

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 13 JULY 2009

Present: Councillor Mrs Hinder (Chairman), and
Councillors Butler, Horne, Hotson, Mortimer, Paine,
Sams and Mrs Wilson

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs Blackmore.

2. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following substitution was noted:-

Councillor Butler for Councillor Mrs Blackmore

3. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

4. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor Mrs Hinder be elected Chairman for the municipal year 2009/10.

5. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor Mortimer be elected Vice Chairman for the municipal year 2009/10.

The Vice Chairman took the Chair in the absence of the Chairman.

6. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members and Officers.

7. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

8. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That the items on the Agenda be taken in public as proposed.

9. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 April 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed.

The Chairman arrived and took the Chair.

10. APPOINTMENT OF POLITICAL GROUP SPOKESPERSONS

RESOLVED: That the Political Group Spokespersons be appointed as follows:-

Councillor Mrs Hinder – Conservative
Councillor Mortimer – Liberal Democrat
Councillors Sams – Independent

11. SUGGESTED CRITERIA FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Group considered the Reference from the Standards Committee regarding the suggested criteria for the appointment of Independent Persons to the Standards Committee.

Members raised some concerns with the wording of some of the criteria. It was felt that the wording "significant office in a political party" needed an explanation and that including "have local connections" could deter people from applying.

The Group were informed that the term of office for the independent member currently serving on the Independent Remuneration Panel ("IRP") was due to expire on 31 August 2009. The Council has recently received a request to explore the possibility of a Joint IRP with other local Councils and therefore it was felt prudent to extend the term of office of the current member until the end of the calendar year to allow time explore this possibility.

RESOLVED:

1. That the following criteria, as amended, be adopted as selection criteria against which applicants to be Independent Members of the Standards Committee will be assessed:-

Applicants must:-

- Be prepared to give up time for training and meetings
- Either reside in the Borough or carry out the main part of their work in the Borough
- Agree to abide by the provisions of the Code of Conduct
- Not hold significant office in a political party (namely a member of the local executive)
- Not have given financial support, other than membership fees, to a political party within five years of the date of appointment

- Not have been convicted of an imprisonable offence
- Not have been adjudged bankrupt
- Not have a history of vexatious and/or frivolous complaints against Maidstone Borough Council or Parish Councils or Members of both.

Applicants should be able to demonstrate from their life experience and interview:-

- Mature judgement: the ability to withhold forming a final view until all available evidence has been obtained and considered
 - Common sense: the ability to distinguish what matters from what does not
 - Strong ethical standards: both an appreciation and demonstration of the importance of high ethical standards in corporate or public life
 - Communication skills: the ability to listen and understand what is being said to them and to respond thoughtfully and articulately
 - An ability to chair meetings as this would be an advantage
2. That the term of office for the independent member on the Independent Remuneration Panel be extended to the end of this calendar year to enable investigations regarding a joint IRP to be concluded.

12. WHOLE AND PARTIAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS REVIEW

The Group considered the Reference from Council regarding the consultation exercise to be undertaken on the matter of moving to whole council elections.

The Group were informed that as there had been very little time between the Council meeting and this meeting a full report on the consultation options was not available at this time. However, some research had taken place and this was outlined to the Group.

Members felt it was important that the electorate in the whole Borough should be consulted but that there was insufficient time to enable a distribution with the electoral register as the deadline was 29 July 2009.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Reference from Council be noted.
2. That the principle of consulting the whole electorate on whole council elections be agreed.
3. That the principle that the analysis of the results received from the consultation should be carried out by an independent body be agreed.

4. That the Democratic Services Manager submits a report on the options available to the Group.

13. THE TOWN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE JUDICIARY

The Group considered the Reference from Council regarding the Town's relationship with the Judiciary.

Members felt that a review of all civic functions that are held was required.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Reference from Council be noted.
2. That it be noted that the Chief Executive would bring a report on this issue as soon as possible.
3. That the Democratic Services Manager report to the Group regarding the issue of civic functions referred from the Council.

14. OUTSIDE BODIES REVIEW

The Group considered the report of the Democratic Services Manager regarding the Outside Bodies review.

The Group was informed that the Kent County Playing Fields Association are requesting a nomination from the Council as Councillor Hotson is no longer an executive member.

The Group were informed that Councillor Mrs Parvin had resigned from the Maidstone Housing Trust.

RESOLVED:

1. That, for those organisations who have not responded and those who have indicated they need someone straight away, the current representatives continue until an appropriate renewal time when the new nomination process can be applied.
2. That Councillor Garland be appointed as the nominated representative on the Local Government Association Urban Commission for a term of one year.
3. That the new nomination process be applied before an appointment is made to replace Councillor Beerling on the Maidstone Sea Cadets.
4. That, for those Outside Bodies where a Ward Member is required, the Ward Members agree the appropriate representative in the following priority order – ward member, local member, any other member. If

more than one nomination is received, then this Group should consider and appoint the representative.

5. That the Democratic Services Manager compiles a timetable for nominations to Outside Bodies.
6. That the nomination process for Outside Bodies, as set out in the report of the Democratic Services Manager, be approved.
7. That the Nomination Form (attached at Appendix B to the report of the Democratic Services Manager) be approved.
8. That Councillors Beerling and Parr be appointed as the Council representatives to the Maidstone Housing Trust for a period of 3 years.
9. That Councillor John A Wilson replace Councillor Mrs Parvin as the Council representative to the Maidstone Housing Trust until 2010.
10. That should a Member serving a 4 year term on an Outside Body lose their seat or resign, then they should be formally asked if they wish to continue as the Council's representative.
11. That the Kent County Playing Fields Association be included in the list of Outside Bodies and a representative be appointed following the new nomination process.

15. MAYORAL PROCESSION AT CIVIC PARADE

The Group considered the matter relating to the High Sheriff and Lord Lieutenant accompanying the Mayor and Mayoress in the carriage at the Civic Parade.

RESOLVED: That the Democratic Services Manager submits a report to the Group on the Civic Parade.

16. DURATION OF MEETING

6.00 p.m. to 7.50 p.m.