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, 19 October 2023.

PRESENT: Mr N J Collor (Chairman), Mr M C Dance, Mr R W Gough, Rich Lehmann, Mr C Simkins, Dr L Sullivan and Mr D Jeffrey

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. P Oakford (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services), Mr. H Rayner (Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J Cook (Democratic Services Manager), Mr T Godfrey (Senior Governance Manager), Mrs J Kennedy-Smith (Operational Delivery Team Manager), Miss K Reynolds (Democratic Services Officer), Mr O Streatfield (Member Hub Supervisor), Ms L Tricker (Democratic Services Officer), Mr B Watts (General Counsel)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

8.   Declarations of Interest
(Item)

There were no interests declared.

9.   Minutes
(Item 3)

Mr Watts provided an update on the previous minutes and explained that there had been delays to other services, which meant meetings could only be webcast from the Council Chamber but informal meetings could continue to be held in the Darent Room.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2023 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chair.

10.   Petition Scheme Review - to follow
(Item 4)

> 1. Mr Cook introduced the report and stated that since June 2023 the team had undertaken a review of the Council's petition scheme and had completed research on comparable council's petition schemes. KCC's petition scheme was in line with many other comparable councils, and if the petition limit was reduced to 2000, this could increase the number of County Council debates. It was explained that the Committee needed to make a choice, as residents needed to be encouraged to submit petitions, but KCC was the strategic upper-tier

authority.

2. A Member raised a question regarding the research undertaken into comparable councils' and the threshold needed to trigger a Full Council debate. Mr Cook explained that although some authorities, such as Hertfordshire County Council, had lower thresholds for County Council debates, Kent remained in line with most comparators.

3. Members raised concerns regarding the threshold for Joint Transportation Board (JTB) petitions, and it was confirmed that if petitions did not meet the threshold they could still be added to the agenda through the agenda-setting process.

4. Members discussed lowering the threshold of County Council and Cabinet Committee petitions to encourage resident engagement with the Council and the democratic process.

5. Members queried how signatures on petitions were checked to confirm eligibility, and if the team could check eligible signatures on the electoral role. It was confirmed that people under 18, or who studied or worked in the borough could sign petitions and may not appear on the electoral role. The team could undertake dip sampling to check petition signatures, but a process and procedure note would need to be agreed before this could begin. A paper could be brought back to the committee to confirm criteria eligibility and the verification process.

6. Members agreed for officers to consider all options before coming back to committee and presenting the options for the petition scheme, along with the eligibility criteria for signing a petition and how this would be verified.

RESOLVED to bring an update back to the next meeting to clarify which changes should be progressed.

11. Outside Bodies: Outcome of Review
(Item 5)

1. Miss Reynolds introduced the report and stated that in June 2023 the Committee had agreed to review the Outside Bodies scheme, and this paper outlined the outcome of this review.

2. A Member raised a concern with recommendation C and asked for inclusion of the word 'relevant' to ensure that the process for appointing to an Outside Body remained streamlined and effective. This amendment was seconded and agreed by the Committee.

3. A Member highlighted that KCC representatives on Outside Bodies should keep KCC informed of any changes to that organisation. Mr Watts agreed that a Protocol would be created to centralise the Outside Body process and clarify the relationship between KCC and outside bodies, as well as what support, if any, needed to be provided

by officers so the process was clear for Members.

4. Members clarified that some changes to the Outside Body list in the report needed to be made, and officers confirmed that the list would be updated.

RESOLVED to:
a. Agree to remove the outside bodies listed in section 2d from the list of outside bodies.
b. Agree to confirm the current list of outside bodies as set out in section 2c.
c. Delegate to the Monitoring Officer the authority to make nominations and appointments to outside bodies where there is a vacancy, after consultation with the relevant Chair of the Committee and relevant Group Leader.

