

Parish Council E-mailed Survey Responses

Bar Hill Parish Council (from minutes of 20 April 2011 meeting)

Standards Committee Newsletter – Localism Bill

RH stated that he had a prejudicial interest and could make no decision. This was debated at length as the Parish Council had a decision to make on the following: Does your Parish Council plan to adopt a voluntary code of conduct? If so, does your Parish Council plan to adopt a framework of dealing with allegations relating to your voluntary code? If the District Council adopts a voluntary code of conduct and framework, would your Parish Council consider signing up to it? If so, what do you think would be an appropriate fee? Does your Parish Council plan to appoint an independent monitoring officer or to ask the District Council's Monitoring Officer to continue to have responsibility for the registration of members' interests? Do you want District Council to continue to have responsibility for Parish Council guidance, advice and training in matters relating to member conduct?

Taking all the above questions in to consideration MP proposed that, in principle, the Parish Council would go along with the District Council's code of conduct and framework and would be guided by their decisions. With regard to a fee, it was felt that an annual fee of £50 would be appropriate. This was seconded by BG. All in favour. Therefore the Clerk would write back to SCDC with our decision.

Barrington Parish Council

At its Meeting yesterday, the Parish Council considered the section of your Newsletter under the heading 'What we need from you' and respond as follows:

- The Parish Council has adopted a model Code of Conduct again this year, and has had one in force for some 6 years now. Each Councillor has a copy.
- There is no plan to adopt a local framework for dealing with allegations relating to the voluntary code other than that which is in our Code of Conduct.
- There is no intention to sign up to the District Council's voluntary code/framework, nor of paying a fee to do so.
- There is no intention to appoint an independent monitoring officer or to ask the District Council's monitoring officer to continue to have responsibility for registration of members' interests nor to pay a fee for this service. We have submitted completed copies of the appropriate SCDC registration form for each Councillor.
- The Parish Council does not want the District Council to continue to have responsibility for guidance/advice/training in relation to member conduct, nor to pay an annual fee for legal advice.

The basis for these decisions is a belief that our Parish Council would be able to deal with any such problem. There is a lot of goodwill amongst the Councillors, who are very familiar and conversant with local issues and the locality. The Councillors felt that because the District Council did not attend our meetings or participate in our work generally, that they were not going to be able to assist us.

Duxford Parish Council

Further to SCDC's recent Standards Committee newsletter, the response from Duxford Parish Council to the questions posed are as follows :-

- 1 The Parish Council will re-adopt the existing Code of Conduct
- 2 The Parish Council would prefer SCDC to provide a local framework to administer members conduct.
- 3 The question of how much the Council is willing to pay for SCDC to provide a framework is impossible to answer at this stage. Any cost must be subject to the number of Council's who sign up and whether there is an annual subscription or fees charged on a case-to-case basis.
- 4 The Council would choose not to appoint the Clerk as Monitoring Officer. The Clerk has confirmed that he is not at present prepared to take on this responsibility. The cost of SCDC providing an officer is again subject to the reasons given above (3) and also dependent on how many Councillors a particular Council has.
- 5 The Council do not feel that SCDC need to provide guidance and training re member conduct as this is already provided by CPALC of which Duxford PC is a member.

Trusting the above comments will be of assistance at this stage.

Histon Parish Council

believe that SCDC, although not obligated, should continue to have responsibility for Parish Council Code of Conduct issues and would suggest a suitable charge to be a basic cost user fee augmented by a usage cost

Impington Parish Council

- does your parish council plan to adopt a voluntary code of conduct? **YES**
- if so, does your parish council plan to adopt a framework for dealing with allegations relating to your voluntary code? **YES**
- if the District Council adopts a voluntary code and framework, would your parish council consider signing up to it? If so, what would do you think would be an appropriate annual fee? **As no payment was due for the Standards Committee, the Parish Council would not wish to pay for it**
- does your parish council plan to appoint an independent monitoring officer or to ask the District Council's Monitoring Officer to continue to have responsibility for the registration of members' interests? **To ask the District Council's Monitoring Officer to have responsibility**
- do you want the District Council to continue to have responsibility for parish council guidance, advice and training in matters relating to member conduct? **YES**

The Parish Council also raise the question as to why the matter is not being dealt with at County Level?

When advised that this consultation was being undertaken by the District Council's Standards Committee to help inform South Cambridgeshire District Council's decisions, the PC Chairman responded to say: *"The fact that the District Council has historically had a responsibility for Parish Councils is not a reason, IMHO, for the question again to be raised as to whether they might in the future.*

"Since there is now no requirement for Districts to "look after" Parishes, it might make more sense to have this done at County, when economies of scale etc might kick in."

