



**SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT  
COUNCIL**

**EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING  
THURSDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2015  
TO CONSIDER THE ISSUE OF  
COUNCIL SIZE**

**THE MEETING WILL COMMENCE AT  
4.00PM OR AT THE CLOSE OF THE  
EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL  
SCHEDULED TO BE HELD AT 3.30PM ON  
THE SAME DAY, WHICHEVER IS LATER**

**AGENDA AND REPORTS**

## **OUR LONG-TERM VISION**

South Cambridgeshire will continue to be the best place to live, work and study in the country. Our district will demonstrate impressive and sustainable economic growth. Our residents will have a superb quality of life in an exceptionally beautiful, rural and green environment.

## **OUR VALUES**

We will demonstrate our corporate values in all our actions. These are:

- Working Together
- Integrity
- Dynamism
- Innovation

## **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The law allows Councils to consider a limited range of issues in private session without members of the Press and public being present. Typically, such issues relate to personal details, financial and business affairs, legal privilege and so on. In every case, the public interest in excluding the Press and Public from the meeting room must outweigh the public interest in having the information disclosed to them. The following statement will be proposed, seconded and voted upon.

"I propose that the Press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item number(s) ..... in accordance with Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that, if present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) ..... of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended)."

If exempt (confidential) information has been provided as part of the agenda, the Press and public will not be able to view it. There will be an explanation on the website however as to why the information is exempt.

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

TO: The Chairman and Members of the  
South Cambridgeshire District Council

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that an extraordinary meeting of the **COUNCIL** will be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, FIRST FLOOR** at **4.00 P.M.**, or at the close of the extraordinary meeting of Council scheduled to be held at 3.30pm on the same day, whichever is later, on

**THURSDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2015**

and I am, therefore to summon you to attend accordingly for the transaction of the business specified below.

**DATED** 16 September 2015

**JEAN HUNTER**  
Chief Executive

**The Council is committed to improving, for all members of the community, access to its agendas and minutes. We try to take all circumstances into account but, if you have any specific needs, please let us know, and we will do what we can to help you.**

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### **AGENDA**

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  
To receive any apologies for absence from Members.
2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
To receive any declarations of interest from Members.
3. **THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND  
ELECTORAL REVIEW - COUNCIL SIZE SUBMISSION**  
Following consideration of this issue by the Civic Affairs Committee on 10 September 2015, it is **RECOMMENDED**:
  - (a) That South Cambridgeshire District Council recommends a Council size of 45 as part of its submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's electoral review.
  - (b) That the draft document attached at Appendix A to the report be used as a basis for an evidence-based submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, and that the Chief Executive be given authority to make any necessary amendments prior to its submission to Council, in liaison with the Chairman of the Council and representatives of all political groups.

**(Pages 1 - 30)**

## **GUIDANCE NOTES FOR VISITORS TO SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE HALL**

### **Notes to help those people visiting the South Cambridgeshire District Council offices**

While we try to make sure that you stay safe when visiting South Cambridgeshire Hall, you also have a responsibility for your own safety, and that of others.

#### **Security**

When attending meetings in non-public areas of the Council offices you must report to Reception, sign in, and at all times wear the Visitor badge issued. Before leaving the building, please sign out and return the Visitor badge to Reception.

Public seating in meeting rooms is limited. For further details contact Democratic Services on 03450 450 500 or e-mail [democratic.services@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@scambs.gov.uk)

#### **Emergency and Evacuation**

In the event of a fire, a continuous alarm will sound. Leave the building using the nearest escape route; from the Council Chamber or Mezzanine viewing gallery this would be via the staircase just outside the door. Go to the assembly point at the far side of the staff car park opposite the staff entrance

- **Do not** use the lifts to leave the building. If you are unable to use stairs by yourself, the emergency staircase landings have fire refuge areas, which give protection for a minimum of 1.5 hours. Press the alarm button and wait for help from Council fire wardens or the fire brigade.
- **Do not** re-enter the building until the officer in charge or the fire brigade confirms that it is safe to do so.

#### **First Aid**

If you feel unwell or need first aid, please alert a member of staff.

#### **Access for People with Disabilities**

We are committed to improving, for all members of the community, access to our agendas and minutes. We try to take all circumstances into account but, if you have any specific needs, please let us know, and we will do what we can to help you. All meeting rooms are accessible to wheelchair users. There are disabled toilet facilities on each floor of the building. Infra-red hearing assistance systems are available in the Council Chamber and viewing gallery. To use these, you must sit in sight of the infra-red transmitter and wear a 'neck loop', which can be used with a hearing aid switched to the 'T' position. If your hearing aid does not have the 'T' position facility then earphones are also available and can be used independently. You can get both neck loops and earphones from Reception.

#### **Toilets**

Public toilets are available on each floor of the building next to the lifts.

#### **Recording of Business and Use of Mobile Phones**

We are open and transparent about how we make decisions. We allow recording, filming and photography at Council, Cabinet and other meetings, which members of the public can attend, so long as proceedings at the meeting are not disrupted. We also allow the use of social media during meetings to bring Council issues to the attention of a wider audience. To minimise disturbance to others attending the meeting, please switch your phone or other mobile device to silent / vibrate mode.

#### **Banners, Placards and similar items**

You are not allowed to bring into, or display at, any public meeting any banner, placard, poster or other similar item. Failure to do so, will result in the Chairman suspending the meeting until such items are removed.

#### **Disturbance by Public**

If a member of the public interrupts proceedings at a meeting, the Chairman will warn the person concerned. If they continue to interrupt, the Chairman will order their removal from the meeting room. If there is a general disturbance in any part of the meeting room open to the public, the Chairman may call for that part to be cleared. The meeting will be suspended until order has been restored.

#### **Smoking**

Since 1 July 2008, South Cambridgeshire District Council has operated a Smoke Free Policy. No one is allowed to smoke at any time within the Council offices, or in the car park or other grounds forming part of those offices.