12. Member Development Sub-Committee: Annual Report
(Item 6)

1. Mr Jeffrey introduced the report and thanked officers and Members for their hard work on the report, both formally and informally. He explained that a survey on key issues such as the role of the Executive and Member training had been distributed amongst KCC Members and 70% had responded. Following the survey, the team had begun to put together a plan of action, which included mandatory training for Planning Committee Members and media training for Cabinet Members, Chairs, and opposition leaders. More training would be held in future, for example risk management training, and comments and feedback on the report would continue to be welcomed.

2. The Chair asked what the next steps of the project would be and if this would include training on mod.gov. It was confirmed that mod.gov training could be provided.

3. Members requested the team consider external training for Members, for example training from the LGA for backbench Members.

4. Mr Watts explained that the report considered varied positions and viewpoints from Members, which would feed into the Annual Governance Statement. Members had different needs and needed diverse levels and types of support and training. Member hub would be available to assist with any queries regarding training or accessing papers online.

RESOLVED to:
a. Note and discuss Member Development to provide contribution to the key findings.
b. Provide a view on the budget arrangements for Learning and Development allocations.
c. Provide feedback on Appendix A.

13. KCC Combined Member Grants
(Item 7)

1. Mr Jeffrey introduced the report and stated that it outlined how Combined Member Grants (CMGs) had been spent by Members in the previous financial year. There remained a problem in reporting as some Members, according to the report, had not spent their CMG but in actuality were saving for larger highways projects or had already allocated this spending to a project, but this had not yet been completed. The team were considering a different way of reporting, which would include categories for monies allocated but not yet spent.

2. Members agreed that reporting should be updated to show where monies had been allocated but not spent, or where the money had been spent but projects delayed.

3. Mr Watts explained that the report provided a year-end snapshot, but CMG expenditure was closely monitored by the team. The team were considering presenting monthly updates to Members on CMGs and were currently considering how best to share this information, including a Member webpage to show real time grant spend. It was agreed that the public document should remain reflective and not be a live document. Mr Watts confirmed that options on how CMGs were presented would be considered, and a caveat would be included when published online to explain that the report provided a year-end snapshot.

RESOLVED to:
   a. Note the grant recipient list for the Combined Member Grants 2022/23.
   b. Note the COVID-19 Local Recovery Fund Grants 2021/22.
   c. Approve the upload to the KCC website, including an explanation that the report provided a 2022/23 year-end snapshot and was not a live document.

14.   Kent Flood Risk Management Committee: Terms of Reference Review
(Item 8)

1. Mr Cook introduced the report and explained that the review had been prompted by the Kent Flood Risk Management (KFRM) Committee Chair to ensure the name of the Committee was up-to-date and accurately reflected the work of the Committee, which had expanded to include the work of the water companies and climate change. No substantive change to the Committee was being proposed.

2. A Member raised a concern as the KFRM Committee was technically an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which meant that Cabinet Members or Deputy Cabinet Members could not sit on the Committee. It was confirmed that the Committee scrutinised the work of other bodies, and did not scrutinise KCC, but constitutional amendments were being considered.

3. A Member highlighted that the Cabinet Member titles in the Terms of Reference were out of date and needed to be updated.

RESOLVED, subject to Cabinet Member titles being updated in the Terms of Reference, to recommend to County Council that the:

    a. Name of the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee be changed to Kent Flood Risk and Water Management Committee

    b. Amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee as set out in the report be approved.

15. Monitoring Officer: Verbal Update
(Item 9)

1. Mr Watts, General Counsel updated the Committee and explained that a more substantive update would be provided once the outcomes from the Annual Governance Statement were known, including proposed changes to the Constitution which would be presented to Committee. There were also conversations ongoing regarding changing the structure of meetings, which would be presented to the Committee in late 2023 or early 2024, to ensure that resources were targeted, and Members fully supported. Mr Watts summarised and explained that this remained a pressurised time for local councils, including KCC, but officers remained committed to providing the best service for residents.

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