

CONSTITUTION AND ETHICS COMMITTEE



Wednesday, 13 September 2023

Democratic and Members' Services
Emma Duncan
Service Director: Legal and Governance

14:00

New Shire Hall
Alconbury Weald
Huntingdon
PE28 4YE

Red Kite Room
New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald, Huntingdon, PE28 4YE

AGENDA

Open to Public and Press

CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

1 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

*Guidance on declaring interests is available at
<http://tinyurl.com/cc-conduct-code>*

2 Minutes - 20 June 2023

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DECISIONS

3 Annual Review of the Constitution

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4 Governance Review - Implementation of Recommendations

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**5 A Review of the Complaints Received Under the Members' Code of
Conduct - September 2023**

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The County Council is committed to open government and members of the public are welcome to attend Committee meetings. It supports the principle of transparency and encourages filming, recording and taking photographs at meetings that are open to the public. It also welcomes the use of social networking and micro-blogging websites (such as Twitter and Facebook) to communicate with people about what is happening, as it happens. These arrangements operate in accordance with a protocol agreed by the Chair of the Council and political Group Leaders which can be accessed via the following link or made available on request: [Filming protocol hyperlink](#)

Public speaking on the agenda items above is encouraged. Speakers must register their intention to speak by contacting [Democratic Services](#) no later than 12.00 noon three working days before the meeting. Full details of arrangements for public speaking are set out in Part 4, Part 4.4 of the Council's Constitution: [Procedure Rules hyperlink](#)

The Council does not guarantee the provision of car parking on the New Shire Hall site. Information on travel options is available at: [Travel to New Shire Hall hyperlink](#)

Meetings are streamed to the Council's website: [Council meetings Live Web Stream hyperlink](#)

The Constitution and Ethics Committee comprises the following members:

Councillor Gerri Bird (Chair) Councillor Sebastian Kindersley (Chair) Councillor David Ambrose Smith Councillor Lorna Dupre Councillor John Gowing Councillor Mac McGuire Councillor Kevin Reynolds Councillor Tom Sanderson and Councillor Graham Wilson

Clerk Name:	Nick Mills
Clerk Telephone:	
Clerk Email:	Nicholas.Mills@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Constitution and Ethics Committee Minutes

Date: 20 June 2023

Time: 2:00p.m. – 16:07p.m.

Venue: New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald, Huntingdon, PE28 4YE

Present: Councillors Gerri Bird (Chair), David Ambrose Smith, Lorna Dupré, Sebastian Kindersley, Mark Goldsack (substituting for Councillor Kevin Reynolds), John Gowing, Mac McGuire, Tom Sanderson and Graham Wilson.

43. Election of Vice-Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Sanderson, seconded by Councillor Dupré and resolved unanimously to elect Councillor Kindersley as the Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2023-24.

44. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Councillor Reynolds.

No declarations of interest were made.

45. Minutes – 2 May 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

46. Governance Review Recommendations

The committee received a report detailing recommendations proposed by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS), following its review of the Council's committee arrangements in response to a recommendation from the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge exercise. These recommendations from the CfGS, summarised in section 2.5 and detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, included the organisation of additional training for members and officers, a reorganisation of agenda planning, member briefing and working groups, the establishment of a new Assets and Procurement Committee and changes to the work of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee.

The Chief Executive welcomed the report as a snapshot overview that provided the Council with an opportunity to encourage continuous development and improve its scrutiny, transparency and rigour, particularly with scrutiny of procurement, contract

management and commissioning, through the introduction of a new committee. As the review had been conducted in the previous year, some improvements had already occurred, and attention was drawn to a recent review of Thurrock Council, which had highlighted the importance of good governance.

While discussing the report, members:

- welcomed the recommendations from the CfGS, particularly those regarding members being involved in the development of reports, increasing the focus and direction of the Community, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, and allocating of responsibility for farms and land estate
- expressed concern about the quality of the CfGS report, suggesting that it lacked evidence, contained factual inaccuracies, included conflicting statements with regard to recommendations 3 and 4a. It was also argued that some of the prescriptive requirements were given to relatively trivial matters, such as the frequency of committee meetings.
- expressed concern that the opposition group had not been sufficiently consulted during the review process, with possibly only one of the nineteen consultees coming from the opposition group. It was argued that the focus had instead been on questioning group leaders and committee chairs and vice chairs; a questionnaire had collected evidence from all other members.
- expressed concern that the establishment of a new Assets and Procurement Committee could result in excess workload and gaps in the decision-making process, and it was suggested that the Strategy and Resources Committee could instead hold two separate meetings to focus on different areas. If this were to occur, however, the Strategy and Resources Committee would need to meet more frequently.
- established that the Adults and Health Committee alone had not used reserve meetings, and that its meetings were often very long. However, it was noted that meetings of other committees were also sometimes lengthy, including six-hour meetings of the Strategy and Resources Committee on 10 June 2022 and the Highways and Transport Committee on 7 March 2023. In comparison, meetings of the Environment and Green Investment Committee were shorter, with the longest meeting lasting around three hours.
- argued that extensive agendas resulted in committees spending insufficient time when considering significant items. While it was acknowledged that a benefit of the committee system was that all members could partake in scrutiny, some members expressed concern about the potential impact of Recommendation 4d on the Council's ability to provide sufficient scrutiny on items, as it aimed to make meetings shorter without increasing their frequency.
- highlighted improvements in how the previous meeting of the Adults and Health Committee had been conducted, welcoming the introduction of pre-scrutiny meetings. However, it was suggested that the report could have gone further in its recommendations related to this committee, with one member advocating a

separation of adults and health responsibilities. It was also suggested that the proposed reallocation of some public health and social care responsibilities, could negate the Adults and Health Committee.

