for May 2025.
- b) On 5 February 2025, the Leader of KCC was notified by Government that Kent and Medway had not been selected as one of the areas that would be

part of its DPP. This notification confirmed that the KCC election scheduled for May 2025 would proceed as planned.

- c) Whilst a decision was awaited on the DPP, preparations and planning for the KCC election continued. The Elections Team attended meetings with the Kent Association of Electoral Registration Officers and Staff (Kent AEROS) in September and December 2024. The CRO and Deputy CRO attended the Joint Kent Chief Executive meeting in December 2024. Communications with the Districts was maintained with regular update emails. Directions were also issued to all DROs in December 2024.

3. KCC Election Notices

- a) The CRO is responsible for the publication of the following statutory notices for the KCC election:

Notice of Election	Friday 21 March
Statement of Persons Nominated	Thursday 3 April
Notice of Election Agents	Thursday 3 April
Notice of Poll & Situation of Polling Stations	Wednesday 23 April
Declaration of the Result	Friday 2 May

- b) These notices will be published at www.kent.gov.uk/elections and displayed outside the relevant district council office.

4. Nominations

- a) Following the temporary reduction to subscribers for the 2021 election, the number of subscribers required for a nomination paper has been permanently reduced from 10 to 2.
- b) Nomination papers for the KCC election can be submitted between Monday 24 March – Wednesday 2 April on working days between 10:00 –16:00 to the relevant DRO's election office. Nomination papers will be available from local election offices, who will be able to advise about:
- The arrangements for informal checks.
 - Whether an appointment is required to submit a nomination.
 - The dates of candidate and agent briefings to outline the election process.

5. Voting

- a) Local government electors must be registered to vote by midnight on Friday 11 April to vote in the KCC election. Electors will be able to cast their vote in person, by post or by proxy.
- b) The deadline to apply for a postal vote is 17:00 on Monday 14 April. The deadline to apply for a proxy vote is 17:00 on Wednesday 23 April. In certain circumstances, an emergency proxy vote can be applied for, applications can be made up to 17:00 on polling day.

6. Verification and Count

- a) The CRO has directed that verification is to commence at 10:00 on Friday 2 May 2025 followed by the KCC count first and then any other counts afterwards.
- b) A KCC representative from GLD will be in attendance at each of the twelve counts to upload the result.
- c) The results from the counts will be displayed on an interactive election map on KCC's website. A media hub will be in operation at Sessions House, County Hall.

7. Election Act Changes

- a) The Elections Act 2022 brought in a variety of changes to the UK electoral system which will be in force for the KCC election on 1 May 2025. The changes that will impact the election, voters, candidates and campaigners include:
 - i. The requirement to show a valid form of photo ID and the introduction of the Voter Authority Certificate as a valid form of photo ID.
 - ii. Changes to the process of applying for postal votes and new rules on handling postal votes, including a limit on the number of postal votes an individual can hand in.
 - iii. Changes to the process of applying for proxy votes, and limits on the number of people an individual can be a proxy for.
 - iv. Introduction of new provisions to improve the accessibility of elections for disabled voters.
 - v. Changes to the offence of undue influence to simplify and clarify the offence and define the types of behaviour used to unfairly influence someone's vote.
 - vi. Changes to the rights of some EU citizens to vote and stand in UK elections.
 - vii. Introduction of a new penalty to prevent candidate intimidation.
 - viii. Changes to the rules about candidate and agent notional spending, and making payments.
 - ix. A requirement for campaigners to include imprints on certain digital campaign material to show who has produced and paid for the material.
 - x. Changes to legal requirements for political parties and non-party campaigners.

8. Boundary Changes

- a) New electoral division boundaries in Ashford and Maidstone will come into effect on 1 May 2025.
- b) This Committee noted the changes in Ashford at its meeting on 27 March 2024 and endorsed the then proposed changes in Maidstone on 15 October 2024.
- c) Since the Committee last met, [The Maidstone \(Electoral Changes\) Order 2025](#) has been made. The Elections Team has been liaising with Ashford and Maidstone to ensure the smooth implementation of the new boundaries.