Longstowe Parish Council

Please find responses from Longstowe Parish Council to the Future of Standards questions as follows:

Do you plan to adopt a voluntary code – **Longstowe is a very small parish without the necessary expertise to form it's own code**

would you consider signing up to the district council's voluntary code/framework – **Yes most definitely**

what do you would be an appropriate annual fee for this service – **difficult to estimate without knowing amount of work involved**

do you plan to appoint an independent monitoring officer or to ask the district council's monitoring officer to continue to have responsibility for registration of members' interest – **the district council to continue**

what do you think would be an appropriate annual fee for this service – **same comment as above**

do you want the District Council to continue to have responsibility for parish council guidance/advice/training in relation to member conduct?- **Yes**

what do you think would be an appropriate annual fee for legal advice – **would be guided by district council**

These responses were approved by the Council at the meeting held on 21st April 2011.

Milton Parish Council

· does your parish council plan to adopt a voluntary code of conduct? **Yes.**

· if so, does your parish council plan to adopt a framework for dealing with allegations relating to your voluntary code? **See next answer.**

· if the District Council adopts a voluntary code and framework, would your parish council consider signing up to it? **Yes in principle.** If so, what would do you think would be an appropriate annual fee? * **The more villages that signed up to this the lower should be the fee.**

· does your parish council plan to appoint an independent monitoring officer or to ask the District Council's Monitoring Officer to continue to have responsibility for the registration of members' interests? **Ask the District Council**

· do you want the District Council to continue to have responsibility for parish council guidance, advice and training in matters relating to member conduct? **Yes in principle. Much depends on the legislation, additional information and charges*.**

Orwell Parish Council

- There will be a continuing need for a local code of conduct.
- In principle we plan to adopt a local code
- As a Parish Council we do not have the resources nor the expertise to draw up or operate a Parish Council Code.
- We would seriously consider signing up to a District Council voluntary code/framework.
- We would also consider asking the District Councils monitoring officer to continue to have responsibility for registering of members interests.

- Such is the professionalism of the present South Cambs team it would be far preferable to have them providing the Standards guidance, advice and training. Clearly the above statements can only be considered in "principle" since although we are well satisfied with the present arrangements there is no assurance it will be the precisely the same in the future nor is there any indication of what such a service is worth or what the fee is likely to be.

Unlikely in our view but this could be another example of the need to shop around amongst other authorities seeking best value.

It is to be hoped this response is helpful but one can only emphasise the large measure of uncertainty at this time not only with the future of how a local code will evolve but also the fourth coming elections means there will be a large turnover within the Orwell P C.

Swavesey Parish Council

Swavesey Parish Council does not intend to adopt its own framework for dealing with allegations or appoint its own independent monitoring officer. The Parish Council would prefer to see a County wide voluntary code to which all parishes sign up to, with responsibility at a County level for registration of members' interests, advice and training. Also Monitoring Officer responsibility resting at County level, which could be via a District Council with County overseeing responsibility.

We feel that the local Parish Council Clerk having to act as Monitoring Officer within its own Council is too close and could cause conflicts and problems. Also the new potential for a criminal conviction if interests are not recorded in the correct way, would mean a considerable change to a Clerk's responsibility and terms and conditions of employment. With so many Parish and Town Clerks positions within a District area, this could lead to a huge variation of views, therefore it would be much safer to have the Monitoring Officer role at County (or District) level.

Parish Council On-Line Survey Responses

Introduction

Please tell us if you are answering:

- as a parish councillor – 3
- on behalf of the parish council – 0
- as a parish clerk – 6
- Name of Parish Council (optional): Barrington, Fen Ditton, Hinxton, Linton, Swavesey

Standards Arrangements

Does your parish council plan to adopt a voluntary code of conduct?

- yes – 80% (4 responses)
- no – 20% (1 response)
- skipped question – 4
- Comments (optional): “We would welcome guidance from SCDC on format and content”
- “It does not plan to adopt its own voluntary code but if there is a District or County-wide voluntary code, then it will most probably adopt that.”

If so, does your parish council plan to adopt a local framework for dealing with allegations relating to the voluntary code?

- yes – 80% (4 responses)
- no – 20% (1 responses)
- skipped question – 4
- Comments (optional): “We would welcome guidance from SCDC on format and content”
- “Again, not its own, however it would adopt a District or County-wide framework.”

Standards Arrangements: District Council Support

Would you consider signing up to the District Council's voluntary code / framework?

- yes – 40% (2 responses)
- no – 0% (0 responses)
- would need more information first – 60% (3 responses)
- skipped question – 4
- Comments (optional): “We would need to know if there are any cost implications”

What do you think would be an appropriate annual fee for this service?