- agreed with Recommendations 1a and 1d and emphasised the importance of differentiating between views held by officers and members, to prevent any suggestion of predetermination.
- welcomed Recommendation 2c and the proposed reinstatement of the members seminar programme, suggesting that it provided members with a breadth of information on specific topics. It was clarified that a revision to how Spokes meetings operated would allow in-depth information to be provided on specific committee issues, which would then be dispersed by the individual Spokes to their groups and party policy planning panels. Further consideration would be given to alternative methods for member consultation which aligned with the Member Officer Protocol.
- clarified that the proposed reorganisation of working groups would be determined by the responsible committees, with the changes listed in Recommendation 2 seeking to improve transparency and scrutiny by creating clarity as to where decisions were made.
- acknowledged the positive feedback on the Council in comparison to Thurrock Council, but drew attention to some aspects of the governance review of Thurrock Council that should nonetheless continue to be worked towards, such as ensuring transparency, good governance and scrutiny.
- expressed concerns about the proposed changes to the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, including on which committee would oversee equality, diversity and inclusion.
- suggested there was a need to resolve specific instances of member behaviour in meetings, which the suggestion for additional training did not explicitly address. It was also requested that future training and seminars be recorded so they could be watched by members who were unable to attend at the scheduled time.
- acknowledged that the views presented in the report had been made by an independent organisation, and argued that there was likely to be a level of protectionism towards the Council in response to this.
- clarified that members could request the attendance of specific officers in meetings to ensure all queries could be responded to within the meeting.
- established that if the recommendations were approved, committee proportionality would be considered at the full Council meeting in July 2023. It was also confirmed that the revised terms of reference would also be drafted for the same meeting in order to come into effect from September, the Members' Seminar programme would commence in Autumn, and other recommendations would be actioned progressively, with most occurring before the end of 2023.

- agreed that a member seminar would be held before Full Council considered the recommendations from the CfGS, to ensure members had ownership of and confidence in the proposed constitutional changes relating to Recommendations 5, 6 and 7 proposed by the CfGS. A further seminar would address some of the proposed changes at a later date.

It was resolved by a majority to:

- a) note and comment on the review of the Council's committee system, attached at Appendix 1 to this report;
- b) recommend the proposed changes to the constitution set out in Section 2 of this report to Full Council; and
- c) delegate authority to the Service Director: Legal and Governance, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Constitution and Ethics Committee, to draft amendments to the Constitution necessary for, or incidental to, the implementation of these proposed changes, to also be presented to Full Council.

47. Cambridge Joint Area Committee

The committee received a report on the proposed re-establishment of a joint area committee in Cambridge, which could also potentially be replicated in other districts across the county in the future, with additional functions also to be considered once the committee had bedded in.

Councillor Bulat was invited by the Chair to speak as the local member of the Abbey division. Noting that she was the Vice-Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee which oversaw decentralisation, Councillor Bulat informed the committee that members from both authorities that had previously sat on the joint area committee were supportive of its reestablishment and had assisted in the development of the proposal. She also highlighted the level of public support, and argued that the joint area committee would support local level communication through decentralisation, while improving the Council's image and helping to mitigate current pavement parking problems.

In response to the report, individual members:

- suggested that a joint area committee could improve the working relationship between the City and County Councils, although one member expressed concern that it could exacerbate mistrust from the public with regard to the Greater Cambridge Partnership's City Deal programme.
- noted that previous joint area committees in other districts to Cambridge city had discontinued after the respective district councils had withdrawn funding to the work of the committees. It was argued that although the previous area joint committees had been successful for some areas, in South Cambridgeshire excessive resources had been required to perform its functions.

- expressed concern that the proposals represented a step towards the Council becoming a unitary authority, although members were assured that this was not the intention and that joint input was a requirement of the proposed committee.
- noted that this was a pilot project and was supported by Cambridge City Council. If successful, it could potentially be expanded to other districts across the county and also into additional service areas. However, it was acknowledged that Cambridge did not have parish councils, and therefore joint area committees would differ in other districts.
- noted that the draft terms of reference stated that the committee would 'determine pavement parking permits', while also stating that it would 'consider and advise' on them. It was confirmed that this inconsistency before the final terms of reference were presented to the Full Council.

It was resolved by a majority to:

- a) consider and recommend the draft Terms of Reference for the Cambridge Joint Area Committee, attached at Appendix 1, to Full Council for approval (subject to approval by Cambridge City Council);
- b) agree that officers continue discussions with Cambridge City Council to secure agreement to the re-establishment of the Cambridge Joint Area Committee; and
- c) delegate the approval of amendments to the Terms of Reference to the Service Director: Legal and Governance, in consultation with the Executive Director of Place and Sustainability, before submission to Full Council.

48. Response to the Full Council Motion on Violence and Intimidation Against Members

The committee received a report which responded to the motion proposed by Councillor Bulat, seconded by Councillor Goldsack, and approved unanimously at full Council on 21 March 2023. The associated action plan to improve protection against bullying and harassment for councillors included: ensuring access to support; providing skills and knowledge opportunities; redaction of home address upon request; structured abuse reporting escalation; and liaison with police. Many of these actions were reported to now be in place.

While considering the report, members:

- drew attention to the cross-party support for the motion.
- supported the principle of redaction of members' home addresses upon request, particularly following a social media post prior to a recent Full Council meeting which had incited hate against councillors and included members' addresses that had been either currently or historically published. Members were informed that the Chief

Executive had reported this matter to the police, although it was acknowledged that it was unlikely the police would be able to respond to such a concern, either locally or nationally. Some officers also experienced similar issues, and it was highlighted that such matters were dealt with through the Customer Complaints Policy and single points of contact.

- welcomed the measures to protect councillors at Council meetings.
- drew attention to cases where members of parliaments had been killed or injured while undertaking their work as a representative of local communities. Members were encouraged to perform their own risk assessments and to attend personal safety training sessions which had been arranged and were being provided by a former police officer, although it was suggested that additional written training would also be beneficial for members. It was highlighted that Employee Assistance Programme sessions would be available on 25 July 2023, while a seminar and social media training had also been scheduled.
- emphasised that members should model appropriate behaviour within the chamber and suggested the approach be furthered to address this. The Chief Executive acknowledged that dilution of the Standards Regime had impacted behaviour in public debate.
- noted members would be equipped with the right skills and knowledge to address issues by 30 September 2023.
- requested that the work be reviewed again by the Committee in six months.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note the motion approved by Council on 21 March 2023; and
- b) endorse the action plan set out in section 2.2 of the report.

49. A Review of the Complaints Received Under the Members' Code of Conduct - June 2023

The committee received a report detailing one new complaint and two ongoing complaints received about members under the Members' Code of Conduct from 2 May 2023 to date. Additional complaints had been received following publication of the report, which would be incorporated into the next report, and the process for complaints had been formalised to improve resolution procedure. Future reports would include trend analysis, which could be used to suggest actions to resolve recurring issues and influence the Members' Code of Conduct.

It was resolved unanimously to note the contents of the report.

50. Constitution and Ethics Committee Agenda Plan

The committee noted its agenda plan, noting the agreed addition of a report on the Response to the Full Council Motion on Violence and Intimidation Against Members in six months.

