

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Civic Affairs Committee held on
Thursday, 20 March 2014 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillor David Bard – Chairman

Councillors: Kevin Cuffley
Jose Hales
Douglas de Lacey
Deborah Roberts
Robert Turner
Simon Edwards
Sebastian Kindersley
Ray Manning
Jim Stewart
Bunty Waters

Officers: Graham Aisthorpe-Watts
Tracy Mann
Fiona McMillan
Jo Mills
John Pym
Democratic Services Team Leader
Development Officer
Legal & Democratic Services Manager and
Monitoring Officer
Planning and New Communities Director
New Village Senior Planning Officer

Grant Osbourne (Independent Person) and Gillian Holmes (Deputy Independent Person) were in attendance by invitation, together with Councillors Roger Hall, Cicely Murfitt, Charles Nightingale, Alex Riley, Neil Scarr and Hazel Smith were in attendance.

34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alison Elcox and Raymond Matthews. It was reported that Councillor Matthews was currently in hospital and the Committee took this opportunity to wish him a speedy recovery. Councillor David Bard, in his capacity as Chairman of the Council, had sent Councillor Matthews a card on behalf of the authority.

Councillor Tim Wotherspoon, Portfolio Holder for Northstowe, also submitted his apologies for absence with regard to minute number 38.

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Simon Edwards declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute number 38 with regard to the Northstowe Community Governance Review, as a member of Oakington and Westwick Parish Council due to the fact that the Parish Council had made representations as part of the informal consultation process. He indicated that he came to this meeting with an open mind.

Councillor Sebastian Kindersley declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute number 39 with regard to the Trumpington Meadows Community Governance Review, as it was within his County Council electoral division.

36. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 December 2013 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

37. MOTION TO CONSIDER PROPOSAL FOR RECORDING VOTES

Consideration was given to a report which set out the implications of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 and provided the Committee with an opportunity to consider a Notice of Motion referred from the meeting of Full Council on 27 February 2014 in relation to recorded votes.

The Council was required to amend its Standing Orders so as to include provisions for the recording of votes at budget meetings, as explained in a letter appended to the report from Brandon Lewis MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, and as set out in the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014.

The Civic Affairs Committee unanimously **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council the introduction of a new paragraph 16.6 headed 'Recorded vote on budget decisions' to the Council's Standing Orders, to read:

"If the Council is considering an item on the Council's budget or the setting of the Council Tax, the names for and against the motion or amendment, abstaining from voting or not voting will be taken down in writing and entered into the minutes".

Councillor Aidan Van De Weyer presented a Notice of Motion to Full Council on 27 February 2014 and the following resolution was passed:

"This Council requests that the Civic Affairs Committee considers and proposes amendments to the Council's Standing Orders so that all votes, except for those taken by affirmation and for appointments, are recorded in the manner described in Standing Order 16.5 (Recorded Vote)."

In debating the concept of undertaking recorded votes for all decisions made by Council, other than those taken by affirmation or for appointments, the following points were noted:

- Members should be able to vote freely at Council meetings without the feeling of being pressurised by their political groups, which could happen if recorded votes were introduced for the majority of decisions at Full Council meetings;
- there was already provision in the Council's Standing Orders for a recorded vote to be held on any item, and only six Members were required to request this at a meeting for it to take place;
- members of the public should be entitled to know how their elected representatives voted on specific items at Full Council meetings;
- the letter from Brandon Lewis MP set out positive principles of transparency and democratic accountability, which this Council could drive forward by introducing recorded votes for the majority of decisions made by Full Council;
- the introduction of this would be a step-change and some Members may feel uncomfortable at the prospect of recorded votes, but they had to accept that the Council was a political environment;
- the Local Plan was a good example of how a recorded vote could provide an effective means of demonstrating to residents how individual votes from Members were cast;
- it was unnecessary to formalise this as part of the Constitution when there was already provision for recorded votes to take place;
- retaining the current arrangement provided more flexibility;
- the way the electronic voting system worked in the Council Chamber meant that it was not possible for anyone in attendance to know which way a Member voted, unless a recorded vote was requested;

- the Council's leadership did not impose a 'group whip' and Members had always been able to vote on their conscience.

Councillor Sebastian Kindersley proposed that recorded votes be held for all decisions at Full Council meetings, except for those taken by affirmation and for appointments, for a trial period of 12 months. Councillor Jose Hales seconded the proposal and with 3 votes in favour and 8 against the proposal was lost.

Voting on the original motion from Full Council, with 4 votes in favour, 6 votes against and 1 abstention, the motion was lost and the Civic Affairs Committee made no recommendations to Full Council on the matter.

