

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SELECTION AND MEMBER SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Selection and Member Services Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 1 December 2011.

PRESENT: Mr P J Homewood (Chairman), Mr A H T Bowles (Substitute for Mr P B Carter), Mr G Cowan, Mrs T Dean, Mr A J King, MBE, Mr K G Lynes, Mr B J Sweetland, Mr M J Whiting and Mrs J Whittle

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs A D Allen, Mr A D Crowther, Mr K H Pugh and Mr J N Wedgbury

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr G Wild (Director of Governance and Law), Mr P Sass (Head of Democratic Services), Mr P D Wickenden (Democratic Services Transition Manager) and Mr A Tait (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

42. Options for new governance arrangements for Kent County Council

(Item 3)

(1) The report by the Leader and the Director of Law and Governance on options for new governance arrangements for the County Council was circulated at the meeting. The Chairman declared consideration of the report to be Urgent as the County Council was due to consider the matter at its meeting on 15 December 2011.

(2) The Committee noted that the report on this matter to the County Council would be by the Leader and that the role of the Committee was therefore to make comments which he could incorporate if he was minded to do so.

(3) Members of the Committee made the following comments in relation to the text of the report:-

(a) Para 3 (1): As the appointment of the Cabinet Committee Chairmen would be in the gift of the Leader, what mechanism would be used to appoint a Chairman from the Opposition Groups?

(b) Para 3 (1): The report did not need to specify that Chairmen could be appointed from Opposition Groups as this was already implied by the phrase "non-executive Members."

(c) Para 3: The reasons for having a mixed economy of Cabinet Committee Chairmen were noted. However, if any one particular arrangement was seen to be working better than others, the County Council should not feel tied to the specified 12 month review period.

(d) Para 3: There might well be a need to trial different chairmanship models for individual Cabinet Committees.

(e) Para 3 (6): It would be essential to retain the Children's Services Improvement Panel together with the Corporate Parenting Panel.

(f) Para 3 (15) & (16): The text in these two paragraphs on proportionality were capable of being misunderstood. Further clarification was needed to show that it was the County Council's choice to apply proportionality to the Cabinet Committees (although it did not have to do so) and that this proportionality was to be varied by allowing each minority group to take up a seat on each of these Committees even if strict application of proportionality would not entitle them to do so. The text of paragraph 3 (15) should be amended to clarify that this was to be the arrangement for all minority groups rather than the "Labour Group."

(g) Paras 7 and 8: As each Member who sat on a Cabinet Committee was automatically serving on the executive side, there was a risk that there might be difficulties in identifying a sufficient number of Members to sit on the "Overview and Scrutiny Committee."

(h) Para 8: Whilst recognising that the term "Overview and Scrutiny Committee" was set out in section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000, the text of this paragraph should be written in such a manner as to clarify that this Committee may not be called by that name and that it would only carry out the scrutiny function i.e. to call in for scrutiny decisions made but not yet called in by the Executive.

(i) The Member Role Description of a Chairman of a Cabinet Committee should include the function of "signposting" items that Members wished to place on its agenda to a forum where the issue could be dealt with most appropriately.

(j) The County Council should not at this stage prescribe that each Cabinet Committee should only meet five times during a calendar year as it might become apparent that some of them would need to meet more frequently.

(k) The report should specify that a Cabinet Committee could set up its own Sub-Committees to consider specific matters including urgent business. This would enable the County Council to continue to avoid the necessity of setting up ad hoc meetings of the "Overview and Scrutiny Committee."

(l) The report should underline the importance that the County Council attached to Localism, Locality Boards and Joint Transportation Boards.

(4) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the comments made by individual Members of the Committee (set out in (3) above) be forwarded to the Leader for possible incorporation into his report to the County Council on 15 December 2011;
- (b) the ongoing work on the Constitution and other constitutional framework/operational documents be noted; and
- (c) the arrangements for embedding the new governance arrangements into the County Council be noted together with the training of Members and officers to ensure a smooth transition.