Chair

Annual Review of the Constitution

- To: Constitution and Ethics Committee
- Meeting Date: 13 September 2023
- From: Service Director of Legal and Governance
- Outcome: The committee is asked to consider changes to the Constitution for recommendation to Full Council. The establishment of a small working group of committee members will ensure member involvement in a revised Constitution, Members' Code of Conduct and Social Media Protocol, before consideration by Full Council.
- Recommendation: The committee is asked to:
- a) Recommend the following changes to the Constitution, as set out in Section 2 of the report, to Full Council:
 - (i) Clarification on the consultation process for decisions delegated to officers.
 - (ii) Additional provision for local members participating in committee meetings.
 - (iii) Restrictions on public questions or petitions that have been put in the past six months.
 - (iv) Removal of references to named social media companies.
 - (v) Amendments to the Terms of Reference for the Assets and Procurement Committee.
 - (vi) Changes to the media protocol.
 - b) Agree to the development of a Social Media Protocol for the Council; and
 - c) Establish and appoint members to a Constitution Working Group, as set out in paragraphs 2.20-2.23 of the report.

Officer contact:

Name: Michelle Rowe
Post: Democratic Services Manager
Email: michelle.rowe@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01223 699180

1. Background

Constitution

- 1.1 The Local Government Act 2000 requires all local authorities to have a constitution that covers standing orders, delegation processes and a code of conduct for councillors. Changes to the Council's Constitution are considered by the Constitution and Ethics Committee before being recommended to Full Council for approval.
- 1.2 In order that the Constitution remains updated, the committee previously agreed to an annual review, which has resulted in the proposed changes set out in Section 2 of this report.

Members' Code of Conduct

- 1.3 At its meeting on 29 September 2021, the committee reviewed the new Local Government Association Model Code of Conduct against the Council's current Members' Code of Conduct. It agreed to retain the Council's current Members' Code of Conduct for the time being and keep it under review, pending a response from the Government to the recommendations from the Committee on Standards in Public Life.
- 1.4 The committee was asked, at its meeting on 26 April 2022, to consider the Government's response to the individual recommendations in the Committee on Standards in Public Life report on Local Government Ethical Standards and consider any future actions, including revisiting its previous review of the Council's Code of Conduct.

Social Media Protocol

- 1.5 At its meeting on 27 June 2019, the committee considered a report proposing the introduction of a Social Media Code for Members, which it agreed unanimously. Then at its meeting on 1 October 2019, at the request of Full Council, it considered amendments to the Social Media Code, which had been approved at the committee meeting in June. At this committee in October 2019, it was agreed unanimously to:
 - a) Withdraw the County Council's Social Media Code;
 - b) Consult with a Member representative from each district council, along with their Monitoring Officers, to develop a countywide approach to social media guidance;
 - c) Request an update on the process from the Monitoring Officer at the Committee meeting on 21st November 2019; and
 - d) Request the Monitoring Officer to present a new County Council social media guidance at a future Committee meeting.
- 1.6 At the meeting on 30 June 2020, it was agreed that a report on a Review of Social Media Guidance, would be deferred to a later date following the completion of a review by the Local Government Association (LGA) of the model code of conduct. At the meeting in September 2021, the committee reviewed the LGA's new model code of conduct and

agreed to retain the Council's current code for the time being, but to keep the code under review, pending a response from the Government to the recommendations from the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 Following the annual review of the constitution, the changes set out below are proposed for the committee's consideration.

Consultation for delegated decisions

- 2.2 Chapter 3D (Scheme of Delegation to Officers) of the constitution states that where an officer takes a decision under delegated authority on a matter which has significant policy, service or operational implications or is known to be politically sensitive, the officer shall first consult with the appropriate committee chair and vice-chair before exercising the delegated powers.
- 2.3 The absence of either the chair or vice-chair could result in a delay to such a decision being made. It is therefore proposed to amend paragraph 6.1 of the Scheme of Delegation as follows (addition in bold):

- 6.1 Where an officer takes a decision under delegated authority on a matter which has significant policy, service or operational implications or is known to be politically sensitive, the officer shall first consult with the appropriate committee chair and vice-chair before exercising the delegated powers. **In either Member's absence, consultation with either the chair or vice-chair will be sufficient.**

Attendance of other county councillors at committee meetings

- 2.4 Section 22 of Chapter 4-4 (Procedure Rules for Committee and Sub-Committee Meetings) of the constitution sets out Members' rights to attend committee meetings when they are not a member of the committee as follows:

22. Attendance of Other County Councillors

Any County councillor who wishes to attend a meeting of a committee or subcommittee of which they are not a member will be entitled to do so. With the consent of the meeting they will be entitled to speak but not vote:

- (a) On any matter affecting their electoral division or its inhabitants; or
- (b) On an item which they have requested be included on the agenda in accordance with Procedure Rule 7.

A county councillor who attends a meeting in this capacity will be entitled to remain in the meeting when a resolution excluding the public is in force.

These provisions do not apply where a committee or sub-committee is

exercising a function which is judicial in nature.

- 2.5 Contributions from local members can add value to a committee's consideration of a matter, and on occasions when local members have previously been unable to attend a committee meeting to speak on such issues, chairs have used their discretion with the consent of the meeting to allow written statements from local members to be read out. The following addition is proposed for inclusion in Section 22 of the committee procedure rules:

If a county councillor is unable to attend a committee meeting to speak on a matter affecting their electoral division or its inhabitants, a written statement may be read out on their behalf by another member of the committee.

Public questions or petitions in the past six months

- 2.6 To avoid repetition of questions and answers at Full Council or committee meetings, public questions and petitions are currently not allowed if they are substantially the same as a question or petition that has been put to Full Council (in the case of Full Council) or a committee (in the case of committees) in the past six months. However, there is no restriction on questions or petitions being put if they have been put to Full Council (in the case of a committee) or a committee (in the case of Full Council).

- 2.7 It is proposed to amend Section 9.3 of Chapter 4.1 (Council Procedure Rules) as follows (addition in bold):

A question which is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council **or one of its committees** in the past six months will not be allowed.

- 2.8 It is proposed to amend Section 9.4 of the Council Procedure Rules as follows (removal in strikethrough, addition in bold):

Petitions will not normally be considered within six months of another petition on the same matter having been considered by ~~a committee of the Council~~ **or one of its committees**.

