

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee held in the Online on Thursday, 18 March 2021.

PRESENT: Mr G K Gibbens (Chairman), Mr A H T Bowles (Vice-Chairman), Mrs C Bell, Mrs P T Cole, Mr P C Cooper, Mr D Farrell and Ida Linfield

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr B Watts (General Counsel), Ms L Adam (Scrutiny Research Officer) and Mr J Cook (Democratic Services Manager)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

14. Minutes of the meetings held on 30 July 2018 and 22 January 2021 (Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2018 and 22 January 2021 were correct records and that they be signed by the Chair.

15. Election Update (Item 4)

1. Mr Watts introduced the report, providing an overview of preparations and activity in advance of the May 2021 elections. He explained the challenging circumstances arising from the pandemic combined with the need to undertake additional elections which had been delayed from 2020. This had included working closely with the Police and Crime Commissioner election returning officer, Sarah Martin, at Dartford Borough Council and Mr Watts advised that they had been working to align the arrangements and preparations as closely as possible.
2. Mr Watts highlighted the excellent work by and good engagement with the District staff who deliver the elections. He highlighted some specific challenges at a local level such as identifying appropriate locations for polling stations and count venues as a number of relevant sites had been or were being used as testing or vaccination centres. Mr Watts also highlighted sections of the report which clarified some of the specific changes being made to the election arrangements in view of the pandemic, including PPE requirements and the reduction in the number of subscribers required to support a nomination.
3. Mr Watts responded to a number of questions from Members, including;
 - Confirming expectation that the KCC election count would be concluded in the day after the election.
 - Reassurance as to sanitation and cleanliness as polling stations.
 - Confirmation that the list of Clinically Extremely Vulnerable People had been shared with Districts to assist in the promotion of alternative methods of voting (to minimise COVID risk).

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

16. Scale of Fees

(Item 5)

1. Ms Adam introduced the report. She explained to there had been three relevant updates since the last consideration of Scale of Fees by the Committee, including a requirement to consider an increase in the bottom level of fees following the Budget County Council decision regarding minimum pay levels.

RESOLVED that the Committee;

- (a) note the uplift to the 2021/22 County Scale of Election Fees and Expenses;
- (b) approve the additional uplift of Item 17 (For each Poll Clerk at the Polling Station) in the 2021/22 County Scale of Election Fees and Expenses for 2021/22 in order to meet the County Council's commitment to increase the entry value of the lowest grade (KR2/3) to £9.55 per hour to maintain the position above the national minimum and marginally above the Living Wage Foundation for April 2021; and
- (c) delegate to the County Returning Officer and Deputy County Returning Officer additional minor adjustments to the 2021/22 County Scale of Election Fees and Expenses.

Concluding the meeting, Mr Gibbens expressed his thanks to all Members of the Committee for their work and engagement with the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee activity during his time as Chair. In particular, he highlighted the significant activity in relation to the substantive Boundary Review.

Mr Gibbens noted that a number of Members of the Committee, himself included, would not be returning as Members after the 2021 election. He wished the best of luck to all staff supporting the 2021 election and thanked them on behalf of all Members for their hard work.