

From: Linden Kemkaran, Leader of the Council
Amanda Beer, Chief Executive

To: County Council, 18 December 2025

Subject: Appointment of Political Assistants

Status: Unrestricted

1. Introduction

- a) Section 9 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 provides that the Council may appoint a maximum of three persons to provide assistance to members of Political Groups. Posts must be for a fixed term and run until the Council's Annual Meeting following the next Council elections.
- b) The pay of Political Assistants is subject to a ceiling set by the Secretary of State. The Local Government (Assistants for Political Groups) (Remuneration) (England) Order 2021 provides that the maximum amount which can be paid to a Political Assistant is spinal column point 38 of the salary scales for local government officers incorporated in the National Joint Council's Scheme. This is currently £49,282 (FTE). This excludes on-costs of NI and pension contributions.
- c) Sections 9(6) and (7) of the Act provide that each of the three largest Political Groups on a relevant authority is entitled to have one Political Assistant, provided that they have at least 10% of the members of the authority. In Kent County Council's case, the Reform UK and Liberal Democrat Groups would currently qualify for a Political Assistant.

2. The Role of Political Assistants

- a) The role of Political Assistants is to undertake research and provide support to members of Political Groups in the discharge of any of their functions as elected members of the Council. They are 'politically restricted' posts. However, as set out in government guidance¹:
 - I. "Political advisers are, however, permitted to speak to the public with the intention of affecting support for a political party, but their actions must not give the impression that they are acting as the representative of the political party."
 - II. "Political advisers are also able to publish or cause to be published written work or other material intended to affect public support for a political party, but they must not give the impression that the publication is authorised by the political party."

¹ [Local authority political assistants guidance - GOV.UK](#)

- b) Section 9(1) of the Act provides that unlike other Council employees, regard may also be had to their political affiliations and political activities prior to their appointment and this can be taken into account as part of the recruitment process.

3. Other Considerations

- a) Delegated powers and decision making (whether Executive or Non-Executive) cannot be conferred on Political Assistants and no other officer of the council can be required to work under the direction of a person holding a Political Assistant post, unless they are providing them with secretarial or clerical services.
- b) Each post will be filled from time to time in accordance with the wishes of the Political Group entitled to appoint the Political Assistant.
- c) The legislation requires that certain provisions relating to Political Assistants are included in the Standing Orders of the Council. It is proposed in the recommendations to delegate to the Monitoring Officer the authority to make the necessary consequential amendments to the Constitution.
- d) In addition to constitutional changes, additional operational governance will need to be developed including the job description, the involvement of Political Groups in any recruitment, attendance at council meetings, management arrangements and a protocol for how political assistants would work with other Officers. Given her accountabilities under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, it is recommended that responsibility for carrying out this exercise is delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leaders of the Political Groups entitled to appoint a Political Assistant.

4. Recommendation

County Council is asked to:

- a. APPROVE the establishment of Political Assistant posts for qualifying Political Groups in accordance with section 9 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989;
- b. DELEGATE authority to the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary consequential amendments to the Constitution;
- c. AUTHORISE the Chief Executive to appoint Political Assistants in accordance with the relevant legislation and guidance and for her to develop and agree a local protocol in relation to Political Assistants, incorporating a job description and salary for the role, in consultation with the Leaders of the Political Groups who qualify for appointment of a Political Assistant; and
- d. AUTHORISE the Corporate Director for Finance to identify the options for funding the roles for 2025/26 and to agree the most appropriate funding source, in consultation with the Leaders of the Political Groups who qualify for appointment of a Political Assistant.