9. Electronic Polling

- a) The CRO has agreed for electronic polling to be used in polling stations in Ashford, Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells.
- b) Using Modern Democracy's digital polling station platform, polling station staff will use iPads to mark the electoral register and corresponding number list and issue paper ballot papers to voters.
- c) The platform has been designed to:
 - modernise the check-in and verification process
 - remove human error by polling station staff
 - reduce queuing times for voters
 - provide real time analytics and instant generation of all post-election reports for the DROs and their Election Managers
- d) The platform was used in the 2024 Police & Crime Commissioner election and the UK Parliamentary General Election in Tunbridge Wells. Testing has been undertaken in by-elections in Ashford and Maidstone.
- e) The CRO has been provided with assurances and legal advice relating to the legality, safety and security of the platform. Electronic polling costs will be reimbursed in line with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) 2024 guidance, where they are equivalent or less than would be incurred in undertaking the polling station work in a traditional fashion.

10. Communications

- a) The Elections Team has been coordinating with the Marketing and Resident Experience Team (MRX) to implement a social media plan targeting residents within Kent. The planned social media communications will cover:
 - Election notices
 - Information for prospective candidates
 - Voter registration details
 - Voting methods

- The importance of voting
 - Changes due to the Election Act
 - Election results
- b) In line with the 2021 Elections Social Media Content Plan, these communications will be shared on the following KCC channels: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.
 - c) In light of the cancellation of County elections in surrounding areas, MRX are preparing a media release to confirm the KCC election will be going ahead on 1 May.
 - d) Work is also underway to update the KCC website with key dates and other election information for voters and prospective candidates.
 - e) Additionally, communications are planned internally for KCC staff, to raise awareness of the election and encourage KCC staff to work in polling stations and at the count to support the districts.
 - f) The Election & Member Induction Project Team are preparing a pre-information pack for candidates, which will be shared following the close of nominations. Candidate email addresses will be collected during the nominations process to enable resources to be shared with candidates directly and enable the smooth and swift organisation of the induction process for elected Members.
 - g) The Elections Team has also been communicating with the Kent Youth County Council (KYCC) and are arranging a virtual session with the KYCC's 16-18 year old members about the KCC election.
 - h) Furthermore, the Elections Team is also collating resources to be distributed to schools, sixth forms, and colleges across Kent to encourage voter registration and participation.

11. Motion for Time Limited Debate

- a) At a meeting of the County Council on 12 September 2024, a Motion for Time Limited Debate, 'Protecting Kent from hostile election interference' was agreed by the Council. It was requested within this motion that the CRO present a report to this Committee updating it on the issues highlighted in the motion and outlining how they intend to reflect the relevant Electoral Commission guidance regarding the management of misleading information within preparations for County elections.
- b) This section of the paper serves as the CRO's update to the Committee. Whilst it should be noted that the CRO does not have the power to regulate the content of campaign material and is therefore limited in taking action to manage misleading information, KCC's election webpages have been updated to signpost to the Electoral Commission's guidance on disinformation and generative AI in order to raise awareness to candidates and voters

- c) Further, work is ongoing to improve the Council's resilience against hacking and other cyber threats with Governance & Audit Committee regularly receiving updates from Counter Fraud and Internal Audit actions related to fraud and cyber security.
- d) Cyber security training has been offered to Members, with five training sessions held from September 2024 – February 2025. These were a mix of in person and virtual training sessions. Cyber security training will also be included in the Member Induction Programme.
- e) KCC staff also have access to cyber security training via the Council's e-learning platform, as well as guidance and information available on the Council's intranet.
- f) The LGA has recently published a resource of best practice guidance for handling situations caused by, or involving, disinformation for member organisations based on the experiences of local authorities across the country.

13. Recommendation

The Committee is invited to note the contents of this report.

Background Documents

County Council, 12 September 2024

[Agenda for County Council on Thursday, 12th September, 2024, 10.00 am](#)

Electoral & Boundary Review Committee, 27 March 2024

[Agenda for Electoral and Boundary Review Committee on Wednesday, 27th March, 2024, 10.00 am](#)

Electoral & Boundary Review Committee, 15 October 2024

[Agenda for Electoral and Boundary Review Committee on Tuesday, 15th October, 2024, 10.30 am](#)

[The Maidstone \(Electoral Changes\) Order 2025](#)

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