#### **Food and Drink**

Vending machines and a water dispenser are available on the ground floor near the lifts at the front of the building. You are not allowed to bring food or drink into the meeting room.

# Agenda Item 3



South  
Cambridgeshire  
District Council

**Report To:** Council

24 September 2015

**Lead Officer:** Legal and Democratic Services Manager

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## **Local Government Boundary Commission for England Review Council Size Submission**

### **Purpose**

1. This report provides Council with an opportunity to consider a recommendation by the Civic Affairs Committee on making a submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on Council size as part of its whole Council electoral ward review.

### **Recommendations**

2. That South Cambridgeshire District Council recommends a Council size of 45 as part of its submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's electoral review.
3. That the draft document attached at **Appendix A** to this report be used as a basis for an evidence-based submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, and that the Chief Executive be given authority to make any necessary amendments prior to its submission to Council, in liaison with the Chairman of the Council and representatives of all political groups.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

4. To ensure South Cambridgeshire District Council's views on Council size are fed into the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's review into its electoral arrangements.

### **Background**

5. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is conducting a whole Council electoral review, due to formally commence in November 2015 and which will result in the publication of its final recommendations in approximately September 2016. These recommendations will form the basis of an Order which will be laid before Parliament leading to electoral changes to be implemented in whole Council elections in 2018. Prior to considering possible changes to ward boundaries, the Commission will make a decision on Council size and has invited a submission from the Council in advance of the formal commencement of the review. A draft evidence-based submission is set out at **Appendix A** which has been recommended by the Civic Affairs Committee. The Committee also recommends that the Council submits a recommended Council size of 45 in response to the invitation by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as part of its review.

## Considerations

6. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is proposing to take a decision on the appropriate Council size on 17 November 2015. To inform its consideration the Commission has requested that the Council submits its proposals and justification as soon as possible before 17 November.
7. The Commission aims to ensure that the Council has the right number of elected Members in place to take decisions, manage its business effectively and provide effective local representation. It will consider the Council's governance and decision-making arrangements, its arrangements for the discharge of scrutiny functions, how Members carry out their representational roles and future trends and developments in the nature of decision-making and the role of elected Members.
8. The Civic Affairs Committee has met both formally and informally to consider what evidence should be collated in order to support a submission by the Council, which included overseeing surveys to elected Members and all Parish Council Chairmen and Clerks designed to quantify existing commitments and experiences.
9. At an informal meeting of the Civic Affairs Committee a request was made to engage with representatives of Parish Councils through an informal workshop, in order to gain a better understanding of their relationship with District Councillors, how they worked together and whether there were more effective ways of working together. This workshop was held on 27 August 2015 and notes of the key points raised are attached as **Appendix B**.
10. The draft Council size submission is designed around the following four themes identified by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England:
  - governance and decision-making;
  - scrutiny functions;
  - representational role of councillors;
  - the future.
11. Should any submission made to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on Council size be accepted, this will be the number that the Commission models the District on at the later stages of the review in respect of electoral boundaries.
12. The Civic Affairs Committee met on 10 September 2015 to consider the issue of Council size and a draft of the submission document as an evidence base. It recommended to Council a Council size of 45, as well as using the submission document attached at **Appendix A** as an evidence base to support this proposition. The draft minutes from this meeting are attached at **Appendix C**.

## Options

13. Other submissions can be made alongside or separately to the Council's submission.
14. Council could opt not to submit a preferred Council size. However, if no submission is made by the Council the Local Government Boundary Commission for England will decide upon a Council size based on the evidence supplied and in comparison with the size of South Cambridgeshire District Council's statistical neighbour authorities.

## **Implications**

15. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

### ***Financial***

16. Any reduction in Council size would result in savings incurred by the cost of the basic allowance for elected Members and travel or subsistence expenses that may be paid for approved duties.

### **Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)**

17. The content of the draft submission has been the subject of ongoing consultation with the Chairman of the Council, political group leaders, the Civic Affairs Committee, other Members of the Council and representatives of Parish Councils.

## **Background Papers**

No background papers were relied upon in the writing of this report.

**Report Author:** Graham Watts – Democratic Services Team Leader  
Telephone: (01954) 713030

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**Ward Boundary Review  
of South Cambridgeshire District Council**

**Stage 1 – Council Size**

**Submission to the Local Government  
Boundary Commission for England**

**[24 September 2015]**

## 1. Executive Summary

Having considered the future arrangements for Council size, the Council is recommending that 45 Councillors would provide efficient and effective representation to the public, although it strongly emphasises that, in view of the rural nature of the district and the significant number of communities that make up South Cambridgeshire, any number below 45 would not be preferable by way of ensuring democratic representation to the district's residents. In developing this submission the Council took as its starting point the existing number of Members and then considered whether the evidence supported a variation of that figure.

The Council's Leader and Cabinet governance model means that the majority of decisions are taken by the Leader and seven Portfolio Holders who make up the Council's Cabinet, with the nine Members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee having the main responsibility of holding these decision takers to account, although it is recognised that all Members are also obliged to carry out this role. The Council's decision-making and committee structure is set out in more detail in the body of this submission document.

South Cambridgeshire District Councillors have a high profile within their local communities and there is an expectation from the majority of Parish Councils in the district for District Councillors to attend most, if not all, of their meetings. Initial modelling has suggested that, although a reduction in Council size will make meeting this expectation more challenging, it may be possible with a Council of 45 Members for Councillors to maintain a presence at Parish Council meetings, thereby fulfilling this expectation.

As further justification for consideration, the Council has answered the questions within the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's guidance document on Council size as part of this submission.

## 2. Introduction

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England has confirmed that South Cambridgeshire District Council is in its ward boundary review programme for 2014/2015. The first stage of the review is to decide how many Councillors, in total, should make up the Council in future.