- 2.9 It is proposed to amend Section 9.1 of Chapter 4-4 (Procedure Rules for Committee and Sub-Committee Meetings) as follows (additions in bold):

Permission to speak may be refused if the anticipated contribution:

- (a) Is not relevant to the agenda items of the meeting;
- (b) Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of **the Council**, a committee, or **a** sub-committee in the past six months;

Social Media Channels

- 2.10 Section 20 of Chapter 4-1 (Council Procedure Rules) and Section 21 of Chapter 4-4 (Procedure Rules for Committee and Sub-Committee Meetings) emphasise the Council's

support for the principle of transparency, including the use of social networking and micro-blogging websites to communicate with people about what is happening, as it happens during meetings. Examples of such social media channels are then listed, and following the change of name of one of these companies it is proposed to remove references to specific companies in order to future-proof the constitution.

- 2.11 It is therefore proposed to amend the identical sections in Chapter 4-1 and 4-4 as follows (removal in strikethrough):

The Council supports the principle of transparency and encourages filming, recording and taking photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. It also welcomes the use of social networking and micro-blogging websites (~~such as Twitter and Facebook~~) to communicate with people about what is happening, as it happens. These arrangements will operate in accordance with a protocol agreed by the Chair of the Council and political group leaders. This protocol will be published on the Council's website.

Terms of Reference for the Assets and Procurement Committee

- 2.12 The summary of functions listed in Chapter 3B-13 (Assets and Procurement Committee), states that the committee has delegated authority to take decisions or delegate decisions around contract award / land and property decisions where the value exceeds £175k. This figure reflects the Council's financial limit for revenue virement, when it should actually reflect the key decision threshold and other property thresholds across the constitution, which is £500k.
- 2.13 The reference in this delegated authority to decisions around contract award is also not in line with the Council's process of seeking approval from committees only to commence procurement, with the award and execution of contracts usually delegated to a relevant officer.
- 2.14 It is therefore proposed to amend function (c) as follows (removals in strikethrough, additions in bold):

(c) Take decisions or delegate decisions around ~~contract award~~ **procurement** / land and property decisions where the value exceeds ~~£175k~~ **£500k**.

Media Protocol

- 2.15 A planned two-year review of the media protocol has been undertaken by the Head of Communications and the Service Director of Legal and Governance, in consultation with Group leaders. While the main elements of the protocol remain unchanged, some revisions are proposed to improve the way the Council manages its communications operation, to update where technological advances have rendered earlier points obsolete, to provide greater clarity and support for Members relating to communications activities, and to ensure the Council fully meets the guidance of the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

- 2.16 The main proposed changes, set out fully in Appendix 1 to this report, include:
- (i) Comments on national issues which relate to the Council's operation or services will set out the local authority's views and reasons for holding those views, but should avoid anything likely to be perceived by readers as constituting a political statement,
 - (ii) Officers will clear all external communications from a technical point of view, but Members will continue to approve any direct quotes / be advised of highly sensitive issues
 - (iii) Members should advise the communications team of any media approaches, in order to ensure consistency and accuracy of response as well as to ensure that they remain within the Member Code of Conduct requirements
 - (iv) An agreed protocol for dealing with shared media activities with the Combined Authority.

Social Media Protocol

- 2.17 Councillors are personally responsible for the social media content they create, publish and share. Being a councillor will not prevent someone else pursuing legal action following the publication of an untrue statement. In such a situation, it is likely that a councillor will be held personally liable. The Local Government Association (LGA) has developed national guidance for social media. [An introduction to social media for councillors | Local Government Association](#)
- 2.18 It is proposed that the Council should develop a Social Media Protocol for Councillors and Co-opted Members in line with best practice, to be included in the constitution, to provide a structured approach to using social media which will ensure that it is effective, lawful and does not compromise Council information or computer systems/networks. The protocol will give guidelines on how to use social media, set out how Councillors and Co-opted Members can effectively manage social media usage and indicate how any risks or pitfalls can be minimised or mitigated. The protocol will aim to ensure appropriate use of social media, that Council information remains secure and is not compromised through use of social media, and that the Council's reputation is not damaged or adversely affected.
- 2.19 It is important that this Social Media Protocol is developed in consultation with Members so it is proposed that that the working group proposed in paragraphs 2.20-2.23 of the report should also develop a Social Media Protocol for consideration by the committee at a future meeting.

Constitution Working Group

- 2.20 The 2024 annual review of the constitution will consist of an extensive, in-depth review of the structure and content of the constitution to develop it into a more modern and accessible document. This will include input from members and officers from across the Council, as well as other stakeholders, and it is proposed to establish a Constitution Working Group (CWG) to facilitate this process and participate in the development of proposals that will then be considered by the committee in September 2024.

- 2.21 If agreed by the committee, the CWG will consist of one member of the committee from each political group, with other committee members and substitutes able to attend meetings as substitutes. Meetings of the CWG would be chaired by the Monitoring Officer and held periodically over the next twelve months with the involvement of various officers.
- 2.22 All work on proposed changes to the constitution carried out by the CWG would be subject to subsequent consideration by the committee and approval by Full Council.
- 2.23 Isolated issues requiring changes to the constitution that emerge over the next year would not necessarily be considered by the CWG prior to the committee, as its remit would be focussed on the wider review of the constitution and would give greater Member engagement in the process of constitutional development.

3. Source documents

- 3.1 [Council Constitution - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)
- 3.2 [Guidance on the LGA Model Code of Conduct](#)
- 3.3 [Best Value Standards and Intervention \(DLUHC\)](#)
- 3.4 [Constitution and Ethics Committee - 27 June 2019](#)
- 3.5 [Constitution and Ethics Committee - 1 October 2019](#)
- 3.6 [Constitution and Ethics Committee - 14 January 2020](#)
- 3.7 [Constitution and Ethics Committee - 29 September 2021](#)
- 3.8 [Constitution and Ethics Committee - 26 April 2022](#)

Principles and Protocols for Proactive Communications with Media and Social Media Outlets

