

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 Wednesday, 27 March 2024.

PRESENT: Mr A Kennedy (Chair), Mr D Jeffrey (Vice-Chairman), Dr L Sullivan, Mr R J Thomas, Mrs C Bell (Substitute), Mrs S Chandler (Substitute) and Mr H Rayner (Substitute)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr B Watts (General Counsel) and Ms S Connelly (Principal Operational Delivery Officer) and Joel Cook (Clerk / Democratic Services Manager)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

10. Substitutes

(Item 1)

Apologies were received from Mr Baker, Mrs Cole, Mr Love and Mr Kite with Mrs Chandler, Mrs Bell and Mr Rayner substituting.

11. Election of Chair

(Item 2)

1. Mr Jeffrey proposed and Mr Rayner seconded that Mr Kennedy be elected Chair. No other nominations were received.

RESOLVED that Mr Kennedy be elected Chair.

12. Election of Vice-Chair

(Additional item)

1. With Mr Kennedy having vacated the Vice-Chair position, the Committee elected a new Vice-Chair.
2. Mr Thomas proposed and Mr Rayner seconded that Mr Jeffrey be elected Vice-Chair. No other nominations were received.

RESOLVED that Mr Jeffrey be elected Vice-Chair.

13. Declarations of Interest on any items on this agenda

(Item 3)

1. Mr Jeffrey declared that he was a member of the Association of Electoral Administrators, having previously held professional responsibility for managing election matters. The Clerk confirmed that this declared interest did prevent Mr Jeffrey serving on the Committee.

14. Minutes - 28 March 2023

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2023 were a correct record.

15. County Scale of Election Fees and Expenses

(Item 5)

1. Mr Ben Watts (General Counsel and County Returning Officer) provided an initial introduction to the item, in particular thanking Sian Connelly and Lizzy Adam for the work on issues outlined in the reports.
2. Ms Connelly explained the proposals contained in the reports, highlighting that the suggested uplifts set out for Committee consideration were linked to the most recent TCP increase. She advised that the uplift would ensure KCC remained in line with other relevant bodies operating similar election activity.
3. Members explored the issues, asking questions of the officers covering the following key areas:
 - Deputy Returning Officer pay awards – it was confirmed that the increase was based on the successful rating from the latest TCP arrangements at KCC and this was reviewed on an annual basis. It was also confirmed that the relevant payments were only paid out to Districts when a KCC election was being delivered.
 - Refreshments spend and approach – it was confirmed that there was significant variation of approach around the County. Members were in favour of providing refreshments for staff working on the election but caution was advised by some in terms of keeping the spend manageable.
 - Wider election costs – it was confirmed that more detailed election costs, including ‘overheads’ like building use and KCC officer time, would be provided at a future meeting of the Committee. Members commented that this was important to monitor and seek to manage carefully given that Local Government was underfunded.

RESOLVED that the Proposed County Scale of Election Fees and Expenses for 2024/25 (as set out in Appendix 1 of the agenda pack) be agreed.

16. Electoral Changes Orders - Ashford

(Item 6)

1. Mr Watts advised that this was a procedural item brought before the committee to ensure awareness and collect any views. The matter related to two electoral change orders in the Ashford area. He explained that the Council had already raised concerns regarding the timing and notice periods involved but that this was being explored with relevant electoral colleagues in the County. Members commented that the timing in sharing this issue was regrettable.

RESOLVED that The Ashford (Electoral Changes) (No. 1) Order 2023 and The Ashford (Electoral Changes) (No. 2) Order 2023 which relate to county division boundaries in the Ashford area be noted.