In considering Council Size the Commission considers the following four parts:

1. Governance and decision making – what is the right number of councillors to take decisions and manage the business in an effective way?
2. Scrutiny functions – what is the right number of councillors to administer South Cambridgeshire's scrutiny responsibilities in a convenient and effective way?
3. Representational role of councillors – what is the right number of councillors to represent and provide leadership to local communities in South Cambridgeshire?
4. The future – what governance changes are being considered and how to these impact on the number of councillors needed in the future?

This document represents the Council's submission on Council Size after consideration of these four factors.

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### **3. South Cambridgeshire in Context**

South Cambridgeshire is the second largest district in Cambridgeshire covering approximately 350 square miles of countryside. It is also the second most populated district after Huntingdonshire and the district completely surrounds Cambridge City. It shares its boundaries with Huntingdonshire, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire to the north. In the south the district has boundaries with North Hertfordshire, Central Bedfordshire, Uttlesford and St. Edmundsbury.

South Cambridgeshire is relatively rural with most of the population living in villages or rural areas – there are currently no towns in South Cambridgeshire. Some communities are very isolated as a result of this rurality, which does provide challenges in terms of service provision and democratic representation. Cambourne is currently the largest village in the district with approximately 8,820 people, Sawston is the second largest village with approximately 7,160 people and Cottenham is the third largest village with approximately 6,100 people. Cambourne, Sawston and Cottenham are currently ranked 13<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> respectively of the largest settlements in Cambridgeshire. However, future development will be focussed around the fringes of Cambridge and in a new town (Northstowe).

South Cambridgeshire is a rural district with a population of 153,300 residents. This population is expected to increase significantly faster than the national average and by 2026, the population is expected to increase by 15.1% to 176,500 residents.

South Cambridgeshire as an area is considered as significant to unlocking economic growth regionally and nationally, as has been demonstrated by the successful allocation by government of significant funding through the Greater Cambridge City Deal of which South Cambridgeshire District Council is a key partner. Employment sites in the district are also attracting international companies such as Astra Zeneca, which is a clear indication of the economic growth that can be expected in the very near future.

## **4. Part 1 – Governance and decision making**

### **4.1 Leadership**

#### **4.1.1 What kind of governance arrangements are in place for your authority? Does the council operate an executive mayoral, Cabinet/Executive or committee system?**

South Cambridgeshire District Council operates a Leader and Cabinet model of governance. The responsibilities of Cabinet Members for 2015/16 is set out at **Annex A** and the Council's governance/committee structure is set out at **Annex B**.

#### **4.1.2 To what extent are decisions delegated to portfolio holders or are most decisions taken by the full Executive and/or Mayor?**

Cabinet meets approximately every six weeks, but a significant number of decisions are made independently by Portfolio Holders. Portfolio Holders themselves usually hold meetings to consider items and make decisions. The normal access to information rules apply to these meetings, which are held as public meetings, and involve opposition spokespersons, monitors from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and any other Member of the Council wishing to attend.

#### **4.1.3 Do Executive (or other) members serve on other decision making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies?**

The Leader of the Council is a member of the Greater Cambridge City Deal Executive Board, which is a formal joint committee with delegated executive decision-making power made up of members from South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership and the University of Cambridge.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Transportation is Chairman of the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee, which consists of representatives from South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council. The Joint Development Control Committee has delegated development control decision-making powers in respect of the new town of Northstowe.

Members also represent the Council on a second Joint Development Control Committee for Cambridge Fringes, which consists of representatives from South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridge City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council and has the same delegated authority to make development control decisions for a prescribed area within the Cambridge Fringes.

Membership of other decision making partnerships, sub-regional or national bodies by Members of the Council include those set out in **Annex C**.

#### **4.1.4 In general, are leadership and or portfolio roles considered to be full time roles?**

The positions of Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder, although not deemed as being considered as full time positions, do require a substantial commitment given the level of responsibility and significant additional time that needs to be spent to undertake those roles effectively.

## **4.2 Regulatory**

### **4.2.1 In relation to licensing, planning and other regulatory responsibilities to what extent are decisions delegated to officers?**

With the exception of the Licensing Act, which states that if an objection is received to an application it must go to a Committee or Sub-Committee, all licensing matters are determined by officers with a right of appeal to an Appeals Sub-Committee.

In accordance with the Act, decisions affecting licensing conditions or policy making are all made at Committee level. Meetings of the Committee are held on an ad hoc basis whenever required, with Appeals Sub-Committees being much more frequent in response to any appeals submitted.

A significant number of decisions are delegated to officers in respect of development control and planning, as per a detailed scheme of delegation. The Planning Committee still meets on a monthly basis and on average will consider ten applications at each meeting, which themselves can last up to four hours and, in some cases, beyond that.

### **4.2.2 How many members are involved in committees?**

The Civic Affairs Committee consists of 12 Members.

The Corporate Governance Committee consists of 9 Members.

The Employment Committee consists of 9 Members.

The Licensing Committee consists of 15 Members.

The Planning Committee consists of 12 Members.

6 South Cambridgeshire District Council Members sit on the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee.

6 South Cambridgeshire District Council Members sit on the Joint Development Control Committee – Cambridge Fringes.

### **4.2.3 Is committee membership standing or rotating?**

Committee membership is standing, although use of named substitutes from each political group is permitted.

All members and substitutes of the Employment Committee, Licensing Committee and Planning Committee have to have received specific and recent training on the functions, law and decision-making powers of each committee before they are able to act on that committee. Training for the Planning Committee is also applied to Members of the Joint Development Control Committees.

### **4.2.4 Are meetings ad hoc, frequent and/or area based?**

The Civic Affairs Committee usually meets a minimum of 4 times a year.

The Corporate Governance Committee usually meets a minimum 5 times a year.

The Employment Committee meets at least once a year but additional meetings may be necessary on an ad hoc basis.

The Licensing Committee meets on an ad hoc basis as a full Committee, but more regularly in the form of Appeals Sub-Committees.

The Planning Committee meets on a monthly basis.

The Joint Development Control Committees tend to meet approximately six times a year.