1. Background and Introduction

- 1.1 Cambridgeshire County Council is committed to effective communications so that citizens of the County are well informed about the services that affect their lives every day and how these services are organised, led and developed. The local media, both traditional and increasingly well-followed social media platforms, play a valuable role in Cambridgeshire life, as they have the ability to reach large numbers of local residents.
- 1.2 The Council's Communications team aims to provide an efficient and timely response to media enquiries and raise the positive public profile of the authority by actively promoting accurate and balanced coverage of its work and activities.
- 1.3 The proactive communications and marketing of the authority is led by the Head of Communications and Information, working with a team of senior communications managers responsible for overseeing News and External Affairs, Campaigns and Projects, Web and digital, and Internal Communications.
- 1.4 To manage the demands of a 24-hour rolling news agenda, the Council's news desk is available from 9:00am to 5:00pm every working day, but provides an on-call emergency communications service for the media, senior officers and Members at other times.
- 1.5 The Communications team will maintain a rolling, forward grid of media and campaign opportunities which are reviewed on a regular basis and are able to be adapted at short notice. This will be based on suggestions from across all service areas and committees linked to the Council's priority outcomes.
- 1.6 ~~It is recognised that the authority wants to speak on issues of relevance in its community leadership role on behalf of the people of Cambridgeshire, and where national issues or developments in other organisations arise on which the authority has relevant knowledge and experience.~~ **Local authorities should ensure that publicity relating to policies and proposals from central government is balanced and factually accurate. Such publicity may set out the local authority's views and reasons for holding those views but should avoid anything likely to be perceived by readers as constituting a political statement, or being a commentary on contentious areas of public policy.** It is the role of senior officers, as well as the Communications team where possible, to maintain an awareness of forthcoming potential external developments which have relevance to the Council's operations or priority outcomes (e.g. the publication of research reports and national Government announcements), and to ensure the authority is ready to react in advance or is able to respond as quickly as possible.

2. The Legal Framework

2.1 The unit operates within the terms and spirit of a legal framework set out in the Local Government Act 1986, which states that:

A local authority shall not publish any material which in whole, or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party.

2.2 The Act defines publicity as:

any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or to a section of the public.

2.3 The unit operates within the national Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity, first published by the Government in August 1988 and revised in 2001 and 2011. The revised code states that publicity issued by local authorities should be lawful, cost effective, objective, even-handed, appropriate, have regard to equality and diversity and be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity.

2.4 In the event of any potential conflict, the Monitoring Officer will be involved.

3. Principles

A number of fundamental principles underpin the work of the Communications team.

3.1 No surprises / Members first

3.1.1 All Members quoted or named on a release (e.g. Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council, Committee Chairs, opposition Spokes, Local Members, etc.), will be sent news releases, statements or responses before they are sent to the media, so that they have time to digest and consider the issue prior to them responding to any follow-up media enquiry.

3.1.2 For the majority of news releases, the team aims to give named Members 12 – 24 hours' notice of the issue of a release, on the understanding that these are not shared in advance of publication time.

3.1.3 Where this is not possible, on urgent news items linked to serious issues, releases will still be sent to Members a minimum of 30 minutes before they are issued to the media, and a communications officer will ~~telephone~~ **contact** the relevant Member(s) **in the most appropriate way** to check receipt.

3.1.4 All other Members will be sent links to news releases at the same time that they are issued to the media. Every attempt will be made to make sure Members should not hear critical Council information first from other sources.

- 3.1.5 It is recognised that the urgency of dealing with news stories at short notice will sometimes require telephone contact and out-of-hours contact to ensure a timely response. In order to ensure due respect for Members and officers involved, account will be taken to the level of seriousness of the story and the potential impact of the communication.
- 3.2 Members actively involved
- 3.2.1 The content of all ~~principal~~ news releases **relating to strategic issues or changes to Council policy** will be shared and developed in draft stages with the Leader and/or appropriate Committee Chair.
- 3.3 Staff informed
- 3.3.1 Media releases will be agreed with the lead officer or service director and approved by them prior to release. Staff should not learn of changes to their services or employment from the media, and so information about such changes will be shared with them in advance of, or at the same time as media issue. The Council's news releases will also be posted on the internet as soon as they are published.
- 3.4 Honest
- 3.4.1 The team will never knowingly mislead the media on a story or issue. Communications staff are in a long-term relationship with the local media in particular and they must trust the team's counsel and respect its honesty of approach.
- 3.5 Accessible and timely
- 3.5.1 Staff are firm, friendly but polite in dealings with the media, always ensure contact numbers are accurate and appropriate, and return calls efficiently to recognise competing pressures on deadlines. The timeliness of the response rate to media enquiries is recorded and a media officer is available to the media (and key departmental and political contacts) on a 24-hour basis, seven days a week.
- 3.6 Fair
- 3.6.1 The Team does not routinely favour one media source over another. Where appropriate, staff will identify the relative importance of media sources and be able to clearly justify any strategy that promotes one over another. Where concerns are raised about the impartiality of a particular media source, these will be raised with the media outlet concerned initially, and if unresolved, advice will be sought from the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer.
- 3.7 Prompt and courteous rebuttal

- 3.7.1 Where there is a threat that inaccurate stories could damage the reputation of the Council, the Communications team will challenge the story at source, rather than waiting for it to be published. If inaccurate and damaging stories are published, the team will contact the source concerned and seek redress.
4. **Work with Meedia**
- 4.1 **General**
- 4.1.1 One of the most important aspects of dealing with and managing the media is being able to provide a prompt response to a query, question or interview request. The sooner the Council can respond and involve itself in the story, the greater the chance it has to influence it. This is especially important where the Council's reputation might be affected.
- 4.1.2 The team also wishes to influence the news agenda proactively by offering people for interview or providing case studies to illustrate topical issues.
- 4.1.3 The team will use links with departments and Council committees, as well as the forward plan to identify opportunities in advance, but still want/have to exploit on-the-day stories, particularly when there is breaking news or developing stories.
- 4.2 **Answering media enquiries**
- 4.2.1 The team will answer relevant media enquiries as soon as possible, especially as stories are now posted online quickly. If an issue does not involve the Council, or the Council has no comment to make, the reporter will be advised promptly. If the Communications team believes that a deadline is too tight, it will negotiate an extension if it can. Members and officers are encouraged to respond to the Communications unit as quickly as possible, as missing deadlines and being 'unavailable for comment' can harm the Council's reputation.
- 4.2.3 The team will not respond to media outlets posting questions to the Council on social media platforms, but will direct them to make their enquiries through the normal communications route (in or out of hours), where both the questions and answers can be logged and monitored, and appropriate Member or senior officer approval can be sought **oversight can be obtained.**
- 4.3 **Approach to aggressive enquiries**
- 4.3.1 The Communications team will answer journalists' enquiries courteously and will expect this to be reciprocated. However, if journalists are aggressive or rude, the team reserves the right to politely end a phone conversation and request that the enquiry is made by email.
- 4.4 **Use of Freedom of Information requests (FOIs)**

