

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Civic Affairs Committee held on
Thursday, 14 March 2013 at 10.00 a.m.

- PRESENT:** Councillor Mick Martin – Chairman
Councillor Alison Elcox – Vice-Chairman
- Councillors:** Sebastian Kindersley Douglas de Lacey
Janet Lockwood Ray Manning
Raymond Matthews Jim Stewart
Robert Turner Bunty Waters
- Officers:** Graham Aisthorpe-Watts Democratic Services Team Leader
Andrew Francis Electoral Services Manager
David Lord Senior Lawyer
Fiona McMillan Legal & Democratic Services Manager and
Monitoring Officer
- Advisors:** Eric Revell
(Deputy Independent Person)

(Councillor Alison Elcox, Vice-Chairman, was in the chair for the commencement of the meeting).

20. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Simon Edwards, Tony Orgee and Edd Stonham. Kathleen English, Independent Person, also submitted her apologies for absence.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Sebastian Kindersley declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute number 25 as a member of Cambridgeshire County Council and a non-pecuniary interest in minute number 30 as he represented two of the Parish Councils named in the report.

Councillor Robert Turner declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute number 30 as he represented three of the Parish Councils named in the report.

22. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2012 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

23. NORTHSTOWE - COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

(Councillor Janet Lockwood attended the meeting at this stage of proceedings).

Consideration was given to a report which set out issues and implications for the future governance of Northstowe.

David Lord, Senior Lawyer, presented the report which had been written in response to the Committee's agreement at its previous meeting to consider the implications and proposed way forward regarding the establishment of a new Parish or Town Council at Northstowe.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 required the Council to take into account the views of a wide range of persons and bodies when reviewing issues of community governance. This included local government electors for the area under review, Parish Councils, Residents' Associations, Community Forums and the County Council.

After submission of the Northstowe outline planning application in 2008 an informal consultation exercise was undertaken which enabled officers at the time to identify and resolve any potential issues that Parish Councils or local residents may have had in relation to establishing a new boundary for Northstowe. In view of the fact that this exercise took place five years ago, officers agreed that it would be necessary to consult again with any interested parties, particularly existing residents and Parish Councils, to ascertain their views on any community governance proposals for Northstowe. The following three-stage approach was therefore suggested: -

Stage one – informal pre-consultation

Officers intended to repeat the informal consultation exercise carried out in 2008 over the coming months, involving affected Parish Councils, the local Rampton Drift Residents' Association and other interested parties, to inform a proposed formal Community Governance Review process in 2014. This would investigate options for boundaries and any potential community governance structure, adding to the information collated as part of the 2008 informal consultation.

Stage two – formal Community Governance Review process

The formal Community Governance Review process would be followed, as outlined in the report, further to which the making of an Order may be agreed to create a new Parish Council, set or alter parish boundaries and set out how the new council would be governed.

Stage three – post Community Governance Review

This would be the final stage of the process, facilitating the implementation of the Order and arranging the first Parish Council elections.

A proposed timescale for each of these stages was set out in the report, commencing in March 2013 and ending with the first elections to the new Parish Council in May 2015.

During discussion Members questioned whether changing Parish Council boundaries could result in a review of District Council electoral ward boundaries by the Boundary Commission. Mr Lord reported that the District Council had the power to alter Parish Council boundaries, following the undertaking of the Community Governance Review process, but any decision by the Boundary Commission to undertake a boundary review was out of South Cambridgeshire District Council's control.

Reference was made to the initial size of a Parish Council for Northstowe, with it having to be small to reflect a relatively low number of electors currently in the area, and the process that would be followed should the number of Parish Councillors need to be increased to reflect the growing number of electors as Northstowe developed. It was anticipated that an initial Parish Council for Northstowe would consist of five Parish Councillors for the first five years, or for such time as the Parish Council agreed that it needed more Councillors to serve the growing population for its area. Changes to the governance of a Parish Council, such as a request to increase or decrease the number of its Parish Councillors, would be submitted to the Civic Affairs Committee for consideration where a decision could then be made to instigate another Community Governance Review. This process would have to be followed each time a request was received to change the number of Councillors on a Parish Council. It was emphasised, however, that the timetable included

in the report was not reflective of all Community Governance Reviews and that a much shorter review timescale could be followed to consider any such requests.

(Councillor Mick Martin attended the meeting at this stage of proceedings).

Discussion ensued on the proposed timetable included in the report and Members agreed that officers should be given the flexibility to truncate the process at any stage if necessary.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed timetable and way forward for the Northstowe Community Governance Review, as set out in the report, but agreed that officers should be given the flexibility to truncate the process at any stage of the proposed timetable if necessary.

(Councillor Mick Martin, Chairman, took the chair at this stage of the meeting).

24. HAUXTON: COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Councillor Janet Lockwood declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item as she was a Member of Hauxton Parish Council.

The Committee considered a report which set out Hauxton Parish Council's request to increase the number of Parish Councillors at the next Parish Council election from seven to nine.

