

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Civic Affairs Committee held on
Tuesday, 29 October 2019 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Dr. Claire Daunton – Chairman

Councillors: Dr. Martin Cahn Mark Howell
Eileen Wilson

Officers: Patrick Adams Senior Democratic Services Officer
Gemma Barron Head of Sustainable Communities and Wellbeing
Elizabeth Davy Project Officer
Andrew Francis Electoral Services Manager
Linda Gallagher Executive Support Officer
Clare Gibbons Development Officer
Kathryn Hawkes Partnerships Officer
Rory McKenna Deputy Head of Legal Practice

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dr. Douglas de Lacey, Henry Batchelor, Bridget Smith and Peter Topping.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Henry Batchelor, Dr. Douglas de Lacey, Bridget Smith and Peter Topping. Vice-Chairman Councillor Dr. Claire Daunton chaired the meeting. Councillor Eileen Wilson substituted for Councillor Henry Batchelor.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was noted that the agenda incorrectly referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 3 September, which had been postponed.

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

4. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

The Electoral Services Manager presented this report, which provided the Committee with the results of the statutory review of the Council's polling districts and polling places and asked the Committee to recommend to Council that the existing polling arrangements be retained.

Consultation

The Electoral Services Manager explained that there had only been two responses received as a result of the consultation. The concerns of Camsight related to the actual voting process and could only be addressed nationally. Waterbeach Parish Council had expressed concerns over parking, but as their polling station was located centrally, most voters walked to it.

Accessibility

It was noted that Cambourne had three polling stations within the one building. In response to concerns regarding accessibility for visual impaired voters, the Electoral Services Manager stated that he would review the arrangements for Cambourne, to ensure that all voters could be easily directed to the correct polling station.

In response to questioning, the Electoral Services Manager explained that the only polling station which was not wheelchair accessible was in Conington, but residents expressed a preference of continuing to vote there. He explained that if necessary the presiding officer could take a ballot paper to a voter who was unable to access the local polling station.

Alternative venues

The Electoral Services Manager explained that the Council might need to seek alternative venues at short notice. For example, in the event of a General Election in December, many venues might be booked for Christmas related events. It was also noted that the polling station for the polling district of Impington South would have to be moved in the future, as the Meadows Community Centre was due to be developed for housing. Councillor Martin Cahn stated that the rebuilt community centre would be within the City's boundary. The Electoral Services Manager said that officers would evaluate the alternatives and present them to the Committee. The Council used caravans, as temporary polling stations. These had proper awnings, which would provide shelter for voters in the event of inclement weather.

Displaying polling places on the website

The Electoral Services Manager agreed to investigate the possibility of displaying the list of polling stations on the website, providing there was no objection from any residents to the publicising of their home address.

The Committee

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL that current schedule of polling districts and polling places be retained with no changes.

5. **CONSIDERATION OF A COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW OF THE PARISHES OF LONGSTANTON AND OAKINGTON & WESTWICK, PROMPTED BY THE DEVELOPMENT AT NORTHSTOWE**

The Northstowe Healthy New Town Programme Lead presented this report, which invited the Committee to consider a Community Governance Review, which would separate the new community of Northstowe from the parishes of Longstanton and Oakington & Westwick.

Increases in Northstowe electorate

It was noted that by April 2021 it was estimated that Northstowe would have 1,164 electors, compared to 1,174 in Oakington and 2,567 in Longstanton. The Review had been delayed by a year to allow the population of Northstowe to develop and to ensure that an experienced parish council existed to address the concerns of the new community.

Amending parish and ward boundaries

It was noted that a small number of residents of Westwick lived in the affected area and that any alteration of the parish boundaries could be contentious. The Electoral Services Manager explained that this Community Governance Review was likely to result in the alteration of ward boundaries which would necessitate the involvement of the Boundary Commission for England. Northstowe had an urban design, which was distinct from the surrounding villages.

Timetable of the Review

It was understood that the Community Governance Review needed to be concluded within a year.

All the affected parish councils had been consulted and supported the instigation of the Review. The Northstowe Healthy New Town Programme Lead explained that the views of Longstanton Parish Council had just been received. They supported the review and wanted input with regards to the timetable.

It was hoped that the results of the consultation would be considered by the Committee at its meeting in March.

The Committee

AGREED

- A)** To commence with a Community Governance Review of the parishes of Longstanton and Oakington & Westwick based on the draft terms of reference in Appendix A.
- B)** That officers should take into consideration the views of the parish councils when determining the timing of the review.

6. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW OF THRIPLow PARISH COUNCIL

The Development Officer presented this report, which invited the Committee to consider a request from Thriplow Parish Council for a Community Governance Review to change the number of parish councils representing each ward from 7 to 5 for Thriplow and 2 to 4 for Heathfield.

Other warded parishes

It was noted that there had not been a recent review of the other warded parishes in the District.

Numbers of parish councillors the two wards

Members of the Committee recognised the logic of the proposed change, as the number of people living in Heathfield had increased. However, concern was expressed at the fact that Thriplow had a lower number of electorate (385) than Heathfield (512), but would still have more parish councillors. It was noted that the total number of parish councillors representing the whole parish council was not being considered as part of this Review. The Committee recognised that these issues could be considered as part of the consultation.

Number of candidates willing to stand

The Electoral Services Manager explained that Thriplow Parish Council last had a contested election in 2016 and that residents of one ward could stand for election in the other ward, providing they lived within five kilometres of that ward.

The Committee

AGREED

- A)** The request from Thriplow Parish Council for a Community Governance Review to consider changing the number of parish councillors representing each of the parish

wards.

- B)** The draft terms of reference, as laid out in Appendix A.
- C)** The proposed timetable set out in the draft terms of reference.

7. UPDATE ON CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

The Deputy Monitoring Officer updated the Committee on the complaints cases regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct, received since the last meeting. He explained that four additional complaints had been received, but had not yet been processed and so were not included in the report.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

8. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on 4 December 2019 at 10am in the Swansley Room.

The Meeting ended at 10.40 a.m.