#### **4.2.5 What level of attendance is achieved? Are meeting always quorate?**

Attendance levels for all meetings that Members were summoned to attend in 2014/15 are set out in **Annex D**.

Meetings of regulatory committees are always quorate.

#### **4.2.6 Does the council believe that changes to legislation, national or local policy will have influence over the workload of committees and their members which would have an impact on council size?**

This would most likely impact the training that Members on certain committees would need to attend, rather than have influence over the workload of Members and the committees or bodies that they sit on.

### **4.3 Demands on time**

#### **4.3.1 Is there a formal role description for councillors in your authority?**

The Council has adopted a role description for its elected Members, together with role descriptions for key elected Member roles in the authority, as part of its Constitution. These role descriptions are set out at **Annex E**.

#### **4.3.2 Do councillors receive formal training for all or any roles at the council?**

The Council has a Member Development Strategy and Member Development Programme in place and is committed to providing opportunities for its elected Members to undertake training and develop on a wide range of topics and subjects.

Formal training is put in place for all Members of regulatory committees, for which attendance is mandatory before they are able to act on the Committee.

Formal leadership training is offered to all Members of Cabinet.

Formal chairmanship training is offered to Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of committees.

In terms of training in general, there is an expectation that Members have to take part in significant amounts of training in order to be able to carry out their roles effectively, a lot of which is continual or reoccurring.

There is also pressure on Members to ensure that they keep themselves up to date when changes occur, such as the introduction of new legislation, regulations or guidance.

**4.3.3 Do councillors generally find that the time they spend on council business is what they expected?**

Of those Members who answered this question in a recent survey, 24 Members indicated that the time they spent on Council business was what they expected, whereas 17 Members stated that it was not what they expected.

**4.3.4 How much time do members generally spend on the business of your council?**

Of those Members who answered this question in an initial survey, 21 Members indicated that they generally spend over 30 hours a month on Council business. Further clarification was sought from the Council's Civic Affairs Committee on this issue, so a further survey highlighted that the following time was spent on Council business by those Members who took part in the survey:

10-20 hours per month	1 Member
20-30 hours per month	1 Member
30-40 hours per month	3 Members
40 – 50 hours per month	5 Members
50-60 hours per month	2 Members
60-70 hours per month	2 Members
70-80 hours per month	4 Members
80 – 90 hours per month	2 Members
More than 100 hours per month	4 Members

**4.3.5 Does the council appoint members to outside bodies? If so, how many councillors are involved in this activity and what is their expected workload?**

Yes, a list of outside bodies and the number of nominees is attached at **Annex C**.

Members are expected to attend meetings and provide reports back to the Council on any areas of relevant interest in respect of the outside body they are appointed onto. This is facilitated by the Partnerships Review Committee which regularly receives reports from Members appointed to outside bodies. Cabinet Members also report any relevant issues from Outside Bodies to meetings of Cabinet.

The frequency of meetings for each Outside Body will be different in each case, so the expected workload will vary depending on which body the Member sits on.

**4.3.6 Does the council attract and retain members?**

The average number of candidates that stood for seats at the Council's 2012, 2014 and 2015 elections is 3.74, which suggests that the Council continues to attract Members to stand for election and subsequently become District Councillors.

No seats have been uncontested at South Cambridgeshire District Council since 2006.



Four Members stood down in the 2015 elections, two of which were very long standing Councillors who decided to retire. The majority of Members in the last three elections have stood again to contest their seats.

**4.3.7 Have there been any instances where the council has been unable to discharge its duties due to a lack of councillors?**

No.

**4.3.8 Do councillors have an individual or ward budget for allocation in their area? If so, how is such a system administered?**

No.

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## **5. Part 2 – Scrutiny functions**

### **5.1 How do scrutiny arrangements operate in the authority? How many committees are there and what is their membership?**

The Council has two scrutiny committees, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee (which focusses on the Council's service delivery, performance and budget from an internal perspective) and the Partnerships Review Committee (which focuses on how effective the Council works with other bodies and organisations within the District).

Both bodies consist of 9 Members and meet a minimum of four times a year.

### **5.2 What is the general workload of scrutiny committees? Has the council ever found that it has too many active projects for the scrutiny process to function effectively?**

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee's workload is reflective of decisions scheduled to be taken by Portfolio Holders or Cabinet as part of pre-decision scrutiny. In reviewing the performance of services it also adds items to its work programme independently. To assist with this, the work prioritisation flowchart attached at **Annex F** is used.

More in depth scrutiny reviews are carried out in the shape of informal working groups or Task and Finish groups, which enable the Committee to consider more items of business and manage its workload effectively.

The Committee has a manageable work programme of active projects and the work prioritisation flowchart assists in ensuring that the Council's scrutiny and overview process functions effectively.

Scrutiny Monitors are also appointed to attend Portfolio Holder Meetings and undertake a scrutiny and overview role at those meetings by way of providing challenge and holding decision-takers to account. Scrutiny Monitors can subsequently report any recommendations they may have made at those meetings into the Scrutiny and Overview Committee as part of a standing item on the agenda for its meetings.

The Partnerships Review Committee's work programme focusses on how South Cambridgeshire District Council works with partner bodies and organisations in the district. External speakers are usually invited to provide the Committee with an opportunity to ask questions about priorities and performance. A standing item on the agenda for meetings of the Partnerships Review Committee is to receive update reports from Members of outside bodies.

Training facilitated by the Centre for Public Scrutiny has been provided for all Members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and Partnerships Review Committee, focussing on how to effectively challenge decision-takers, questioning skills and using evidence to come to conclusions.

**5.3 How is the work of scrutiny committees programmed? Is the work strictly timetabled?**

The work of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee is programmed in consultation with the Chairman, following requests received from officers and Members of the Committee for items to be included on the agenda for meetings. The work prioritisation flowchart assists in the consideration of these items. The work programme is also considered collectively as a Committee at each meeting.