38. NORTHSTOWE COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Civic Affairs Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Longstanton, Oakington and Westwick and Northstowe Boundary Review.

It was noted that officers had completed the public events reported at the previous meeting of the Committee on 5 December 2013. As well as the public events and meetings with residents of Rampton Drift, officers had also visited Parish Council meetings of Longstanton and Oakington and Westwick to continue discussions in relation to any boundary changes.

Mrs Gill Ashby, Chairman of Longstanton Parish Council, was in attendance and clarified that there was a general lack of appetite from local residents to become Parish Councillors for Northstowe at this stage, although there had been some interest in establishing an informal working group.

(Councillor Roger Hall attended the meeting at this stage of proceedings)

Councillor Simon Edwards reminded the Committee that it would probably be 30 years until development moved down to the Oakington area and the Parish Council therefore felt that there was no reason at this stage why the boundary should change. He accepted that things may change in 15 or 20 years, but reiterated that there was no need to change the boundary now.

Councillor Ray Manning declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item as County Councillor for Longstanton. He asked whether any financial support to fund additional clerking responsibilities had been offered to Longstanton Parish Council to assist with the number of planning applications it would have to deal with as a result of the Northstowe development. It was noted that the District Council had agreed to provide additional funding for this and was in the process of liaising with the Parish Council to establish anticipated costs.

Councillor Sebastian Kindersley reflected on previous experiences with Orchard Park, Cambourne and Bar Hill and was of the opinion that the governance arrangements had to be up and running as soon as possible. He felt that an independent Parish Council for Northstowe was necessary as it would be making decisions about its own future. Councillor Kindersley highlighted that Oakington and Westwick and Longstanton residents were very engaged and would be able to sit on a Parish Council for Northstowe, due to the fact that they were located within the required distance from the parish boundary. He called for this issue to be moved forward and said that in developing its first town the District Council should have an obligation to take the lead and encourage local people to do this. Councillor Kindersley suggested that the aim should be for a Parish Council for Northstowe to be established by 2017, but that this be reviewed annually.

Councillor Alex Riley felt that there should be a move to set the phase one site up as an independent entity as soon as possible in readiness for anticipated delivery in April 2017. He also reported that the Highways Division at Cambridgeshire County Council had made it clear that the phase two site would not be able to take any further traffic until the A14 had been upgraded and that no houses were anticipated on phase two until 2020. Councillor Riley also reflected that west of phase two was all in Oakington, which was 20 to 30 years away, and north of the Guided Bus Way in Longstanton would not be an issue for at least another 30 years. It was noted that the respective areas of the Northstowe development were all completely different and the people living within them at the various stages and phases would have changed by the time any decisions needed to be made on boundary issues.

The Civic Affairs Committee **AGREED** with the establishment of an independent Northstowe Parish Council with the aim of it commencing in April 2017, but that this be reviewed in June 2016.

39. TRUMPINGTON MEADOWS COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report which set out progress to date regarding the potential changes to parish boundaries at Haslingfield and Grantchester, in order to create a new parish for the development at Trumpington Meadows.

It was reported that officers had attended the Southern Fringe Community Forum with displays and information relating to the proposed boundary changes. Further public meetings would be held with Haslingfield Parish Council and Grantchester Parish Council, together with residents from both areas, as set out in the report.

A letter had been received from the Trumpington Residents' Association, which outlined support for the proposed new boundaries.

Members were informed that these meetings and correspondence formed part of the informal consultation process, as planning applications for the part of the development within South Cambridgeshire would not be submitted for at least six months.

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

40. UPDATE ON CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

The Civic Affairs Committee considered a report which provided Members with an update on complaints cases regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct.

The report was **NOTED**.

41. DISPENSATIONS GRANTED BY THE MONITORING OFFICER

The Council's Monitoring Officer reported that, following consultation with the Independent Person, dispensations had been granted to Councillors David Bard and Nigel Cathcart to enable them to take part in discussions and vote in the extraordinary meeting of Council on 13 March 2014 in relation to the proposed Local Plan. It was noted that Councillor Bard's dispensation was also applicable to any other meetings related to the Local Plan at which the site H1/c in Sawston was discussed for a four year period, until March 2018.

42. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Further meeting dates for the Civic Affairs Committee were **AGREED** as follows:

- 3 July 2014 – 10.00am
- 2 October 2014 – 10.00am
- 8 January 2015 – 10.00am
- 2 April 2015 – 10.00am

The Meeting ended at 11.20 a.m.
