

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee held in the Wantsum Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 2 August 2012.

PRESENT: Mr G K Gibbens (Chairman), Mr K A Ferrin, MBE, Mr M J Harrison, Mr P J Homewood (Substitute for Mr J F London), Mr T Prater, Mr M V Snelling and Mrs P A V Stockell

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr G Wild (Director of Governance and Law), Mrs A Beer (Corporate Director of Human Resources), Mr P Sass (Head of Democratic Services) and Ms J Hickey (Online Communications Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

5. Apologies and Substitutes

The Committee noted apologies from Mr London and Mr Chell. It was noted that Mr Homewood was substituting for Mr London.

6. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest by Committee Members.

7. Minutes - 1 March 2012

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2012 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

8. Boundary Reviews

(Item 4)

(1) The Committee considered a report which provided information and requested Members' comments on Boundary/Governance Reviews in Swale, Tonbridge & Malling, Shepway and Sevenoaks.

(2) Members had a general discussion around District Boundary Reviews and their potential impact on County Electoral Divisions, especially the impact that these reviews could have on two Member Electoral Divisions because District Council wards were the building blocks of County Electoral Divisions. Members emphasised the importance of the Committee having the opportunity to comment on these reviews at the appropriate time during the consultation period.

(3) The Committee was keen to ensure that none of the existing District Council reviews led to a situation where more two Member electoral divisions could be created.

(4) RESOLVED that:

(a) it be noted that the consultation on the Electoral Boundary Reviews for Swale and Tonbridge and Malling areas had now closed and that Local Members had been given the opportunity to submit comments direct and that the Committee would be kept informed of progress with these reviews;

(b) Sevenoaks District Council be informed that this Committee does not wish to submit any comments on the Sevenoaks Community Governance Review and it was noted that the Committee would be kept informed of progress with this review;

(c) the submission made to the Local Government Electoral Boundary Commission by Shepway District Council be noted and that Shepway District Council be informed that the County Council would not want to see any review of Ward Boundaries that would lead to the creation of more two Member Electoral Divisions or any difficulties caused if the County Council wanted to change existing two Member divisions to single Member divisions in the future;

(d) the Chairman write to the Local Government Electoral Boundary Commission on behalf of the Committee expressing concern about two Member Electoral Divisions and the need to ensure that District Boundary Reviews did not make it difficult to change these to single Member Electoral Divisions in the future; and

(e) a meeting of the Committee would be called to consider all future District Boundary Reviews at the most appropriate time during the consultation period so that the County Council had an opportunity to submit its views at the earliest possible stage.

9. Kent County Council Election - May 2013

(Item 5)

(1) The Committee considered a report from the Director of Governance and Law on the work being undertaken with the District and Borough Councils in Kent to plan for the County Council elections in May 2013 and the publication of the election results on the County Council's website.

(2) Members discussed various aspects of the elections including the role of the District and Borough Councils in running elections and the voting process.

(3) Mr Wild, as County Returning Officer (CRO), stated that there would be a robustness around the payment of expenses for the election and confirmed that payments would be made to Districts following the verification of the District expenses by KCC Financial Officers in strict accordance with the approved fees and charges and in line with the recommendations of the Kent Audit review earlier this year. Following the elections in 2013 work would be carried out to compare the way that District and Borough Councils ran the election and to share best practise in other parts of the country.

(4) Mr Wild confirmed that the timing of the Election Count was still the subject of discussions with District and Borough Councils, although his initial view as CRO was for all District and Borough Councils to commence the count the morning after

election day. Some of the Committee Members expressed a preference for the Election Count to be held on the night of the Election rather than the following morning. Mr Wild stated as CRO, the final decision legally rested with him, but he would take into account the views expressed by Members.

(5) The Committee received a presentation on the way in which Election Results for the County Council election in 2013 could be displayed on the County Council's website. Members were pleased with the way in which it was proposed to display the results and made a number of comments, which included the following;

- Where ever there is a percentage figure shown on the web page the actual number must also be available.
- The importance of ensuring that the page was kept up to date and regularly refreshed was emphasised.
- The graphic depicting the prancing horse was regarded as being confusing and should not feature in the final designs
- The way that the swing was displayed should be kept as clear and simple as possible.
- Consideration should be given to how this data could be displayed on smart phones.
- A Member requested that the results should also be made available in the form of a single excel spreadsheet.

(6) RESOLVED that:

(a) the progress made with regard to planning for the 2013 County Council elections be noted and it be confirmed that the running of County Council elections remains with the District and Borough Councils; and

(b) the progress made to date on the display of election results for the County Council elections in May 2013 and the feedback from Members on the way that these should be visually displayed on the website as detailed in these minutes be noted.

10. Urgent Item

The Chairman stated that he proposed to deal with an urgent exempt item in relation to the proposed remuneration for the County Returning Officer and he declared the report as urgent because of the need to clarify the position with regard to the proposed remuneration for the County Returning Officer so that the necessary arrangements for the County Council Elections in May 2013 could be made without delay.

11. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the report involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

12. County Returning Officer Remuneration

(The Director of Governance and Law, Mr Wild withdrew from the meeting for this item)

(The Corporate Director of Human Resources, Ms Beer joined the meeting for this item)

Public Summary of the Exempt Minute:

The Committee was advised that at its meeting on 15 December 2011, the County Council appointed the Director of Governance and Law as the County Returning Officer (CRO). The Committee discussed and endorsed the proposed remuneration for the CRO and also agreed to review the arrangements following the County Council Elections in 2013.