- “We are unlikely to sign up if there is more than a nominal fee, e.g. £30”
- “X”
- “£0”
- “I cannot say at present. Perhaps a fee for use, rather than an annual fee would be more appropriate?”
- “Needs to reflect the size of the Council. For a small council such as Hinxton, perhaps £20 max”
- skipped question – 4

Monitoring Officer Arrangements

Do you plan to appoint an independent monitoring officer or to ask the District Council's monitoring officer to continue to have responsibility for registration of members' interests?

- appoint an independent Monitoring Officer – 0 (0% responses)

- ask the District Council's Monitoring Officer to continue – 5 (100% responses)
- Comments (optional): "We would need to know the cost implications and would prefer to have it on an ad hoc basis"
- "Or perhaps the County could provide the Monitoring Officer role?"
- skipped question – 4

What do you think would be an appropriate annual fee for this service?

- "We would prefer an ad hoc basis rather than an annual fee"
- "X"
- "£0"
- "I would have hoped it would be included in the fee which would already be paid (see previous questions)."
- "Again, a fee for use rather than an annual fee."
- skipped question – 4

Training and Support

Do you want the District Council to continue to have responsibility for parish council guidance / advice / training in relation to member conduct?

- Yes – 80% (4 responses)
- No – 20% (1 response)
- Skipped question – 4
- Comments (optional): "We would like to know the alternatives."
- "Or perhaps the County?"

What do you think would be an appropriate annual fee for legal advice about member conduct?

- "We would like this to be on an ad hoc basis, i.e. a fee only when we ask for advise"
- "X"
- "A fee should only be charged when legal advice required. Scale of fees should be available"
- "A fee per use/as necessary would be better."
- "£0"
- skipped question – 4

Other

Do you have any other comments to help the Future of Standards Working Group develop its proposals? (optional)

- skipped question – 7
- "The Parish Council does not want the Clerk to have to take responsibility for monitoring and reporting on possible infringements in relation to members' declaration of interests."
- "I would be very concerned if parishes had to administer their own Monitoring Officer role. Many parish clerks are not qualified for this, even if they are CiLCA qualified. Monitoring Officers are present are usually Legal officers. Also it is far better to have an independent Monitoring Officer to refer to, rather than Parish Councils having to refer to their own Clerk on these matters."

District Council On-Line Survey Responses

Introduction

Please tell us if you are answering:

- as a district councillor – 2
- as an officer - 4

Standards Arrangements

Should the district council plan to adopt a voluntary code of conduct for members?

- yes – 33% (1 response)
- no – 33% (1 response)
- need more information – 33% (1 response)
- skipped question – 3
- Comments (optional): “The existing code of conduct has been nothing but a source of grief, a complete waste of time, and a sickening waste of money.

If so, should the district council plan to adopt a local framework for dealing with allegations relating to the voluntary code?

- yes – 33% (1 response)
- no – 33% (1 responses)
- need more information – 33% (1 response)
- skipped question – 3
- Comments (optional): “or any other apparatus for making mountains out of mole hills”

Standards Arrangements: Parish Council Support

Should the District Council invite parish councils to sign up to the District Council's voluntary code / framework?

- yes – 0% (0 responses)
- no – 50% (1 response)
- need more information – 50% (1 response)
- skipped question – 4

What do you think would be an appropriate annual fee for this service?

- “enough to recover the council's costs”
- “double what would cover our costs“
- skipped question – 4

Monitoring Officer Arrangements

If requested by parish councils, should the District Council's monitoring officer continue to have responsibility for registration of members' interests?

- Yes – 50% (1 response)
- No – 50% (1 response)
- skipped question – 4

What do you think would be an appropriate annual fee for this service?

- “enough to recover the council's costs”
- “double what would cover our costs“
- skipped question – 4

Training and Support

Should the District Council to continue to have responsibility for parish council guidance / advice / training in relation to member conduct?

- Yes – 50% (1 response)

- No – 50% (1 response)
- Skipped question – 4
- Comments (optional): “parish councillors find assurance in their dealings with the immediate next up principal authority

What do you think would be an appropriate annual fee for parish councils seeking legal advice about member conduct?

- “cost recovery”
- “double what would cover our costs”
- skipped question – 4

Other

Do you have any other comments to help the Future of Standards Working Group develop its proposals? (optional)

- skipped question – 4
- “Why is any proposed code of conduct voluntary? As an elector I expect anyone who puts themselves forward to be an elected representative to sign up to a code of conduct - why would they not want to do this and if so, shouldn't the electorate be told?”
- “don't”