

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SELECTION AND MEMBER SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Selection and Member Services Committee held in the Online on Thursday, 19 November 2020.

PRESENT: Mr B J Sweetland (Chairman), Mr M A C Balfour (Substitute for Mr G Lymer), Mr M C Dance, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr D Farrell, Mr R W Gough, Mr E E C Hotson and Mr C Simkins

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R H Bird, Mr A H T Bowles, Mr G Cooke and Mr H Rayner

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr B Watts (General Counsel) and Mr A Tait (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

23. Terms of Reference of the Committee

(Item 3)

(1) The General Counsel agreed that, in line with the County Council's decision, the Committee would be provided with a list of the Informal Working Groups referred to in paragraph (p) of the Committee's Terms of Reference.

(2) RESOLVED that the Committee's Terms of Reference be noted.

24. Terms of Reference of the Member Development Sub-Committee

(Item 4)

(1) Mr Bowles said that the important role of the Member Development Sub-Committee should be stressed by ensuring that its Chairman was a Member of the Selection and Member Services Committee. All Members of the Council should be encouraged to attend in order to ensure that all developmental needs and experiences were taken into account.

(2) RESOLVED that:-

(a) the Terms of Reference of the Member Development Sub-Committee be noted; and

(b) the Committee's appreciation of the work undertaken by Mr Bowles as Chairman of the Member Development Working Group be recorded.

25. Minutes - 30 September 2020

(Item 5)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2020 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

26. Future of the Selection and Member Services Committee - Oral Update

(Item 6)

(1) The General Counsel said that the Electoral Commission had confirmed to him that the May Local Government Elections were expected to go ahead as planned. Preparatory work was at an advanced stage to ensure that they would be Covid-19 secure. This included working with the Districts to put in place a unified approach to fulfilling Covid-19 requirements, taking the requirements of the Director of Public Health fully into account. Assurances had also been obtained from the Director of Corporate Procurement that the necessary protective equipment would be provided. Notice of the elections would be published on 19 March 2021 as intended.

(2) In response to a question from Mr Cooke, the General Counsel said that all Counts would be completed on the Friday following the elections. He would report on this question in greater detail to the next meeting of the Committee.

(3) The General Counsel replied to further questions by saying that discussions on the arrangements for people to watch the Count were ongoing, with the intention that they should be as close to normal as possible. The question of the safest way for prospective candidates to collect the required nominations in Tier 3 areas was being considered, taking account of Electoral Law as well as possible legislative changes that the Government would introduce to assist the process. It was possible that there would be a greater emphasis on proxy voting.

(4) RESOLVED that the report be noted together with the intention to report on the May election arrangements to the next meeting of the Committee.

27. Preparation for the New Council

(Item 7)

(1) The General Counsel introduced the report and asked for comment on its content. He drew the Committee's attention to the areas for the proposed induction programme set out in paragraph 3.2.

(2) Members of the Committee made the following comments:-

- The Draft Prospective Councillor Webpage set out in Appendix B should include reference to Education as one of the areas for which the County Council was responsible;
- There should be reference to the role of Parish Councils in Appendix B.
- Appendix B should explain that KCC provided its Members with ICT equipment and support.
- The 7 principles of public life should be identified in Appendix C rather than being referred to collectively.
- The report should clarify that their Members' declarations of interest had to include those of their spouses or partners.

- The Induction Programme set out in Appendix A should set out a list of key contacts, which would be especially useful for those new Members who were unable to attend every induction session.

(3) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the report and the comments made by Members be noted; and
- (b) the Member Development Sub-Committee be asked to oversee those preparations in the induction programme set out in its Terms of Reference and report its recommendations on them for approval to the February meeting of the Committee.

28. KCC Combined Member Grant

(Item 8)

RESOLVED that agreement be given to the Member Grant applications set out below:-

- (a) Herne Bay in Bloom – Sea Street Roundabout, Herne Bay Makeover;
- (b) Herne Bay Coastal Community Team CIC – Christmas Lights;
- (c) Whitsparkle – Christmas Light Up 2020; and
- (d) Kent Enterprise Trust – purchase of IT equipment to mobilise training courses.

29. KCC Combined Member Grant Scheme Closedown

(Item 9)

(1) The General Counsel introduce the report requesting formal approval for the closedown of the Combined Member Grant Scheme 2017-2021 on 31 December 2020.

(2) Members expressed concern over the lack of clarity for those Members who had avoided spending in previous years in order to fund significant highways projects. It was therefore agreed that the General Counsel would urgently contact the Corporate Director - GED and the Cabinet Member for Highways in order to establish whether these projects could go ahead, with a view to committing to them after the election if they could not be implemented before. This information would be passed on to the Group Leaders as well as those other Members present at the meeting.

(3) RESOLVED that subject to (2) above, approval be given for the closedown of the Combined Member Grant Scheme 2017-2021 on 31 December 2020.

30. Meetings Update

(Item 10)

(1) The General Counsel introduced the report which set out the position for holding meetings as it had evolved since the previous meeting of the Committee.

The report covered the implications of the introduction of a new lockdown across England which came into force under *The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No.4) Regulations 2020* on 5 November 2020 and were due to expire after 28 days.

(2) In response to Members' comments, the General Counsel confirmed that he would be available to discuss possible arrangements for Regulation Committee Transport Appeal Panels if its Members were unable to reach a decision due to their inability to hold face-to-face meetings. He also agreed to circulate his letter to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to those present at the meeting.

(3) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the current arrangements for formal meetings to be conducted virtually be continued for the remainder of the municipal year as allowed by the regulations;
- (b) the arrangements be kept under review with a decision about meetings in the period following the election in May 2021 being made in due course in the light of prevailing regulations governing meetings; and
- (c) the General Counsel in his role as Monitoring Officer be requested to write to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government seeking clarification on its plans for extending the regulations allowing virtual meetings.

31. Agenda Setting for future meetings - Oral Update

(Item 11)

(1) The General Counsel asked the Committee whether there were any items that it particularly wished to see included on the agenda for its next meeting on 7 January 2021 in addition to those already agreed. No such items were suggested.