



6 March 2024

To: Chair – Councillor Peter Fane
Vice-Chair – Councillor Paul Bearpark
Members of the Civic Affairs Committee – Councillors Henry Batchelor,
Dr. Martin Cahn, Lina Nieto, Bridget Smith, Dr Susan van de Ven,
Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer and Heather Williams

Quorum: 3

Substitutes: Councillors Graham Cone, Dr. Richard Williams, Sue Ellington,
Bunty Waters, Mark Howell, Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Brian Milnes and
Michael Atkins

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **Civic Affairs Committee**, which will be held in **Council Chamber - South Cambs Hall** at South Cambridgeshire Hall on **Thursday, 14 March 2024 at 10.00 a.m.**

Yours faithfully
Liz Watts
Chief Executive

Agenda

	Pages
1. Apologies for Absence To receive Apologies for Absence from Committee members.	
2. Declarations of Interest	
3. Minutes of Previous Meeting To authorise the Chairman to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2023 as a correct record.	3 - 6
4. Public Questions If you would like to ask a question or make a statement, then please refer to the Document called Public Speaking Scheme (Physical Meetings) and contact Democratic Services by no later than 11.59pm three clear working days before the meeting.	
5. Update on Code of Conduct Complaints and Annual Summary	7 - 10

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Further information for members of the public can be found at the below link.

[Link to further information for members of the public attending South Cambridgeshire District Council meetings.](#)

If you wish to ask a question or make a statement at a meeting, please refer to the Public Speaking Scheme at the below link.

[Link to the Public Speaking Scheme](#)

Further information for Councillors

[Declarations of Interest – Link to Declarations of Interest - Information for Councillors](#)

Councillors are reminded that Democratic Services must be advised of substitutions in advance of meetings. It is not possible to accept a substitute once the meeting has started.

Agenda Item 3

South Cambridgeshire District Council

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

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

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

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

Councillor Cllr Brian Milnes was in attendance remotely.

1. Apologies for Absence

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

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

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

4. Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2023

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

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

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

The Elections and Democratic Services Manager reported that a private residence

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

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

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

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

A vote was taken by affirmation the

Civic Affairs Committee

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

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

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

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

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

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

A vote was taken and by affirmation the Committee

Recommended that Council

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

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

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

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

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

7. Update on Code of Conduct Complaints

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

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

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

The Committee **noted** the report.

8. Date of Next Meeting

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

The Meeting ended at 11.15 a.m.

Agenda Item 5



REPORT TO: Civic Affairs Committee

14 March 2024

LEAD OFFICER: Monitoring Officer

Update on Code of Conduct Complaints & Annual Summary

Executive Summary

1. To update the Civic Affairs Committee on complaint cases regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct.

Recommendations

2. That the Civic Affairs Committee **note** the progress of any outstanding complaints and the conclusion of cases resolved since the last meeting.

Details

3. Progress since the last meeting in relation to Code of Conduct complaints is set out in the below table:

District/Parish Council/ref	Allegation/complaint	Outcome
SCDC (JM03)	Allegations from 2 complainants against a Councillor that their social media postings breached the code of conduct.	The Monitoring Officer, after consultation with the Independent Person, determined that the complaint did not merit a formal investigation as there had not been a breach of the Code.
Fowlmere PC (JM05)	Allegations from 2 complainants against a Councillor concerning their behaviour breached the relevant code of conduct.	The Monitoring Officer, after consultation with the Independent Person, determined that the complaint did not merit a formal investigation as there had not been a breach of the Code.
Cambourne TC (JM04)	Allegations from a complainant against Councillors concerning their behaviour	The Monitoring Officer is awaiting the Independent Person's assessment to the complaints prior to determining whether the matter merits formal investigation.

	breached the relevant code of conduct.	
Madingley PC (JM07)	Allegations from a complainant against a Councillor that their behaviour breached the relevant code of conduct.	After discussions with the Complainant and the Independent Person, the Monitoring Officer determined to dismiss the complaint.
Fowlmere PC (JM06)	Allegations from a complainant against a Councillor that their behaviour breached the relevant code of conduct.	The Monitoring Officer is awaiting the Councillor's response to the complaint prior to consulting with the Independent Person.
Bassingbourn cum Kneesworth (JM08)	Allegations from a complainant against Councillors that their behaviour breached the relevant code of conduct.	The Monitoring Officer is awaiting the Councillor's response to the complaint prior to consulting with the Independent Person.

Annual Summary 2023-2024

2023-2024 Summary

4. Total number of Standards Complaints: 12

- SCDC – 4;
- Parish Councils – 8;

How many formally investigated:

- SCDC – 0;
- Parish; - 0;

How many Summary Resolutions:

- SCDC – 0;
- Parish – 0;

How many Standards Hearings:

- SCDC – 0;
- Parish Council – 0.

Trends in subject matter of complaints – social media and communications, plus conduct at Parish Council meetings.

Implications

5. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, there are no significant implications.

Background Papers

Constitution – Code of Conduct

Ethical Handbook - Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure

Report Author:

John Murphy – Monitoring Officer Telephone: 07522 619617

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