

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **DEMOCRACY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9 MARCH 2022**

**Present:** Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Cooper, English, Garten, Hastie, Purle (Chairman) and Russell

114. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors McKay, Perry and R Webb.

115. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Garten was present as a Substitute Member for Councillor Perry.

116. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman informed the Committee that an urgent item had been accepted for the Local Government Boundary Review – Ward Scheme Consultation Response (Item 16) so that the consultation response could be presented at the full Council meeting on 13 April 2022.

117. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

118. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

119. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillor English had been lobbied on Item 15 – New Constitution.

All Members had been lobbied on Item 16 – Local Government Boundary Review – Ward Scheme Consultation Response.

120. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

121. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 FEBRUARY 2022

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed.

122. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

123. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

124. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

125. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

126. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports of Outside Bodies.

127. TRUSTEE APPOINTMENT TO THE RELIEF IN NEED CHARITIES

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and explained that there was one current and one upcoming vacancy for Trustees for Relief in Need Charities. A nomination had been received from Councillor Harper, and Councillor Daley, whose term would expire on 13 March 2022, had expressed an interest in being reappointed for another term.

**RESOLVED:** That

1. Councillor Harper be appointed for a term of four years; and
2. Councillor Daley be reappointed for a term of four years.

Note: Councillor Russell left the meeting during this item.

128. NEW CONSTITUTION

The Head of Policy, Communications and Governance introduced the report and explained that the access to information rules had been extensively rewritten with the proper officer function for ascertaining the need to know being changed from the Monitoring Officer to the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance. The next steps for the constitution would be submission to full Council for approval.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that the current process of implementing changes to the constitution would continue, whereby changes would be presented to the Committee and then ratified by full Council. It was clarified that an amendment could be made to 14.1.1 of C2 to include reference to neighbourhood forums.

The Monitoring Officer explained that the Committee was recommended to review the new constitution six months after its introduction.

**RESOLVED:** That

1. Council be recommended to adopt the draft Constitution for Maidstone Borough Council at Appendix A, to come into effect from the Annual Meeting of the Council on 21 May 2022, subject to the amendment of part C2, 14.1.1 to reference neighbourhood forums;
2. The Head of Policy, Communications and Governance in consultation with the Chair of Democracy and General Purposes be given delegated authority to add a guide to the constitution and make any minor amendments to the draft to correct errors, omissions or inconsistencies, prior to submitting the draft to Council; and
3. The operation and effectiveness of the new Constitution be reviewed by the Committee six months after its introduction.

Note: Councillor Hastie joined the meeting during this item.

129. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY REVIEW - WARD SCHEME CONSULTATION RESPONSE

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager introduced the report and outlined the recommended ward scheme consultation response. The purpose of the review was to achieve electoral equality across the Borough, with strong consideration of communities and maintaining effective local government. Members had contributed throughout the process through workshops, a drop-in event and individual conversations. Groups and individuals could submit proposals directly to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) with supporting evidence. It was noted that a community governance review would be undertaken by the Borough Council the following year.

The Chairman read a statement from Councillors J Sams and T Sams regarding the proposed Harrietsham, Lenham and Hollingbourne Ward.

In response to questions, the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager explained that the LGBCE would consider every proposal on the evidence provided, including the impact on other wards. The narrative for Harrietsham, Lenham and Hollingbourne could be amended to reflect that some developments in Lenham were already populated, and note that the proposal affects the Parish Council.

In expressing support for the proposal and acknowledgement that it satisfied the LGBCE's criteria, the Committee recognised the complexity of producing a ward scheme that all Members would be content with.

**RESOLVED:** That

1. The response to the LGBCE consultation on ward boundaries, set out at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 of the report, be recommended to Council for submission to the LGBCE, subject to the amendment of the narrative for Harrietsham, Lenham and Hollingbourne to reflect the Ward Councillors' comments; and
2. Delegated authority be given to the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager to make minor refinements to boundaries and text in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 ahead of Council.

130. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30pm to 7.13pm.