

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, 28 March 2023.

PRESENT: Mr G Cooke (Chairman), Mr A Kennedy (Vice-Chairman), Mr M Baldock, Mrs P T Cole, Mr R J Thomas, Ms S Hamilton (Substitute), Mr P Cole (Substitute) and Mr J Meade (Substitute)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr B Watts (General Counsel) and Ms L Adam (Operational Delivery Manager) and Joel Cook (Democratic Services Manager)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

7. Declarations of Interest on any items on this agenda *(Item 2)*

Mr Jordan Meade declared that in his professional paid capacity as a Senior Parliamentary Advisor to The Rt Hon. The Lord Udny-Lister PC Kt, that he provided support to Lord Udny-Lister in the passage of the Local Government (Disqualification) Act 2022 as it passed through the various Bill Stages in the House of Lords.

8. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2022 *(Item 3)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2022 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

9. Scale of Fees *(Item 4)*

Ms Lizzy Adam (Operational Delivery Manager) and Mr Benjamin Watts (General Counsel and County Returning Officer) were present for this item.

1. Ms Adam provided an introduction to the report, setting out the proposed increases to the scale of fees as detailed in the report; namely a 6.44% uplift based on the average uplift from the 2023/24 NJC pay award offer. It was also proposed that presiding officers and polling station inspectors receive an uplift of 10% in recognition the additional responsibilities anticipated as part of the introduction of voter ID arrangements. Ms Adam also outlined the final proposed change to fees in relation to Polling Station Inspectors when working on joint elections rather than single elections. This was to recognise the additional work involved when different elections were being held at the same time.
2. Responding to questions from Members, Ms Adam and Mr Watts clarified the following points:

- Presiding Officer fee uplifts were proposed because they held personal responsibility for the conduct of the election activity in their polling station. This additional responsibility meant they may have to take difficult decisions that could prevent individuals from voting, making the function more challenging.
- The repeated review of the scale of fees was necessary because of changing financial circumstances, including inflationary pressures. Mr Watts reassured the Committee that reviewing the fees on annual basis was appropriate and provided the most up to date and well informed decision-making around the issue.
- Presiding Officer travelling expenses were different from other staff expenses because of specific responsibilities, including having to securely transport election equipment between Council offices and polling stations.
- Mr Watts advised that as County Returning Officer, he and his team worked with Districts through a positive partnership approach to managing the election. Directives or instructions on specific arrangements were only given to Districts on rare occasions.
- Ms Adam advised the Committee that no concerns had been reported to the Returning Officer's team about staffing the elections. It was explained that some promotional activity was undertaken within KCC to encourage staff to work on the elections in some capacity.

RESOLVED that the proposed County Scale of Election Fees and Expenses for 2023/24 be approved.