The Partnerships Review Committee considers its work programme at every meeting, with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman having the discretion to consider key items of business and invite external speakers to attend.

Pre-scrutiny work has to be strictly timetabled in order to ensure that recommendations can be fed into Portfolio Holders or Cabinet before decisions are taken.

Task and Finish Groups will always have terms of reference agreed at the outset of each review. This will include confirmation of a completion date which is strictly adhered to in order to focus the group's work.

**5.4 What activities are scrutiny committee members expected to carry out between formal meetings?**

Scrutiny and Overview Committee members would be expected to monitor the work of Cabinet and Portfolio Holders in between formal meetings of the Committee, especially the Scrutiny Monitors.

Those involved in Task and Finish Groups would also be required to read, digest and analyse information relating to the subject being reviewed.

## **6. Part 3 – Representational role of councillors**

### **6.1 In general terms, how do councillors carry out their representational roles with electors? Do members mainly respond to casework from constituents or do they have a more active role in the community?**

Councillors can opt to carry out their representational role within communities in any way which suits them. Generally this would consist of attending meetings of Parish Councils and responding to casework from residents. The majority of Members are very active in their communities and will spend time attending Parish Council meetings and a range of local forums and interest groups in their capacity as local District Councillor.

### **6.2 How do councillors generally deal with casework? Do they pass on issues directly to staff or do they take a more in depth approach to resolving issues?**

Members operate in different ways depending on the individual, however, generally casework would initially be dealt with by a Member once a query is received by a resident. They would normally contact Council officers for assistance if they required technical advice or if the issue was an operational matter.

### **6.3 What support do councillors receive in discharging their duties in relation to casework and representational role in their ward?**

Members receive no direct support in discharging these duties, although the advice of professional officers at the District Council is always available to Councillors and issues are often referred to officers as and when necessary in order to seek resolution.

### **6.4 How do councillors engage with constituents? Do they hold surgeries, distribute newsletters, hold public meetings, write blogs etc?**

Councillors engage with their residents using all of the above methods, depending on the individual. Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, is becoming a very popular way of Members engaging with their residents.

### **6.5 How has the role of councillors changed since the council last considered how many elected members it should have?**

The Council implemented a Leader and Cabinet model of governance at the same time as the previous review took place in 2001/02. The role of Members will therefore have changed since the last review in accordance with the revised model of governance.

The introduction of the Leader and Cabinet model has resulted in less meetings of Full Council and other bodies that would have previously had decision-making powers.

Social media and improved technology has meant that Members are more able to communicate with their communities, which has changed the way in which some Members operate as a District Councillor.

**6.6 Has the council put in place any mechanisms for councillors to interact with young people, those not on the electoral register or minority groups or their representative bodies?**

The Council actively supports the South Cambridgeshire Youth Council and provides opportunities for engagement both informally and formally.

No formal mechanisms are in place to support those not on the electoral register or minority groups, other than appointments to outside bodies that may provide links into representatives of these groups.

**6.7 Are councillors expected to attend meetings of community bodies such as parish councils or residents associations? If so, what is the level of their involvement and what role are they expected to play?**

A recent survey to both District Councillors and Parish Council Chairmen/Clerks suggests overwhelmingly that there is an expectation for District Councillors to attend meetings of Parish Councils.

Most District Councillors make an effort to attend all, if not the majority, of meetings of the Parish Councils within their respective electoral wards. Their main role at these meetings is to ensure that Parish Councils are accurately informed of District Council issues.

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## **7. Part 4 – The future**

### **7.1 Localism and policy development**

#### **7.1.1 What impact do you think the localism agenda might have on the scope and conduct of council business and how do you think this might affect the role of councillors?**

The Council already has effective working arrangements in place with localities and communities, specifically through Parish Councils and other community groups. Members and officers meet regularly with representatives of Parish Councils formally through Parish Forum meetings. Parishes are also consulted on specific proposals and the Council provides a regular information bulletin aimed solely at Parish Councils, in addition to informal liaison that takes place frequently with Parishes on local issues.

#### **7.1.2 Does the council have any plans to devolve responsibilities and/or assets to community organisations? Or does the council expect to take on more responsibilities in the medium to long term?**

The Council has actively empowered communities and Parish Councils by encouraging and enabling them to own and be responsible for facilities in their areas that are considered to be community assets, through a range of methods including advice from officers and community grant funding. This support and way of working with Parish Councils and community groups has long been an integral part of the culture of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The District Council's only significant assets are the administrative headquarter building, South Cambridgeshire Hall, and its Council housing stock. It also owns a housing company, Ermine Street Housing Ltd.

### **7.2 Service delivery**

#### **7.2.1 Have changes to the arrangements for local delivery of services led to significant changes to councillors' workloads? (For example control of housing stock or sharing services with neighbouring authorities)**

The Council has joint working and shared services arrangements in place with partner Councils for a number of key services including waste and recycling, legal services, ICT, building control, internal audit and payroll. Members of South Cambridgeshire District Council still take decisions and undertake the overview and scrutiny role from the perspective of the District Councils interests in the joint arrangements. This has not, therefore, impacted the workload of Councillors.

The Greater Cambridge City Deal is a significant partnership arrangement that impacts South Cambridgeshire District Council. Some Members of South Cambridgeshire District Council are also Members of the City Deal Executive Board and Joint Assembly, which each meet approximately ten times a year. Members of these bodies have noticed a significant increase in their respective workloads.

The Council has placed more emphasis on commercialisation and creating alternative and sustainable income streams. This has required more training to be put in place for Members who themselves need to understand this different approach to service delivery.

**7.2.2 Are there any developments in policy ongoing that might significantly affect the role of elected members in the future?**

Significant new development proposed in South Cambridgeshire, together with the development of the new town of Northstowe, will have an impact on the role of Members both locally in their communities if affected by new development and for those that sit on the Planning Committee, Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee and Cambridge Fringes Joint Development Control Committee.

