

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRACY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 4
SEPTEMBER 2019**

Present: Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Chappell-Tay, Garten,
Hastie, Joy, Lewins, Munford, Purle and Webb
(Chairman)

23. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gooch and Perry.

24. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that the following Substitute Members were present:

- Councillor Munford for Councillor Gooch
- Councillor Garten for Councillor Perry

25. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

26. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

27. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

28. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

29. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE
BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION.

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed.

30. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 JULY 2019

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed.

31. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

32. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

33. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Policy, Communications and Governance highlighted that additional items could be added to the Work Programme following consideration of Item 15. Democratic Representation Review.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

34. WORKFORCE STRATEGY UPDATE

The Head of HR Shared Services explained that the primary reason for long-term sick leave in recent years was mental health. The figure had substantially reduced and was comparable to other factors such as cancer and hospital treatment/surgery. In 2018/19, 30 employees had been trained to support staff through Mental Health First Aid training. Work had also been undertaken to communicate the total employment package received by employees at the council. This included monetary and non-monetary benefits. A Total Rewards Video had been developed to communicate this information as part of the Total Reward Statements roadshows. This video was shown to the Committee.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Head of HR Shared Services replied that:

- Staff turnover percentages were consistent with previous years.
- MBC was on track to achieve the target of having 2.3% of the workforce on apprenticeships by 2021.

The Committee commented that:

- It would be positive for MBC to meet, or exceed, the 2.3% apprentice headcount target.
- It was beneficial for Councillors to receive further information on Mental Health First Aid.
- Staff turnover figures could be broken down into percentages and categories, including benchmarks.

RESOLVED: That the progress of the actions set out in the Workforce Strategy be noted.

35. PROTOCOLS FOR FLYING THE BOROUGH COUNCIL FLAG AT HALF-MAST

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager recommended that the current protocol for flying the Borough Council flag at half-mast be continued. Through engagement with Civic Teams at other Local Councils, it was apparent that the approach detailed in 'Civic Ceremonial' was commonly used.

The Committee commented that if Maidstone Borough Council deviated from national policy, this had the potential to lead to challenges in the future.

RESOLVED: That the Borough Council continue to use the existing protocol, as set out in 'Civic Ceremonial'.

Voting: Unanimous

36. NOMINATIONS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Democratic Services Officer explained that, following the advertisement of vacant Outside Body positions, two nominations had been received.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager confirmed that it was possible to appoint members of the public as Council Representatives on Outside Bodies. This had been suggested by the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee on 16 July 2019 and was in accordance with the principles agreed by the Democracy and General Purposes Committee on 3 July 2019.

RESOLVED: That:

1. Councillor Dan Daley be appointed as a Council Representative on the Allington Millennium Green Trust.

Voting: Unanimous

2. Ms Daphne Parvin be appointed as a Council Representative on the Relief in Need Charities.

Voting: For – 8 Against – 0 Abstentions – 1

37. DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION REVIEW

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager outlined that the report set out a structured approach to the review. It was explained that an initial decision on Whole Council Elections was required, as the introduction of single-member wards could only be considered if Whole Council Elections were agreed.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Electoral and Democratic Services Manager said that:

- If a decision was made not to move to Whole Council Elections, then it was possible to conduct a review of boundaries through a Community Governance Review.
- If a Community Governance Review was required, it was important to prepare fully for this, as the review had to be completed within 12 months.

RESOLVED: That:

1. The new approach, structure and timetable for the review as set out in Appendix 1 be agreed.
2. The factors listed in Appendix 2 be included in the report on Whole Council Elections in November 2019.

Voting: Unanimous

38. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION - OUTSIDE BODIES

The Democratic Services Officer informed the Committee that, following work to consolidate records relating to Outside Body appointments, the report aimed to align information in the Constitution with accepted administrative practices. Furthermore, improvements to the future administration of Outside Body appointments had been suggested.

The Committee commented that:

- Ward Members were often best placed to be the Council Representative on organisations that were directly linked to specific Wards. Therefore, where appropriate, Ward Members were to be given preference during the nomination process. If no nominations were received from the relevant Ward Members, then all Councillors were to be given the opportunity to apply for the position.
- To prevent the politicisation of Outside Body appointments, the Constitution was to state that the Policy and Resources (P&R) Committee delegated appropriate positions only when invited to do so by the Chairman.

RESOLVED: That:

1. Council be recommended to agree the changes to Schedule 2 of the Constitution, attached as Appendix 1, subject to the amendment of Ward Member restriction wording and Chairman delegation wording as follows:
 - a. “[XXX] Ward Member be appointed, unless no relevant Ward Member nomination is received, in which case this restriction no longer applies.”

- b. "P&R Chairman automatically appointed, unless he/she invites the Committee to delegate to another member."
2. Council be recommended to agree the changes to committee Terms of Reference, attached as Appendix 2.
3. The amended terms of office for Council Representative positions on the Collis Millennium Green Trust and Kent Downs AONB Joint Advisory Committee be noted.

Voting: Unanimous

39. DURATION OF MEETING

6.31 p.m. to 7.41 p.m.