Councillor Mick Martin, Chairman of the Civic Affairs Committee, presented the report and informed Members that five responses had been received as a result of going through the Community Governance Review process, copies of which were appended to the report.

The Committee **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** that an Order be made pursuant to Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to increase the number of Councillors at the next parish council election for Hauxton Parish Council from seven to nine.

25. TRUMPINGTON MEADOWS: COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report which informed the Committee that the Chief Executive had recently received a letter from the Chairman of Haslingfield Parish Council outlining a request for a Community Governance Review to be undertaken in respect of Trumpington Meadows.

Councillor Mick Martin, Chairman of the Civic Affairs Committee, presented the report which was solely to note receipt of the letter from the Chairman of Haslingfield Parish Council at this stage, with a more detailed report scheduled for submission to the Committee in due course.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

26. RECRUITMENT OF NEW INDEPENDENT PERSON AND DEPUTY

The Committee considered a report which set out the requirements and suggested process for recruiting a new lead and deputy independent person.

Fiona McMillan, Monitoring Officer, presented the report and outlined that the current lead and deputy independent persons could only be appointed until 30 June 2013 as per the

requirements of the transitional provisions of the Localism Act 2011, due to them being former members of the Council's Standards Committee. A proposed recruitment pack for the appointment of the new lead and deputy independent person was appended to the report.

The Committee:

- (a) **DELEGATED** to the Chairman of the Civic Affairs Committee and the Monitoring Officer the responsibility of recruiting a lead Independent Person and a deputy Independent Person with the aim of recommending two appointments to Annual Council on 24 May 2013, with the roles to commence on 1 July 2013.
- (b) **AGREED** the updated recruitment pack appended to the report, subject to the incorporation of slight amendments to the language used in some of the documents to be agreed by the Monitoring Officer in liaison with Councillor Douglas de Lacey.

27. REVISED NOLAN PRINCIPLES

Consideration was given to a report which set out revised descriptions of the principles of public life, further to the fourteenth report on standards by the Committee on Standards in Public Life entitled 'Standards matter – a review of best practice in promoting good behaviour in public life' which was presented to Parliament in January 2013.

The Committee **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** that:

- (a) the Council adopts the revised wording of the principles and amends the revised principles to the Council's Code of Conduct for members as part of the constitution, as outlined in Appendix F to the report.
- (b) the Council amends the revised principles to the Council's Officers' Code of Conduct, as outlined in Appendix G to the report.
- (c) the Council appends the revised principles in its standard contract documentation.

28. UPDATE ON CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

Consideration was given to a report which updated Members on complaint cases regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

29. TRAINING ON CODE OF CONDUCT

Fiona McMillan, Monitoring Officer, provided the Committee with an update on Code of Conduct training.

It was reported that a decision had been made to jointly procure an external facilitator to deliver training on the Code of Conduct for District and Parish Councillors. It was proposed to hold this session in June as there would be at least one new District Councillor elected in May this year and the new lead and deputy independent persons should also be appointed by then, who would benefit from receiving the training. The date of this training session would be circulated to all Members as soon as it was confirmed.

One of the action learning sets from the Council's Leadership Development Programme focused on consultation with Parish Councils and the delivery of training. A further meeting of this action learning set working group, consisting of senior managers from the Council, was scheduled to be held in April.

It was noted that sessions on the Code of Conduct for Parish Councillors had not been very well attended in the past. In order to address this issue it was proposed to include training on the Code of Conduct as part of other training sessions that attracted higher levels of attendance from Parish Councillors.

The Committee **NOTED** the update.

30. REGISTRATION OF INTERESTS UPDATE

The Committee considered a report which provided Members with progress on the implementation of the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 in relation to the registration of interests.

In presenting the report Fiona McMillan, Monitoring Officer, reminded the Committee that the Localism Act 2011 required all Councillors to complete a register of interests. For South Cambridgeshire District Council this applied to all District and Parish Councillors and these registers had to be published on the Council's website, including the respective Parish Council's website if they had one.

All South Cambridgeshire District Councillors had completed their registers of interest, which had been published on the Council's website.

Appended to the report was a table indicating how many Parish Councils had returned registers for their Parish Councillors. A number of Parish Councils had not yet submitted registers for their Councillors and the Monitoring Officer would continue to liaise with the respective Parish Clerks to remind them of and emphasise their statutory obligations in this regard.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

31. NEW MODEL CONSTITUTION

Fiona McMillan, Monitoring Officer, provided the Committee with an update on the new model constitution, further to minute number 13 of the previous meeting.

It was noted that officers now had access to a template for the new model and would be undertaking some work to populate this with information relevant to South Cambridgeshire District Council. An update on this piece of work would be reported to the next meeting of the Civic Affairs Committee.

The Committee **NOTED** the update.

32. DATES OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee **NOTED** the dates of the next meetings as follows: -

- Thursday 20 June 2013 at 10.00am
- Friday 20 September 2013 at 10.00am

The Meeting ended at 11.13 a.m.