**7.3 Finance**

**7.3.1 What has been the impact of recent financial constraints on the council's activities? Would a reduction in the scope and/or scale of council business warrant a reduction in the number of councillors?**

The Council has consistently had a Medium Term Financial Strategy in place which reflects the need to make significant efficiency savings. Savings targets have continually been met year on year, but this is an ongoing challenge.

The Council is seeking alternative and sustainable income streams and a number have already been identified. Ermine Street Housing Ltd (the Council's housing company) and the Commercialisation Programme are two such examples.

Despite the curtailing of some non-mandatory services, the additional funding streams outlined above, together with significant partnerships such as the Greater Cambridge City Deal, does not suggest a reduction in the scope and/or scale of Council business.

**7.3.2 If you are proposing a reduction in the number of councillors for your authority to what extent is this a reflection of reduced activity of the council overall, an anticipation of efficiency plans or a statement to local people? Or none of these things?**

The Council, in considering its Council size as part of the Boundary Commission's review, has accepted that a reduction in Councillors is an unavoidable requirement. However, it does have grave concerns that the rurality of the district will put significant pressure on Councillors' ability to provide sufficient democratic representation for the rurally isolated residents and communities South Cambridgeshire. The Council therefore recommends a Council size of 45 and strongly advises against any reduction below this figure.

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## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Notes of a meeting of the Workshop for Parish Council held on:  
Thursday, 27 August 2015 at 6pm

### PRESENT:

Parish	Enid Bald	Linton
Council	David Bard	Sawston & SCDC
Reps:	John Beadsmore	Great Wilbraham
	Malcolm Bore	Foxton
	Anna Bradnam	SCDC
	Jane Coston	Milton
	Simon Crocker	Caldecote & Cambourne
	Kevin Cuffley	Sawston & SCDC
	Genevieve Dalton	Little Abington
	Judy Damant	Meldreth
	Mary Drage	Fulbourn
	Bev Edwards	Barton
	Sue Ellington	SCDC
	Arthur Greaves	Whittlesford
	Ian Hack	Wimpole
	Colin Hoptroff	Orwell
	Liz Jones	Waterbeach
	Jackie McGeady	Gamlingay
	Cicely Murfitt	SCDC
	Mike Oakley	Oakington
	Niall O'Byrne	Harston
	David Pepperell	Stapeford
	Elizabeth Sim	Elsworth
	Sandie Smith	Swavesey
	Margaret Stalkie	Horningsea
	Avril Taylor	Arrington
	Derek Thorn	Fulbourn
	Richard Turner	SCDC
	Robert Turner	SCDC
	Geoff Twiss	Over
	John Vickery	Cambourne
	Robert Williamson	Waterbeach
Officers:	Patrick Adams	Senior Democratic Services Officer
	Jo Cox	Electoral Services Officer
	Andrew Francis	Electoral Services Manager
	Clare Gibbons	Development Officer
	Graham Watts	Democratic Services Team Leader

Apologies for absence were received from Barrington, Hauxtion, Heydon, Ickleton and Willingham Parish Councils .

### 1. INTRODUCTION FROM ELECTORAL SERVICES MANAGER

Andrew Francis, Electoral Services Manager, thanked all the Parish Council representatives for attending the meeting. He explained that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England had recently started a review of South Cambridgeshire District Council's electoral arrangements because growth within the

District meant that some councillors represented many more electors than others. The review had been triggered because the number of electors being represented by the councillors for the Histon & Impington ward was more than 30% above the average.

The District Council had been invited to make a recommendation to the Boundary Commission on the total number of councillors at the authority. The purpose of this meeting was to allow parish councils to give views on their relationships with District Councillors following a request by Members of the Civic Affairs Committee. This would assist the Committee in considering the issue before making any recommendations to Full Council.

## **2. QUESTIONS FROM PARISH COUNCILS**

Q: How many wards would there be under the new arrangements?

A: The Boundary Commission have not specified a figure. Their main concern was that the District's electorate was equally represented.

Q: Could Council boundaries mirror the Parliamentary boundaries?

A: This could only be achieved by review of Parliamentary boundaries, which was a separate process. The Government was likely to start a boundary review in the near future.

Q: Could the District Council's ward boundaries mirror those of the County Council?

A: In theory it could, but the County Council's boundary review was entirely separate from the District Council's review.

Q: Could parishes be merged?

A: A Community Governance Review would be required to merge parishes, but this was a lengthy process, which was unlikely to be completed in time to affect the Boundary Review.

Q: Did the new electorate figures take any planned development into account?

A: Any development that was expected to increase the electorate size by the year 2021 was included in the electorate figures.

Q: How many people should each councillor represent?

A: This varied greatly throughout the country. The Boundary Commission gave no guidance on this, only to state that it should be an even number within the authority's area. It was noted that accommodating small villages, without over-burdening individual councillors, could prove challenging.

Q: Could the review take into account the number of parish councils being represented by each councillor?

A: The primary concern of the Boundary Commission was to ensure that councillors represented the same number of electors. A submission would risk rejection if it ignored this in favour of ensuring councillors represented an equal number of parish councils.

Q: Was it possible that a Unitary Authority could be set up, thus negating the need for a boundary review?

A: Officers present were not aware of any plans to set up a Unitary Authority and the Boundary Commission had initiated a review of the District Council's electoral arrangements. Obviously if a Unitary Authority was set up then its electoral wards would need to be agreed under a separate process.

Q: Could parish councils receive the projected electorate figures for the existing wards?

A: This information was not to hand but could be provided.

Q: Surely the Council should first look at possible wards and use this to agree on a number of councillors, instead of deciding on a number of councillors and then looking at possible wards?

A: The Boundary Commission insist that Councils first agree on a number of councillors, using evidence to justify this number which did not include possible ward boundaries. It was noted that looking at possible ward boundaries without first deciding on a number of councillors was a huge amount of work due to the large number of variables.

Q: Was this review being driven by a desire to reduce costs?