- 4.4.1 The team will encourage the media to submit enquiries, rather than FOIs, and remind them that FOIs are answered within a formal timescale, which can be slower than submitting an enquiry through the usual communications route. **All FOIs from media outlets or concerning contentious issues** will be sent to the Communications team's leads for FOI enquiries, who will sense check proposed responses, ~~especially those to requests submitted by the media,~~ and prepare statements where necessary. The team works with the FOI team and departments to reduce the number of FOI requests by encouraging the proactive publication of key information to regular schedules.
- 4.5 Press releases
- 4.5.1 The team will email press releases to all relevant local, regional and national media contacts and will update the distribution list when it becomes aware of new outlets or journalists. It will ~~also post releases online on the day of publication and, for most,~~ will also post links to the story on the most appropriate social media channels ~~(such as the Council's Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or TikTok sites).~~
- 4.6 Briefings
- 4.6.1 The team will always attempt to accommodate journalists' requests for briefings with key Members or officers, provided there are no issues around confidentiality or sensitivity. Briefings can add important context and detail to stories, helping to achieve a more balanced result for the Council.
- 4.7 Council meetings
- 4.7.1 The Communications Team will work closely with departments in the development of relevant committee papers, and even if this is not required, departments will pass reports to main committees through the key Communications contacts for information as early as possible to reduce the risk that there will be insufficient time to prepare proactive communications or context around sensitive information. ~~The team will seek to ensure a relevant Communications officer will participate in Chair/Vice-Chair pre-meetings with officers prior to all service committee meetings, to identify relevant issues for media releases and for use on social media channels.~~
- 4.7.2 The media and public are free to film, record or photograph Council meetings, provided that they do not disrupt proceedings. The team encourages broadcasters, as a courtesy, to inform the communications unit in advance of any meetings they intend to record or film, due to the size of their equipment, so that it can suggest which part of the room they can film from. ~~Full Council meetings are broadcast live and the ambition is for more meetings to be live streamed, and the communications unit will publicise these broadcast meetings on the Council's YouTube channel.~~ **All Full Council and committee meetings held at the New Shire Hall offices are broadcast live and stored on the Council's YouTube channel.**

4.8 Campaigns/Consultations

4.8.1 The team will work with departments and Council committees to develop an annual campaigns and communications service plan to market and promote the Council's key objectives. It will also provide communications support to consultation and engagement related to major Council projects. These activities will use market segmentation to reach the most appropriate audiences and will be based on Citizen First: Digital First principles wherever possible.

4.9 Strategic issues

4.9.1 It is recognised that the Council faces a number of strategic issues across the authority as a whole, and the Communications team will maintain regular consultation with the administration to ensure that these are fully integrated in the communications strategy on a continuing basis.

5. Organisation

Information from the Council is organised in the following distinct ways.

5.1 News Releases

5.1.1 News releases deal with substantial news matters that the Council wants to promote, publicise or explain. They will often arise from items being raised or considered by Members, Member decisions, important visits, and matters of policy, or a wide range of external matters. These will always carry contacts for comment from all groups represented on committees in order of Member responsibility (Chair, Vice-Chair, other administration Spokes, opposition Spokes).

5.1.2 The Council's releases are targeted to the most relevant media outlets covering the geographical area or specialism, or to the channel most appropriate to the audience. The team will avoid issuing releases to all media outlets regardless of content, as this form of blanket issue leads to loss of credibility.

5.2 Public Information Notices

5.2.1 Public information notices provide important, factual information about normal day-to-day activities of the Council and are both issued to the media proactively and published on the Council's website to share advice and provide data. They include matters such as road works and closures, minor emergencies (such as the temporary closure of offices, schools or other premises to which the public normally have access), and basic event information. These will carry officer or communications contacts only.

5.3 News Statements

- 5.3.1 Written statements are principally used in respect of sensitive issues to be sure that the Council's position cannot be open to possible misinterpretation or misrepresentation. These will carry communications contacts only.
- 5.4 Reactive Comments
- 5.4.1 On reactive communications, the team still works on the principle of 'no surprises' but will also look to be proportionate. Therefore, if approached for comment on a significant issue affecting the Council it will liaise with the most appropriate officer to develop the answer and ~~seek comment or approval~~ **highlight to relevant members. Approval will only be sought on the most politically sensitive issues** from the most appropriate Councillor (usually the Leader or Deputy Leader, or the most appropriate Committee Chair/Vice-Chair).
- 5.4.2 Reactive statements will not usually be circulated to all Members, but where a written response is made linked to a significant issue or to Council policy it will be sent to Committee Chairs/Vice-Chairs, opposition Spokes or Local Member(s) where appropriate.
- 5.4.3 If the team is approached for comment on an ongoing issue where previous statements have been approved, or on a purely operational matter (dates, times, confirmation of issues, confirmation of responsibilities, follow up on proactive media releases or campaigns, etc.), it will not usually involve Members.
- 5.5 Campaigns
- 5.5.1 Behaviour change is one of the primary functions of local government communications, helping to improve the quality of life for Cambridgeshire people, and helping the Council to deliver its services or to run more effectively, as well as save taxpayer's money.
- 5.5.2 The Communications team will develop an annual plan of proactive campaigns to support the Council delivering its ambitions through behavioural change campaigns, which it will support in detail. These will be agreed with the appropriate service department and committee Chair/Vice-Chair, or the Leader/Deputy Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.
- 5.5.3 These campaigns will be based on behavioural science insight and will be appropriately resourced, targeted and monitored. In order to run these successfully, they will be limited to areas of greatest priority for the Council. They may be constant (e.g. fostering or social work recruitment), annual (e.g. vaccination uptake), or related to specific issues (e.g. publicising the census or elections).
- 5.5.4 Other campaigns throughout the year may be supported by the team in a 'light touch' manner (e.g. retweeting/sharing materials on the Council's social media platforms from organisations whose aims support those of the Council, or highlighting these campaigns to Council staff and stakeholders through internal routes).

