

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Civic Affairs Committee held on
Thursday, 14 December 2023 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Peter Fane – Chair
Councillor Paul Bearpark – Vice-Chair

Councillors: Henry Batchelor
Lina Nieto
Dr Susan van de Ven
Heather Williams
Dr. Martin Cahn
Bridget Smith
Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer

Officers: Patrick Adams
Andrew Francis
John Murphy
Jonathan Tully
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Elections and Democratic Services Manager
Monitoring Officer
Head of Internal Audit

Councillor Cllr Brian Milnes was in attendance remotely.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Paul Bearpark. Councillor Brian Milnes was in attendance online.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2023 as a correct record.

4. Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2023

The Elections and Democratic Services Manager presented this report on the outcome of a review of the Council's polling districts and polling places. He highlighted the changes that were proposed.

In response to questioning the Elections and Democratic Services Manager explained that whilst the population might indicate a need for a separate polling station it was often difficult to find a suitable location.

The Elections and Democratic Services Manager explained that the Tesco site was the most accessible place to locate the Fulbourn Beechwood Polling Station. Voters would have further to travel if the Polling Station was located in the Sports and Social Club.

The Elections and Democratic Services Manager reported that a private residence

in Tadlow had been booked for the local elections on 2 May 2024. It was unusual to have a private residence that the local voters were satisfied with.

The Elections and Democratic Services Manager suggested that the primary school would suffice as a polling station at Trumpington Meadows. He added that the District Council and City Council worked together in border areas to ensure that voters went to the correct station.

The Elections and Democratic Services Manager reported that the Council continued to communicate the requirement for photographic identification to vote, with large posters on public buildings, a full page advert in the winter edition of the South Cambs Magazine and adverts planned for bin lorries. He invited Councillors to contact him directly about this matter and how best to inform residents of the change.

With regard to accessibility concerns the Elections and Democratic Services Manager explained that voting took place under the awnings of caravans and the adapted mobile libraries had a lift.

A vote was taken by affirmation the

Civic Affairs Committee

Recommended to Council the adoption of a revised schedule of polling districts and polling places as laid out at Appendix A to the report.

5. **Independent Person for Audit and Corporate Governance Committee**

The Head of Internal Audit presented this report on the progress being made on the appointment of an Independent Member to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee. Council on 5 October 2023 had approved this, with an amendment that they must be a resident of Cambridgeshire. Officers had been asked to provide a definition of a resident and the Committee was being asked to consider this definition.

The Monitoring Officer explained that the proposal was to keep the definition of resident flexible and allow those in charge of the recruitment process to decide whether a candidate was eligible.

Councillor Heather Williams declared an Other Registerable Interest, as a member of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee. It was noted that appendix C was missing from the agenda and would be included in the report to Council.

Councillor Bridget Smith requested that this matter be reviewed in a year's time to consider whether a second Independent Member should be appointed, as this was in line with best practice. The Chair expected that the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee would want to review the process and consider appointing a second Independent Member in due course.

A vote was taken and by affirmation the Committee

Recommended that Council

Change the Constitution to allow the appointment of an Independent Member to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee, noting that they should:

- A) Not have voting rights.
- B) Be a resident of Cambridgeshire area; and
- C) The recruitment process to be delegated to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.

6. Celebration of the Council's 50th Anniversary - Oral Update from the Working Group

The Chair explained that the Council had been established in April 1974 and it seemed appropriate to commemorate the 50th anniversary of this event. A small working group had been set up to make recommendations on how to achieve this and notes of their meeting on 12 December had been circulated to the members of the Committee. Members of the Committee made the following suggestions:

- The event should celebrate democracy and the diversity of the population.
- Joint values and respect should be promoted.
- A display for each of the five decades should be considered.
- The event should also look to the future and seek to involve young people in local government.
- Former Leaders should be invited, along with invitations to young potential future leaders.
- Local music groups could provide entertainment at the event.
- Groups that had received funding from the Council should be invited.

7. Update on Code of Conduct Complaints

The Monitoring Officer updated the Committee on the complaint cases regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct. He explained that a breach of the Code of Conduct involving a District Councillor had been proven and it had been closed under the summary resolution procedure. In another complaint against a District Councillor no breach of the Code of Conduct had been found and so this case had been closed. The other cases were still under investigation.

The Monitoring Officer reported that he had received an e-mail from a resident, which had been copied to Committee members, expressing concern that the details of the recent breach of the Code of Conduct had not been published. The current practise of the Council was to not put details of a case on the website, where there had been a summary resolution. The Monitoring Officer concluded that he would be reviewing the Council's procedure. Members of the Committee suggested that the Local Government Association be consulted with to establish what other local authorities do.

The Monitoring Officer explained that he would be introducing himself to parish council representatives at a forthcoming training day organised by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils.

The Committee **noted** the report.

8. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 14 March at 10 am.

The Meeting ended at 11.15 a.m.
