

ROLE OF THE CHAIRMAN/WOMAN OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

- To:** Council
- Date:** 24th March 2015
- From:** LGSS Director Law, Property and Governance
- Purpose:** To consider the need to clarify the role of the Chairman/woman of Cambridgeshire County Council.
- Recommendation:** Council is recommended to:
- (a) approve the revisions in bold to Part 2 – Articles, Article 5 – Chairing the Council (see Appendix 1) to reflect the types of civic and ceremonial functions the Chairman/woman of the Council should attend and the process for dealing with areas where the type of function is not clear;
 - (b) agree the establishment of a webpage devoted to the role of the Chairman/woman of the Council; and
 - (c) authorise the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Constitution and Ethics Committee, to make any other minor or consequential amendments to the Constitution necessary for, or incidental to, the implementation of these proposals.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The current Chairman of the Council, Councillor Kevin Reynolds, is of the view that the role of the Chairman/woman (and associated status) of Cambridgeshire County Council has diminished significantly in the last few years.
- 1.2 The role of Chairman of Cambridgeshire County Council was established in 1973 when the Council itself was first established. It has always been based broadly on the functions set out below in Article 5.
- 1.3 Article 5 of the Constitution – Chairing the Council states the following in relation to the role and function of the Chairman/woman of the Council:

ARTICLE 5 – CHAIRING THE COUNCIL

Role and Function of the Chairman/woman of the Council

The Chairman/woman of the Council will be elected by the Council at the Annual Meeting. The Chairman/woman of Council, and in the Chairman/woman's absence the Vice-Chairman/woman, will have the following roles and functions:

1. To uphold and promote the purposes of the Constitution.
 2. To preside over meetings of the Council so that its business can be carried out efficiently and with regard to the rights of Councillors and the interests of the community.
 3. To ensure that the Council meeting is a forum for the debate of matters of concern to the local community and the place at which members are able to hold each other to account.
 4. To promote public involvement in the Council's activities.
 5. To be the conscience of the Council.
 6. To attend such civic and ceremonial functions as the Council and the Chairman/woman determine appropriate.
- 1.4 The budget heading "Personal Allowance" is for monies paid to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to cover personal expenses they incur as a result of holding this office. The Personal Allowance is entirely separate from the Members' Allowances System, which covers expenses incurred for County Council duties not civic duties. The Chairman/woman is also supported by one member of staff (Kathy Jacklin) based in the Customer Service and Transformation Directorate.
 - 1.5 In relation to the Role and Function of the Chairman/woman of the Council (item 6), the Council's previous Members' Allowances Scheme stated the following:
 - (d) Attendance by Cabinet member, Group Leader, Overview and Scrutiny Chairman or Spokesman as the official representative of the Council at a civic or other official event relating to their service or *on behalf of* the Chairman of the Council.

The new scheme of Members' Allowances is not quite so specific and states the following:

- a) Attendance at meetings/events where the Member is an official Council representative or requested by the Leader or the relevant Service Committee Chair.

- 1.6 The Constitution and Ethics Committee considered a report on this issue at its meeting on 3 March 2015.

2.0 ROLE OF CHAIRMAN/WOMAN

- 2.1 The Committee acknowledged that the role of Chairman/woman outside the functions associated with full Council is not clear. There is some confusion regarding whether the Chairman of General Purposes Committee/Leader of the Council or the Chairman/woman of a Service Committee or the Chairman of the Council should attend an event e.g. the opening of a bypass where a particular committee has been closely involved. The Constitution therefore needs to define the types of civic and ceremonial functions the Chairman should attend.
- 2.2 Civic and ceremonial function refers to an official event held for celebratory, ritual or commemorative purposes. It is therefore expected that the Chairman/woman of the Council will, for example, be invited to:
 - preside over citizenship ceremonies
 - present awards
 - officially open new buildings and projects
 - attend twinning events
 - attend funerals of Members and officers who die in service and civic dignitaries past and present.
- 2.3 The Committee also acknowledged that there will always be grey areas regarding what is or is not a civic or ceremonial function. It is therefore proposed that the final decision should rest with the Monitoring Officer following discussion with the Chairman/woman.

3.0 PROMOTING THE ROLE OF THE CHAIRMAN/WOMAN OF THE COUNCIL

- 3.1 Some County Councils have a specific page on their website promoting the role of the Chairman/woman.

3.2 Surrey County Council

Surrey County Council sets out the types of events the Chairman will attend, how people can book the Chairman and provides some notes to organisers.

<http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/your-council/how-the-council-works/civic-and-ceremonial-duties/chairman-of-the-county-council>

3.3 Leicestershire County Council

Leicestershire County Council has a specific webpage devoted to the Chairman, which covers the role of the Chairman and inviting him to an event.

<http://www.leics.gov.uk/chairman>

- 3.4 Cambridgeshire County Council does not currently have a dedicated page for the Chairman/woman on its website.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The Constitution and Ethics Committee acknowledged the need to clarify the civic and ceremonial role of the Chairman/woman in the Council's Constitution.
- 4.2 The Committee also suggested that the role of the Chairman/woman of the Council should be published on Cambridgeshire County Council's website stating clearly what it covers, who to contact etc. It is proposed that the member of staff supporting the Chairman (Kathy Jacklin) work with the Council's Web Team to develop a format to reflect the role.

Source Documents	Location
Council's Constitution Part 2 - Articles Article 5 – Chairing the Council	http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20050/council_structure/288/councils_constitution
Reports and minutes of Constitution and Ethics Committee	http://www2.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CommitteeMinutes/Committees/Committee.aspx?committeeID=59