- 5.5.5 The Leader, Deputy Leader, Committee Chairs or Vice-Chairs will act as the lead spokes for any campaign launch, or will be quoted in campaign review materials. Professional comment (e.g. around the specific need for more foster carers) may come from the lead officer.
- 5.6 Political quotes and named media contacts
- 5.6.1 Any quotes on matters relating to the development of Council policies will always come from the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council ~~on a 2:1 ratio basis across the year~~, or the most appropriate Committee Chair / Vice-Chair. This principle will also apply to any letters written for publication.
- 5.6.2 Where appropriate, quotes from other members will be included in a news release. This may be the Chair of the Council on civic matters, or the Leader / Deputy Leader of the Council on matters which relate to the leadership of the Council, but will most often be the Chair or Vice-Chair of the relevant committee with responsibility for the area concerned.
- 5.6.3 Where a news release specifically relates to an issue affecting a particular area or geographical division, the Communications unit will advise the Local Member(s) early, their contact details will be added to the release, beneath those of the political leads, and they will be sent the release prior to or simultaneously with distribution to the local media.
- 5.6.4 Where the release is non-controversial, and concerns a local issue that a Local Member is particularly connected or involved with, they may be invited to include a quote in addition to, but not supersede, a quote from the Committee Chair.
- 5.6.5 **All Senior officers will approve the technical content of the release, but any quotes should be cleared with the named person before use.**
- 5.6.6 In the event of situations where an appropriate Member's quote is needed and the Member is unavailable, the appropriate Group Leader will be contacted for clearance. Officers will not normally approve Members' quotes except where a time constraint makes this inevitable, in which case at least one member of the Council's Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), in addition to the Communications team, must approve the quote.
- 5.6.7 In all cases, the names and contact details for the Spokes of all political groups on the committee will be included on press releases, in order of committee responsibility (Chair, Vice-Chair, other administration Spokes, opposition Spokes).
- 5.6.8 The relevant departmental/officer contact will also be included, followed by that of the Communications team's main number and out of hours contacts.

- 5.6.9 The Chair of the Council (and in their absence, the Vice-Chair) has an important part to play in ceremonial events carried out on behalf of the Council. Their activities will be published and publicised as appropriate.
- 5.6.10 Officers will respond to media requests for interviews/information on matters involving the giving of background technical or practical operational information, non-policy matters, matters involving the implementation of policies or matters of professional responsibility. Officers can be used as lead spokes when the Council's reputation can be enhanced by use of an expert, such as the Director of Public Health talking about health issues.
- 5.6.11 In both cases above, ~~approval will be sought in advance from the~~ **Communications team will make** the appropriate Chair/Vice-Chair **aware**, ~~or where there are urgent requests or in an emergency situation from the Chief Executive or the appropriate member of CLT.~~
- 5.7 Speaking on behalf of the Council
- 5.7.1 Officers who are directly approached by a member of the media for a comment on Council activities should not answer questions themselves. The journalist should be referred to the Communications team, which will manage the response and gain political sign off where appropriate.
- 5.7.2 Councillors who are directly approached by a member of the media ~~may wish to~~ **should** refer the enquiry on to the Communications team, ~~or make use of the guidance contained in this protocol to answer the enquiry themselves~~ **alternatively highlight the approach to the team before they answer to discuss their response. This will enable support to be given around providing accurate and up to date information, and will guard them against breaching any ongoing proceedings.** ~~It is helpful, if~~ **If they plan to answer directly, for them to they should make use of the guidance contained in this protocol about ensuring accuracy, confidentiality constraints, logging and recording both the approach and their answer. They should then** advise the Communications unit **at the earliest opportunity** in case of media follow-up, **to ensure consistency in providing answers to other media outlets.**
- 5.7.3 Officers and Councillors who have contact with the media in a personal capacity or as members of non-Council related organisations must not refer to their Council posts and must make it clear to the journalist concerned that they are speaking in a personal capacity or on behalf of the non-Council related organisation.
- 5.7.4 Trade union officers, who are employees of the Council and who have contact with the media in their trade union or political capacity, must make clear that they are speaking as a union or political group representative.
- 5.8 Social Media

A social media protocol, which is published on the Council’s website, sets out the Council’s general approach to the use of social media channels.

- 5.8.1 The Council will use the most appropriate social media channels, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn and Whatsapp to promote its news or key campaign messages, in addition to conventional media. The Communications unit is responsible for the Council’s main channels and has the discretion to write and post material without clearance, provided it is in line with the social media protocol, based on an approved approach around a subject and the Council’s key messages.
 - 5.8.2 The team would remind staff and Members who use social media that reporters and the public will view their posts and use them in stories. The team would encourage them (and provide training where necessary), to ensure that their social media activity could not be used to damage the reputation of the Council.
 - 5.8.3 It is recognised that there is a rapidly changing media landscape whereby most people receive their news through social media and where the best impact is made through speed of response. The Communications team will seek to identify potential issues and stories in advance where possible, to enable social media posts in real time where possible, but reflecting the requirements of this protocol.
6. Protocols
- 6.1 Issuing of agendas
 - 6.1.1 All committee papers will be made available to the media a minimum of five working days before the meeting concerned and posted on the internet by Democratic Services.
 - 6.2 Media attendance at meetings
 - 6.2.1 Members of the media must be provided with any additional papers which may have been issued on the day.
 - 6.3 Motions and questions
 - 6.3.1 Motions and questions from individual Councillors shown on the agenda will not be publicised through Council news releases in the interests of fairness.
 - 6.4 Reporting debates
 - 6.4.1 If a member of the media has not attended a meeting and wants to find out what was said during a debate at a meeting that wasn’t broadcast, officers will direct them to the appropriate Committee Chair directly and offer to provide opposition contacts. Staff from the Communications team will report back to the media on any decision/recommendation reached.

- 6.4.2 Journalists are free to tweet or post from Council meetings and members of the Communications unit will only tweet factual decisions made by committees and Full Council depending on the newsworthiness of the issue being debated.
- 6.4.3 Live broadcasting from Council meetings is permitted and the Council itself live streams ~~the all~~ Full Council **and committee** meetings on its YouTube channel, which the Communications Team will publicise.
- 6.5 Embargoes
- 6.5.1 Embargoes should be used sparingly. This would most typically be when a news release is linked to a launch event; when an issue of confidentiality requires it; or when a third party requires it (e.g. the announcement of an award or additional funding).
- 6.5.2 Embargoes are not legally enforceable and are adhered to by general local agreement.
- 6.6 Communications during the pre-election period
- 6.6.1 The Council follows the guidelines set out in the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Government Publicity, which states:
- The period between the notice of election and the election itself, publicity relating to individuals involved directly in the election should not be published by local authorities during this period unless expressly authorised by or under statute.
- 6.6.2 No Councillors will be quoted in any releases during the period outlined above when the Council itself is holding an election or if they are involved in elections for other authorities.
- 6.6.3 Wider publicity initiatives also need to be considered carefully during this period. The Code states that:
- Local authorities should not publish any publicity on controversial issues or report views or proposals in such a way that that identifies them with any Members or groups of Members.
- 6.6.4 Any prospective candidates (parliamentary, county and district) requesting visits to Council premises must always be treated equally. Council staff should not be included in any photographs that candidates might arrange, to avoid any impression of one party being favoured over another. Council offices should not be used to host political events during this time, unless these premises are available for general hire.
- 6.6.5 Further guidance to officers and members is available from the Council's document on Election Guidance agreed with Chief Officers and Group Leaders before the May 2021 elections.

