

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, 5 March 2026.

PRESENT: Mr T Prater, Mr A Kennedy, Mr B Collins (Chair), Ms L Kemkaran, Mrs G Foster, Mr M Brown, Mr W Chapman, Mr J Moreland and Mr S Dixon

IN ATTENDANCE: Ben Watts (Deputy Chief Executive), Joel Cook (Democratic Services Manager), Lizzy Adam (Operations & Client Relationship Manager), Tristan Godfrey (Senior Governance Manager), Sian Connelly (Operational Delivery Team Manager)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

24. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 1)

Apologies were received from Mr R Lehmann and Mr M Harrison. Mr S Dixon was in attendance as substitute for Mr Harrison.

25. Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this meeting.

(Item 2)

RESOLVED there were no Member declarations of interest.

26. Minutes of the Meeting held on the 16 December 2025

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2025 were approved as a correct and accurate record and a paper be signed by the Chair.

27. 2026-27 County Scale of Election Fees and Expenses

(Item 4)

1. The item was presented by Lizzy Adam, Deputy Returning Officer and Operations and Client Relations Manager.
2. Ms Adam explained that, following the transfer of functions from the former Electoral Boundary Review Committee, the Committee was now responsible for annually approving the Kent County Council election fees scale. She advised that this was time-sensitive due to an upcoming by-election. The proposal was to adopt, in full, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2026–27 pay bands, with two exceptions: fees for poll clerks and presiding officers would be capped at the midpoint.

3. Appendix 1 covered items outside the pay bands but within the Ministry's expenses guidance; these would generally be reimbursed at actual cost, with specified exceptions. The Deputy Returning Officer cost section was proposed to be increased by 3.8%, in line with the general increase to pay grades in the Kent Scheme.
4. There were no Member questions or comments.
5. RESOLVED that Members APPROVED the proposed County Scale of Election Fees and Expenses for 2026/2027.

28. 2025 Election Review

(Item 5)

1. The item was presented by Ben Watts, the County Returning Officer and Deputy Chief Executive.
2. The report provided oversight and assurance on the conduct of the election and acknowledged the considerable work undertaken across Kent County Council and in the District, Borough and City Councils.
3. Mr Watts expressed appreciation for the Deputy Returning Officers and the teams in the District and Borough Councils, highlighting the collaborative working arrangements during the electoral period. Thanks to colleagues across Kent County Council who supported delivery, including staff who served in polling stations and provided technical, mapping, communications and operational support, were gratefully expressed.
4. Special tribute was paid to Lizzy Adam, Deputy Returning Officer, for leading the Internal Elections Team and for innovations in the use of technology and tools that supported the timely handling of enquiries and information flows. It was highlighted to Members that media coverage contributed to the transparency of the process.
5. Members would receive information about pre-election period rules concerning the forthcoming by-election in due course.
6. In response to Member comments and questions, the following was said:
 - a) As set out at paragraph 13(b) of the report, 16 spending returns were incomplete or outstanding out of a total of 427 received. Mr Watts advised that this represented a smaller number than had been reported at a similar point in the previous cycle.
 - b) It was stated that an updating report on the status of returns and follow-up actions would be brought to the next meeting. Mr Watts noted that the role of the Returning Officer in receiving returns was distinct from any separate enforcement considerations.
7. RESOLVED that Members noted the report and ENDORSED the actions of the County Returning Officer in conducting the 2025 Kent County Council election, as set out in the report.

29. Outside Bodies Update

(Item 6)

1. The report was presented by the Democratic Services Manager, Joel Cook.
2. Members were reminded that in September 2025 the Committee had delegated responsibility for making appointments to outside bodies and for liaising with members.
3. Members had been written to seeking expressions of interest, but several vacancies remained, and in some cases multiple members had expressed interest in a single seat.
4. Mr Cook proposed to write again to all Members highlighting current vacancies and sought the Committee's endorsement to address overlaps in consultation with the Chair of the Committee and Group Leaders, then bring a detailed report to the next meeting either confirming appointments made or seeking the Committee's decision where overlaps remained.
5. In answer to Member comments and questions, the following was said:
 - a) An all Member email requesting expressions of interest was sent the previous week to provide an update at the meeting.
 - b) There were approximately 12 vacancies across the programme of Outside Body appointments.
6. RESOLVED that Members noted the Outside Bodies update.