A: The Boundary Commission had initiated this review because of electoral inequality. The Boundary Commission's reflection that the number of councillors might be reduced was based on comparisons with other authorities, which had similar characteristics to South Cambridgeshire and had nothing to do with attempting to reduce costs.

It was agreed that, if possible, the Council's submission on the new wards should be a cross-party recommendation and not just represent the views of one political group.

### **3. BENEFITS OF ATTENDANCE OF DISTRICT COUNCILLORS AT PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS**

The meeting divided into three informal workshop groups.

Parish councillors made the following points about the benefits of District councillors attending parish council meetings (counter-points made in brackets):

- District councillors can quickly answer complex questions that would otherwise take time to find from officers (would trust officers to answer complex questions.)
- They provide a direct link to officers – copied into e-mails helps.
- Allows public access to district councillors directly as other ways not always responded to.
- Allows district councillors to make decisions based on knowledge direct from parishes, especially at planning committee.
- District councillors can help a parish council to take things through the Planning Committee.
- District councillors can contribute to meetings without making decisions.
- E-mails to district councillors before meetings can determine if issues need chasing and allows non-agenda items to be discussed.
- Members of the community benefit from hearing from both parish and district councillors.
- District councillors are the parish council's first point of contact, even on County issues, as they are always there.
- District councillors can guide the meetings and give them a formal structure (Chairman, not the District Councillor, should keep order at meetings).
- District councillors can share workload, attend more meetings and feedback to parish councillors more easily.
- They provide the reassurance of expertise.
- District councillors can access information from SCDC more easily than parish councils trying to find it themselves. (This should work both ways).
- A district councillor attending a parish council meeting can:
  - Offer advice
  - Contribute to the meeting
  - Try to resolve problems with the Council

- Answer questions to resolve issues on the spot
- Report on District matters coming through
- Provide updates on any changes
  
- Benefits of attendance depends on:-
  - Quality of member
  - Number of parishes
  - Other council roles
  - Other commitments
  - Good communication is vital.

#### **4. THE PROBLEMS CREATED BY NON-ATTENDANCE OF DISTRICT COUNCILLORS AT PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Parish councillors made the following points about the attendance of district councillors at parish council meetings (counter-points made in brackets):

- Attendance at parish council meetings is the fundamental role of a District Councillor - if they don't turn up, what are they for?
- When the district councillor lives in the village it's easier for them to communicate with residents and attend parish council meetings.
- Sometimes parish council meetings clash, especially the annual meetings.
- Parish councils should liaise with District councils so that clashes can be avoided.
- Parishes have to be flexible with dates for meetings (meetings should be held when convenient to parish councillors and it is possible for district councillors to attend two meetings in an evening.)
- Clashes do occur, making attendance impossible.
- Fewer district councillors mean more parishes to a councillor and should lead to negotiation between parishes on when meetings are held to allow attendance.
- Meeting schedules can be planned to ensure there are no clashes.
- Joint meetings on big issues would ensure that all could meet with the District Councillor at the same time.
- Value of attendance depends on quality of district councillor.
- If district councillors don't attend they don't take into account parish views.
- Non-attendance means that the parish council have to contact the Council directly through officers.
- Would be harder for a district councillor to attend if they represented more parishes.
- Twin-hatted councillors sometimes forget which hat they are wearing.
- District councillors should not be parish councillors due to a conflict of interest.

#### **5. OTHER WAYS IN WHICH DISTRICT COUNCILLORS COMMUNICATE WITH PARISH COUNCILS OTHER THAN ATTENDING MEETINGS**

Parish councillors made the following points on different ways in which district councillors could communicate with parish councils without attending meetings.

##### **Other ways of communicating**

- No substitute for District Councillor coming to parish meetings.
- If the District Councillor has not attended, he/she should read the minutes.
- Written reports or verbal reports? Perhaps both.
- Page in the parish magazine.
- District councillor has contact details in the parish magazine.

- E-mails to chairman and clerk, which is then “cascaded”.
- E-mails to all parish councillors.
- Monthly report – issued in the report and agenda pack. Should be published on parish council website.
- Electronic bulletins.
- Newsletters.
- Is a member of the Parish Council so the link is automatic.
- District Councillor represented on Parish Councils when more than one parish is represented. Potential conflict of interest.
- Monthly meeting with Chairman and District Councillor.
- Social media (training course was valuable here) – but not attractive to older people and can be misconstrued and/or lead to personal attacks.
- Parish Council website.
- District councillor’s website.
- Parish councils should consider “shared services”, over areas such as website domains etc.
- Response to direct contact, by e-mail, phone or a knock on the door.
- Key contacts outside of the parish councils is important, as is local knowledge.
- Face-to-face meeting is valuable (can’t beat 1:2:1).
- Drop-in surgeries.
- Social functions attended by the district councillor is very important.
- Attendance at village events.
- Written materials through doors.
- Local pub!

#### **Issues with effectiveness**

- District councillors do not always understand the role of the Parish Council.
- They need to be familiar with parishes to be effective.
- Councillor are not the only blockage – it can be the officers.
- District Councillors sometimes respond before fact checking with the parishes - more of an issue if their attendance is low.
- Small parishes have low hours of clerking, causing communication challenges, which can be overcome.
- Concerns that smaller parishes are missed out when they have bigger neighbours.
- Sometimes the District Councillor will have different points of view, but that is normal and to be expected.
- Parishes have to reflect the communities point of view.
- Reporting with respect to what is happening at SCDC needs to be accurate.

#### **Representation in a multi-member ward**

- Two District Councillors means double expertise and more likely to guarantee attendance (complicated if district councillors are of different political parties).
- Co-operation can prove difficult if different political groups are represented in a multi-member ward.
- Partisan representation when there are multiple councillor wards.
- Dislike – don’t like politics coming into play at parish meetings.
- Electing in thirds allows constant representation by experienced district councillors.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Andrew Francis stated that the views expressed by parish councillors at this meeting would be presented to the Civic Affairs Committee meeting on Thursday 10 September, which will make a recommendation on the number of councillors to Council. Full Council will make a formal recommendation on the authority's size to the Boundary Commission at its meeting on Thursday 24 September.

