

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Civic Affairs Committee held on  
Thursday, 23 March 2017 at 10.00 a.m.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Sue Ellington – Chairman  
Councillor Charles Nightingale – Vice-Chairman

<b>Councillors:</b>	Nigel Cathcart Janet Lockwood Bridget Smith	Simon Crocker David McCraith Bunty Waters
<b>Officers:</b>	Patrick Adams Gemma Barron Jason Clarke Andrew Francis Rory McKenna	Senior Democratic Services Officer Head of Sustainable Communities and Wellbeing Development Officer Electoral Services Manager Deputy Monitoring Officer

Councillors Ray Manning were in attendance, by invitation.

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors David Bard and Deborah Roberts who were attending an Emergency Planning Committee meeting.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Simon Crocker declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 4 “Community Governance Review of Caxton, Elsworth and Cambourne Parishes”, as the Chairman of Cambourne Parish Council and author of the document “Cambourne West Governance”, included as an appendix to the report. He spoke on behalf of Cambourne Parish Council and answered questions from Committee members, but he did not participate in the debate and he did not vote.

### **3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

### **4. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW OF CAXTON, ELSWORTH AND CAMBOURNE PARISHES**

The Development Officer presented this report which invited the Committee to agree terms of reference for undertaking a formal Community Governance Review of the parish boundaries between Caxton, Elsworth and Cambourne.

#### **Anomaly with ward boundaries**

The Electoral Services Manager explained that whilst the Council could alter the parish council boundaries the agreement of the Boundary Commission was required to amend the ward boundaries. This meant that if, at the end of the consultation period, it was agreed to move the parish boundary to include Cambourne West in Cambourne, its residents would vote for and be represented by those District Councillors in the Caxton and Papworth ward whilst being Cambourne parishioners. This anomaly would exist until the Boundary Commission agreed to alter the ward boundary to include Cambourne West in the Cambourne ward.

**A future review of ward boundaries**

Concern was expressed that the development at Cambourne could trigger another review of ward boundaries. However, it was noted that new developments elsewhere in the District could also trigger a review and the electorate figures for Cambourne in May 2018 were well below the average District figure, indicating that there was room for growth.

**Cambourne parish**

It was noted that the Community Governance Review could consider creating a separate parish for Cambourne West, although it was unclear if there was any support for this option.

The Civic Affairs Committee unanimously

**AGREED**

- A) The draft terms of reference as detailed in Appendix A of the report; and
- B) The indicative timetable for the review as detailed in paragraph 2.5 of Appendix A of the report.

**5. REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS - QUESTIONS AT COUNCIL MEETINGS**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced this report, which invited the Committee to make a recommendation to Council on whether members should be able to continue to ask questions at Council without notice within a maximum period of 30 minutes.

The Committee supported the current arrangements because:

- it allowed councillors to ask questions on events that had occurred after the agenda had been published
- it was working well as councillors tended to get responses to their questions at the meeting instead of being told to wait for a written response
- the 30 minute time limit ensured that councillors were succinct when asking and answering questions

The Civic Affairs Committee unanimously

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**

That Standing Order 11.4 in the Constitution be amended to allow members to ask questions at Council without giving notice within a maximum period of 30 minutes.

**6. CODE OF CONDUCT UPDATE**

The Principal Lawyer introduced this item, which updated the Committee on cases regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct. He explained that Legal Services had to consider the following issues when processing complaints regarding parish councillors:

- it was imperative that the Council remained impartial regarding complaints about parish councillors
- parish councils were separate legal entities
- there were over 100 parishes in the District and equal support had to be offered to all parish councils
- the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils existed to

provide advice and support to parish councils.

The Head of Sustainable Communities and Wellbeing explained that officers in her section offered support to parish council, attended their meetings and liaised regularly with parish clerks. It was agreed that parish councils who needed advice on Code of Conduct issues should contact the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils.

The Civic Affairs Committee **NOTED** the report.

**7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting will be held on Thursday 22 June 2017.

---

**The Meeting ended at 10.30 a.m.**

---