

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Civic Affairs Committee held on
Tuesday, 12 January 2016 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Sue Ellington – Chairman
Councillor Charles Nightingale – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: David Bard Nigel Cathcart
Simon Crocker Simon Edwards
Sebastian Kindersley Ray Manning
Bridget Smith

Officers: Gemma Barron Sustainable Communities & Partnerships
Manager
Andrew Francis Electoral Services Manager
Fiona McMillan Legal Services Manager and Monitoring Officer
Graham Watts Democratic Services Team Leader

Advisors: Gillian Holmes Deputy Independent Person

Councillors Alex Riley was in attendance, by invitation.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Raymond Matthews, Deborah Roberts and Bunty Waters.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ray Manning declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute number 6 as he had signed a petition in relation to the proposed parish boundary review.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 November 2015 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. FIRST PHASE CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO LGBCE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE ELECTORAL REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report which provided the Civic Affairs Committee with an opportunity to recommend to Council a response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's first phase of consultation on new warding patterns for South Cambridgeshire.

Councillor Alex Riley, Boundary Review Member Champion, presented the report and the draft response as attached to the report at Appendix 1 which he said all Members of the Council had seen and which had not changed for the last two months. Councillor Riley informed the Committee that he had not received any comments in that time to suggest additional changes to the proposals.

Councillor Cathcart, reflecting on the shape and nature of the district, referred to the decision made at the previous meeting stating that he had not supported the decision and still had concerns in respect of single Member wards and inconsistencies across the

district. Councillor Cathcart gave examples where some wards, as they currently sat, would lose villages as part of the new proposal and felt that there was no particular harmony to what was being proposed. He was also concerned that the proposal had been developed ahead of consultation with Parish Councils, with his view being that comments from Parish Councils should have been incorporated into the initial proposal.

Councillor Riley responded by reminding the Committee that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England had already made its decision regarding a Council size of 45 for South Cambridgeshire District Council, so there was no choice in developing a proposal based on that Council size, equating to 2,900 electors per Member, which he accepted worked better in some areas of the district than in others. In terms of the draft proposal being developed prior to consultation with Parish Councils, Councillor Riley made the point that there had to be a proposal in place for Parish Councils to comment on. He said that the principles of electoral wards being single-Member wards and small parishes not forming part of an electoral ward with large parishes, in both cases where possible and practical, had been agreed at the last meeting and were put into practice as part of developing the draft proposal.

Councillors Bridget Smith and Sebastian Kindersley had sympathy with Councillor Cathcart's concerns, citing examples in the electoral ward they represented where single-Member wards were not the most suitable solution. Councillor Riley acknowledged that there were difficult compromises that had to be made across the district. Councillor Smith also made the point that there were a number of newly proposed electoral wards that were towards the end of the 10% tolerance level and questioned what the Boundary Commission's views would be in respect of that. Andrew Francis, Electoral Services Manager, advised that whilst this was true, it would be up to the Council to put forward its case.

It was noted that the wording of ward 20 in the draft proposal would be amended to reflect that the proposed ward was a single large settlement, which would clearly benefit from being a ward on its own, and that there were plans for growth.

Councillor Simon Edwards reported that Parish Councils had been contacted directly by the Boundary Commission and stated that Oakington and Westwick Parish Council had expressed its concerns with regard to proposed ward 24, which would see Oakington and Westwick grouped with Longstanton, to include the town of Northstowe. Councillor Edwards asked whether the growth of Northstowe, in reaching a certain number of electors, would trigger a further boundary review. It was clarified that any ward exceeding a 30% variance in the average Member to elector ratio would usually trigger a boundary review.

Voting on the recommendations contained within the report with 6 votes for, 1 against and 2 abstentions, the Civic Affairs Committee **RECOMMENDED** to Council that the warding proposal as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, developed by the Member Champion in consultation with all Members, be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as a Council response to the first phase of the review, subject to the inclusion of an amendment to ward 20 in respect of Cambourne to reflect that the proposed ward was a single large settlement which would clearly benefit from being a ward on its own and that there were plans for growth.

The Committee put on record its thanks to Councillor Riley for the work he had undertaken in developing the draft proposals.

5. REVIEW OF COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS

Consideration was given to a report which set out proposed changes to the specific Standing Orders identified and supported for amendment, in principle, at the previous meeting on 12 November 2015.

Appendix A to the report set out the proposed amendments to specific Standing Orders and it was clarified, in relation to significant amendments put forward when considering the Council's annual budget, that the Council's Section 151 Officer would determine the definition of 'significant' in this respect.

Discussion ensued on the suggested introduction of a process to facilitate questions by Members without the requirement to provide notice, in addition to the current process for submitting questions on notice. It was agreed the trial introduction of a new format for questions by Members at meetings of Council, to include the usual process for submitting written questions by notice followed by the ability to ask questions without notice, including questions in relation to the Greater Cambridge City Deal, within a total timeframe of 30 minutes, should be recommended to Council. The Committee agreed to review this again in six months.

The Civic Affairs Committee **RECOMMENDED** to Council:

- (a) the amendments to Council Standing Orders as set out at paragraphs 12.4, 14.6 (g) to (i) and 24 of Appendix A to the report, subject to paragraph 24 excluding Portfolio Holder Meetings.
- (b) the trial introduction of a new format for questions by Members at meetings of Council to include the usual process for submitting written questions by notice followed by the ability to ask questions without notice, including questions in relation to the Greater Cambridge City Deal, within a total timeframe of 30 minutes. This procedure would be reviewed again by the Committee in six months.
- (c) the amendment of the Scrutiny and Overview Procedure Rules to reflect the reduction of the quorum for both the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and Partnerships Review Committee to one quarter.

6. PARISH BOUNDARY BETWEEN WILLINGHAM AND OVER

This item was **DEFERRED** following a request for more information into the reasons for a proposed Community Governance Review.

7. UPDATE ON CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

The Civic Affairs Committee **NOTED** the progress of any outstanding complaints.

8. UPDATE ON COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEWS

Gemma Barron, Sustainable Communities and Partnerships Manager, provided a verbal update on Community Governance Reviews. The following points were noted:

- the Haslingfield review was on schedule to launch in February 2016;
- the timings relating to the Northstowe review would be reconsidered, in consultation with the local Member;

- officers had been liaising with Cambourne and Caxton Parish Councils to confirm timings for the review into Cambourne West.

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

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be confirmed in due course.

The Meeting ended at 3.10 p.m.
