

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 24 November 2016.

PRESENT: Mr G K Gibbens (Chairman), Mr A H T Bowles, Mr D L Brazier, Mr I S Chittenden, Mr J D Simmonds, MBE (Substitute for Mr A J King, MBE), Mrs P A V Stockell, Mr R Truelove and Mrs Z Wiltshire (Substitute for Mr M Heale)

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms L Adam (Scrutiny Research Officer), Ms D Fitch (Democratic Services Manager (Council)) and Mr B Watts (General Counsel (Interim))

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

28. Minutes - 22 May 2015 (Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2015 are correctly recorded and they be signed by the Chairman.

29. Kent County Council Election - May 2017 (Item 4)

(1) Mr Watts introduced a report which updated the Committee on his appointment as the County Returning Officer and the work being undertaken with Borough and District Councils in Kent to plan for the County Council election in May 2017.

(2) In relation to the process for the receipt of nominations, Members emphasised the importance of there being clarity around where nominations needed to be submitted. There was a general view that there was no benefit to Members or potential candidates in having a nomination submitted centrally. The view was expressed that centralisation of nominations could be a negation of democracy, as candidates may be discouraged by having to travel long distances to an unfamiliar office to submit their nomination rather than being able to do so at their local District Council office.

(3) Regarding whether the count should be held on the evening of the election or the following day as has been the practice at recent County Council elections, Members did not express any strong wish to hold the count on election day. The importance of having consistency in the timing of the count across the County was emphasised. Members acknowledged that if the count was held the following day it may mean that candidates may not be able to attend if they had work commitments.

(4) Mr Watts thanked Members for their comments. He stated that he would take these into account in making his decisions as the County Returning Officer. He had also sought the views of District Council colleagues and he was reflecting upon the way in which the 2013 election had been run. He emphasised that, as County

Returning Officer, he was personally responsible for the proper conduct of the election and was required to deliver an accurate and efficient election.

(5) RESOLVED that;

(a) the appointment of the General Counsel (Interim) as the County Returning Officer and the progress made with regard to planning for the 2017 County Council election be noted;

(b) the County Returning Officer note the Committee's comments about the Notice of Election, election count, nomination process and the Scale of Fees and Expenses and provide an update to the Committee in January 2017.

30. 2018 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies

(Item 5)

(1) Mr Watts introduced a report which updated the Committee on the 2018 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies being undertaken by the Boundary Commission for England including the timetable of the review and initial proposals for Kent.

(2) RESOLVED that the 2018 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies be noted and KCC political groups respond directly to the Boundary Commission for England's consultation on the initial proposals by 5 December 2016.

31. Ashford Borough Council - Community Governance Review

(Item 6)

(1) Mr Watts introduced a report which updated the Committee on the community governance review undertaken by Ashford Borough Council in 2015 and the proposal to make consequential minor alterations to the county electoral divisions in Ashford in advance of 2017 County Council election. The report included a summary of the alterations and illustrative maps. He confirmed that if the Committee did not agree to these minor alterations then the current agreed boundary would be implemented for the 2017 County election.

(2) In response to questions from Members Mr Watts undertook to provide the Committee with clarification regarding Parish Boundaries split across district wards and county electoral divisions.

(3) Mr Watts emphasised that the request to agree to these minor alterations had come from Ashford Borough Council and the Boundary Commission, and this Committee would need to agree to these alterations at this meeting in order for them to be implemented for the 2017 County Election.

(4) RESOLVED that the alterations to the county electoral divisions in Ashford as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be agreed and a letter be sent to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England confirming the Committee's approval of these changes.