

OFFICIAL OPENINGS

To: **Constitution and Ethics Committee**

Date: **4th February 2016**

From: **LGSS Director Law, Property and Governance**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Purpose: **To consider arrangements for conducting official openings of buildings or projects that have been developed by a Committee of the Council.**

Recommendation: **The Committee is asked to consider the approach to be taken with regard to conducting of official openings of facilities/projects that have been promoted by a Committee and whether such events should not be regarded as “civic” functions.**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Committee, at its meeting held on 3rd March 2015, considered a report regarding the need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Chairman/woman of Cambridgeshire County Council.
- 1.2. On the recommendation of this Committee, the Council agreed to amend Article 5 of the Constitution to clarify the role of the Chairman/woman and to reflect the types of civil and ceremonial functions the Chairman/woman should deal with. A copy of Article 5 is attached at Appendix A to this report.
- 1.3 Members will see from Appendix A, that the types of civic functions the Chairman should deal with includes:-
- presiding over citizenship ceremonies
 - presenting awards
 - officially opening new buildings and projects
 - attending twinning events
 - attending funerals of Members and officers who die in service and civic dignitaries past and present.

The Article provides that in the case of doubt as to what does and does not constitute a civic or ceremonial function, the final decision shall rest with the Monitoring Officer following discussion with the Chairman/woman.

2. PRESIDING AT OFFICIAL OPENINGS

- 2.1 Article 5 indicates that the Council Chairman/woman should conduct official openings of buildings and projects.
- 2.2 The Council may be involved in the development of various projects and buildings and some of these may be driven through individual Committees. It has been suggested that where an official opening relates to a project promoted through a Committee, then the relevant Chairman/woman should be responsible for conducting the opening, rather than it being regarded as a civic function and therefore the duty of the Chairman/woman of the Council.
- 2.3 Whilst the Monitoring Officer has authority to determine what constitutes a civic or ceremonial function, it would be helpful to receive a steer from the Committee on the suggestion that Committee Chairmen/women should perform openings relating to their Committee projects.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 Article 5 of the Constitution currently provides that the Chairman/woman of the Council will perform official opening of buildings and projects. However, a view has been expressed that this should not apply to openings of facilities or projects promoted by a Committee and that, instead, they should not be regarded as civic functions and therefore this duty should fall to the relevant Committee Chairman/woman. The views of the Committee are invited on this issue to guide the approach taken to conducting future such openings.

Source Documents	Location
Constitution	http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20050/council_structure/288/councils_constitution

ARTICLE 5 – CHAIRING THE COUNCIL

5.01 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, for example 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.

In the case of doubt as to what does and does not constitute a civic or ceremonial function, the final decision shall rest with the Monitoring Officer following discussion with the Chairman/woman.