

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 Friday, 13 December 2024.

PRESENT: Mr N J Collor (Chairman), Mr A Brady, Mr M C Dance, Mr R W Gough, Rich Lehmann, Mr D Jeffrey and Mr H Rayner

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr B Watts (General Counsel) Mr J Cook (Democratic Services Manager) Miss R Emberley (Democratic Services) Mr T Godfrey (Senior Governance Manager) Ms J Kennedy Smith (Operational Delivery Team Manager) and Mr O Streatfield (Member Hub Supervisor)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 1)

Apologies were received from Mr A Hook and Mr C Simkins, with Mr Rayner attending as a substitute for Mr Simkins.

2. Declarations of Interest

(Item 2)

Mr Brady announced that he and several other Members were part of the Governance Working Group.

3. Minutes

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2024 were correctly recorded and that a paper copy be signed by the Chair.

4. Combined Member Grant Report

(Item 4)

1. The Item was presented by the General Counsel, Mr Ben Watts.
2. In answer to questions and comments from Members, it was said that:
 - a) The Terms of Reference needed to be revised in order to review the Combined Member Grant Fund allocation procedure. It was suggested that a cut off at the end of each year could be helpful in terms of the Council's budgetary position. It was noted that some Members are involved in projects that run over several years.

- b) It was indicated that a report could be produced before the end of the administrative cycle to allow Members the opportunity to reflect and change the guidance.
 - c) It was suggested that where Members were unable to utilise specific funds within their division, the reallocation of these funds could be examined within the review of the Terms of Reference.
3. RESOLVED to:
- a) NOTE the grant recipient list for the Combined Member Grants 2023/24.
 - b) APPROVE the upload to the KCC website.

5. Outside Bodies - Update *(Item 5)*

- 1. The report was presented by a Democratic Services Officer, Ruth Emberley.
- 2. In response to questions and comments from Members, Mr Watts commented as follows:
 - a) Local or adjacent Members would be approached to see there was interest in joining the Aylesham and District Community Workshop Trust.
 - b) Training was in place to support Members in Trustee posts.
 - c) It was suggested and agreed that, if there was no Member interest, the post would be held open as a vacancy until the May 2025 and then revisited.
- 3. RESOLVED to Delegate the management of the outside body appointment to the General Counsel, in consultation with the Group Leaders

6. Governance Working Party Updates *(Item 6)*

- 1. The Governance Working Party Updates paper was presented by the Cabinet Member for Communications and Democratic Services and Chair of Governance Working Party, Mr Dylan Jeffrey.
- 2. Mr Jeffrey drew Members' attention to an error contained in 1e of the Introduction; Mr Chard and Mr Bond were also Members of the Committee but had not been mentioned.
- 3. Mr Brady confirmed that he had been on the Governance Working Party since it was first formed.
- 4. Some of the key highlights were as follows:

- a) Thanks was given to everyone who took part in the group.
- b) Cabinet Committees would be retained however, reform was necessary and this topic would need to return for further discussion.
- c) It was agreed that the Children Young Persons and Education (CYPE) Cabinet Committee would be separated to reflect the individual portfolio holders. This would mean establishing an Education Cabinet Committee and a Children and Young People Cabinet Committee.
- d) The Health Reform and Public Health Committee would be merged into the Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee.
- e) An Annual State of the County item would be presented by the Leader and then open for debate by all Members. This would be facilitated by the Committee Chairmans, who would provide the Leader's report to the individual Committee and Members could debate in that arena.
- f) The group were looking at a way to publish written responses to individual Member question asked at full Council.
- g) Changes to Member training had been looked at, particularly the areas of critical thinking, diversity and the legal framework of the Council which would be fed into the Member Induction Programme.
- h) The improvement and development of Member interaction and the quality of Committees was also looked at in detail.
- i) Lengthy discussions had been held around the Scrutiny Committee, in particular the external auditor's report which implied that the Committee should be chaired by a Member of the Opposition. The discussions involved thresholds, which Opposition Party and how they should be selected and a model to conduct this had been created.

5. RESOLVED Members to:

- a) NOTE with thanks the contribution and efforts of the Members of the Governance Working Party.
- b) NOTE and comment on the retention of Cabinet Committees.

6. RESOLVED the Leader to:

- a) CREATE an Education Cabinet Committee.
- b) CONSOLIDATE the Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee into the Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee.
- c) ASK the General Counsel to carry out a review of the Terms of Reference of Cabinet Committees.

7. RESOLVED Members to recommend to the County Council:

- a) To DEBATE AND DECIDE whether the Constitution be changed so

- that the Chairman of Scrutiny be an opposition Member.
- b) To AGREE the introduction of the “Annual State of the County” item at County Council.
 - c) To AMEND the constitution to provide an opportunity for the Proposer of Amendments to have a right of reply before the end of the debate on the amendment they proposed.
 - d) To NOTE the outputs of the Governance Working Party.
 - e) To NOTE ongoing work around further reporting from other Committees.
 - f) To AMEND the constitution to require the publication of all questions received in accordance with the constitution and their answers irrespective of whether the questioner attended County Council.
8. RESOLVED Members to note the recommendations regarding training and induction for May 2025.
 9. RESOLVED that discussions around hybrid/physical/remote meetings be paused until the Government determines any changes following the current consultation, with a further review by the Committee in six months if no changes are forthcoming.
 10. RESOLVED to ask the General Counsel to:
 - a) DEVELOP governance to support the annual reporting mechanism for all Committees.
 - b) PROVIDE support to the Governance Working Party to develop and finalise their further activity in time for the March County Council.
 - c) PROVIDE a report to the Committee on Democratic Engagement proposals.
 - d) PROVIDE a report on the changes to report templates.
 - e) REVIEW proposals around the Executive-Scrutiny Protocol and provide advice to the GWP that can be incorporate into future recommendation for the March County Council.
 - f) REVIEW agenda setting protocols.
 11. RESOLVED to note the ongoing work of the group and AGREE that a further report come to the Committee ahead of the March County Council.

7. Remote attendance and Proxy Voting (Item 7)

1. The report was presented by Mr Watts.
2. Some of the key comments and responses to questions were as follows:

- a) The Members opposed to proxy voting highlighted issues for specific Committees, such as Planning and Regulation.
- b) Members in favour of remote attendance and proxy voting indicated that issues should be identified to enable most experienced individuals to participate and benefit the Council.
- c) In response to a Member question regarding proxy voting, the Leader of the Council commented that Members should listen to the merits of a debate and then make a decision based on that.
- d) The General Counsel reminded Members that it would be for the Local Authority to determine the arrangements and not central Government; Kent County Council would be responsible for deciding how and what they did with the powers bestowed on them. Members confirmed that they welcomed local discretion.
- e) Mr Jeffrey proposed the following change to the Recommendations:
 - Members to note the report
 - Members to debate the item at full Council and the Leader responds on behalf of the Council
- f) The proposal was seconded by Mr Rayner.
- g) Members voted as follows:
 - 4 Members in favour
 - 2 Members opposed
 - No abstains

3. RESOLVED that Members:

- a) NOTED the report.
- b) ASK full Council to consider and agree the response to the Consultation.