The decision on whether to continue to elect district councillors in thirds or to hold all-out elections every four years would be taken at a special Council meeting also to be held on 24 September. The Boundary Commission had made it clear that if the Council continued to elect in thirds all wards would have to have three councillors.

The actual review of ward boundaries will formally start in November 2015, with final recommendations being published in August 2016. It was understood that implementation was planned for May 2018.

It was noted that more information available from the Boundary Commission website: [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

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**The Meeting ended at 7.30 p.m.**

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**SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Civic Affairs Committee held on  
Thursday, 10 September 2015 at 4.00 p.m.

PRESENT:	Councillor Sue Ellington – Chairman	
	Councillor Charles Nightingale – Vice-Chairman	
Councillors:	David Bard	Nigel Cathcart
	Kevin Cuffley	Simon Edwards
	Sebastian Kindersley	Ray Manning
	Deborah Roberts	Bridget Smith
	Bunty Waters	
Officers:	Patrick Adams	Senior Democratic Services Officer
	Alex Colyer	Executive Director, Corporate Services
	Andrew Francis	Electoral Services Manager
	Jean Hunter	Chief Executive
	Fiona McMillan	Legal & Democratic Services Manager and Monitoring Officer
	Graham Watts	Democratic Services Team Leader
Advisors:	Grant Osbourne	Independent Person

Councillors Anna Bradnam, David McCraith, Cicely Murfitt and Hazel Smith and Hazel Smith were in attendance, by invitation.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Raymond Matthews. Councillor Kevin Cuffley was appointed as a substitute for Councillor Matthews.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Sebastian Kindersley declared an interest in item 4 as a Cambridgeshire County Councillor.

**3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 July 2015 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND REVIEW  
COUNCIL SIZE SUBMISSION**

Consideration was given to a report which provided the Civic Affairs Committee with an opportunity to consider a recommendation to Council on making a submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on Council size as part of its whole Council electoral ward review.

The Chairman introduced this item and referred to the appointment of Councillor Alex Riley, who had recently been appointed by the Leader of the Council as the Council's Boundary Review Champion. Councillor Riley, who was unable to attend the meeting, had put forward a proposal to recommend that the Council submitted a Council size of 45 to the Boundary Commission. He felt that the best chance of agreeing this figure was for

the whole Council to agree upon it in a unified way and cited the following as reasons for his proposal:

- a Council size of 45 would correspond readily to mapping three South Cambridgeshire District Councillors onto every Cambridgeshire County Council Member in the current 15 Member Boundary Commission review of the County Council;
- it happened to match numerically to a boundary review scenario independently drawn up by officers;
- it was the minimum Council size which allowed the district's largest parish of Histon and Impington to remain a three Member ward;
- it represented a reduction of some 20% in the current Council size.

Discussion ensued on the proposal to recommend a Council size of 45, during which the following points were noted:

- it was very difficult to consider a reduction in Council size given the rural nature of the district and the difficulties some Members already experienced in representing numerous rural communities;
- there was a real risk of democratic deficit across the district as a reduction in Members would mean more communities to represent per Member;
- there was a danger, however, of the Boundary Commission imposing a Council size based on South Cambridgeshire District Council's statistical neighbours should the Council not be minded to put forward an evidence-based recommendation. It was noted that a recommendation by the Council, as long as it was supported by an evidence base, was more likely to be accepted by the Boundary Commission;
- the proposed Council size of 45 should be supported, but it should also be recommended that this number be a minimum for any proposed reduction in Council size;
- the role of County Councillors and District Councillors was very different, so it was not vital to achieve a 3:1 ratio of District Councillors per County Councillor across the district;
- in view of the significant projected population growth for South Cambridgeshire, it may be necessary for the Boundary Commission to undertake a further electoral earlier in the future than anticipated;
- a reduction in Council size would mean that a lower number of Members would be expected to represent more people, with the projected population growth adding to this pressure. In view of this, another issue to consider was how difficult it would be to attract people to stand as Councillors, particularly young people who worked and would not necessarily have enough time to devote to the role.

The Chairman put this proposal to the vote and the Civic Affairs Committee **RECOMMENDED** to Council that it recommends a Council size of 45 as part of its submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's electoral review.

The Chairman invited Members to consider the draft document attached as an appendix to the report which formed an evidence-base for the Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on Council size, in accordance with the Boundary Commission's guidance.

The following additions to the document were suggested:



- more reference to the rural character of South Cambridgeshire, particularly the issue of rural isolation experienced by a number of communities in the district;
- reference to South Cambridgeshire as an area being significant to regional and national economic growth;
- more emphasis on the substantial population growth in South Cambridgeshire and the fact that this was projected to be above the national average;
- more emphasis on the significant increase in the workload of those Members involved in the Greater Cambridge City Deal Executive Board and Joint Assembly;
- more emphasise on the expectation for Members to attend significant amounts of training and ensure that they kept up to date with issues, such as changes in legislation, regulations or guidance;
- Council housing stock being identified as a South Cambridgeshire District Council asset and reference to St Ermine Street Ltd as the Council's housing company;
- further clarity around the amount of time Members currently spent on Council business per month.

The Civic Affairs Committee **AGREED** the draft document appended to the report as a basis for an evidence-based submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, subject to the inclusion of a number of amendments as suggested above, and that a revised version be circulated to all Members of the Civic Affairs Committee as soon as possible.

It also **AGREED** that officers be given authority to make any necessary amendments to the evidence-based submission document prior to its submission to Council, in liaison with the Chairman of the Civic Affairs Committee and political group leaders.

## 5. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was **NOTED** that the next meeting of the Civic Affairs Committee was scheduled to be held on 24 September 2015 at 11.00am.

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**The Meeting ended at 4.50 p.m.**

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