6.7 Letters for Publication

- 6.7.1 The Communications team will, in consultation with the appropriate service director or Committee Chair, consider drafting replies to letters and articles about the Council or its services that appear in the printed or online media and help draw up letters for publication, if appropriate. In such cases, the Committee Chair concerned will sign the letter or agree who else is best to respond.
- 6.7.2 Group Leaders will consider and deal with any response to letters or comments which are clearly political in nature and, while the Communications team may flag these to the relevant group, they will not be involved in the drawing up or issuing of any response.
- 6.7.3 The Council's Officers' Code of Conduct states that all contact with the media should be conducted through, or in consultation with, the Communications team. If an employee wishes to write to a newspaper in their position as a Council employee, they must first obtain permission from their senior manager or Head of Service.

6.8 Dealing with Confidential Items

- 6.8.1 Under the Local Government Act 2007, a written record of all key decisions and other executive decisions made by the Council must be made publicly available 'as soon as practicable' after the meeting, even if the decision has been taken as an exempt item. This could be when the minutes of the meeting are available, but could equally be much sooner after the decision has been taken.
- 6.8.2 The Communications team will always seek to give the outcome of an issue taken in confidential session, unless there are over-riding reasons not to do so, such as the handling of personal and sensitive issues affecting staff or clients, or financial and commercial issues.
- 6.8.3 In these circumstances, officers should liaise with the department concerned before deciding the best course of action to follow and clear the approach with the Monitoring Officer and Chair of the relevant committee.

6.9 Emergency Communications

- 6.9.1 The Council has a statutory duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to warn and inform local people in emergency situations to help minimise risk and harm.
- 6.9.2 The Communications team is a member of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Warn and Inform Communications subgroup.
- 6.9.3 In emergency circumstances, the normal media approvals process may not apply. The Communications Team Leader will approve media activity in consultation with the Chief Executive or relevant 'gold' or 'silver' command.

6.10 Media / Social Media Training

- 6.10.1 In an organisation comprising 61 elected Members and approximately 4,000 employees it would be impossible and impractical for all communications from or about the Council to be produced and issued by the Communications team.
- 6.10.2 While all high profile and sensitive communications, or those most closely supporting the Council's objectives, will be led and developed by the team, part of its role will be supporting elected Members and Council staff who have responsibility to be good communicators as part of their role.
- 6.10.3 The Communications team will provide training to Councillors and staff which encourages a positive relationship in communicating with their communities and the media, and provides information on the best ways to get their information across.
- 6.11 Fostering and Adoption
- 6.11.1 Any media requests relating to filming/imagery of children in care requires director sign off. In no case will the Council allow external media interviews or any filming of any child in care who is under the age of 18 – although the ~~internal~~ team may develop case studies following interviews, using anonymised quotes.
- 6.11.2 In all cases with either partner videos or media interviews, foster carers must give their consent to be involved in the media/video case study process, and be clearly informed where any materials are going to be used and for how long.
- 6.11.3 The supporting Social Worker for that foster carer must also be informed and then a briefing must take place before any planned media activity.
- 6.11.4 A signed consent form will also be completed detailing all of this information, by external parties who work on the Council's behalf and by the Council.
7. Communication on Partnership Issues or Projects
- 7.1 Partnership working is a common feature of the Council's activities. It works closely with many public sector partners, in particular Peterborough City Council, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ~~Clinical Commissioning Group~~ **Integrated Care Board** and other local statutory bodies.
- 7.2 It remains the independent decision of the Council to take part or not to take part in joint communications and all partners should be informed in advance that the authority's agreement should be carefully sought and obtained in relation to any joint communications.
- 7.3 Where joint releases are issued (for instance around a joint response to ~~the Covid-19 pandemic~~ **a public health issue affecting the area**, or joint funding announcements from the Government), the team will use jointly branded communications headed paper and agree at the outset who the lead spokes will be. Where this is a project with another local government partner, it is likely to

involve quotes from the lead spokesperson for each authority. Media approaches for interview will be directed to the most appropriate place or spokes.

- 7.4 Communications protocols must be established with private sector contractors at the outset of major contracts, and this will be the responsibility of the lead department/officer involved in the contract, but should be overseen by the Communications department.
- 7.5 The protocols (template available) will set out responsibilities for which organisation takes the communications lead, frequency and type of communications, sign off and key spokespeople.

The template will, ensure that:

- The Council's role or contribution is identified appropriately and information to media or local residents includes quotes from named Council Members or officers.
- The Council logo is included with others on any documentation.
- The text of information is shared in draft stages between partners and approved by the relevant communications leads prior to distribution.
- The method, manner and timing of distribution are also agreed in advance by the relevant communications leads.
- Depending on the size of the project or partnership, the relevant Council committee Chair will be consulted as usual but may not be quoted where it is agreed that the Council is not the lead agency and in the interests of producing succinct media releases.
- Wherever possible, news releases should be issued on joint paper, with contact details for each organisation.

8. Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP)

8.1 Where the GCP is concerned, agreed communication protocols are already in place, as agreed by the GCP Executive Board on which all partners are represented.

8.2 The key elements are as follows:

- Pro-active communications will, as far as possible, be planned and devised in consultation with the relevant partner agency/ies, via the subject experts (usually an officer) or, in the event of unavailability, through the communications lead.
- Requests for information and/or comments to Members/officers will clearly state the deadline for a response.

- Pro-active and re-active statements will, as far as possible, be seen and approved by the GCP Executive Board Chairperson/Vice-Chairperson who will act as talking heads.

8.3 Inevitably, to maximise an opportunity or to avoid a communications vacuum, there will be occasions when a statement or response needs to be issued dynamically or swiftly to a deadline. It is recognised that, on such occasions, the GCP Programme Director, Communications Manager and/or partners' communications leads will have authority to speak on behalf of the GCP, in good faith, and adhering to the communications principles set out in their strategy, ensuring the GCP Executive Board Chairperson/Vice-Chairperson and relevant officers are kept informed.

8.4 On occasion, it will be relevant for the lead agency to issue a communication which is linked to the GCP programme. In this event, the agency should liaise with the GCP Communications Manager / Programme Director prior to publication.

9. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority

9.1 ~~Collaboration on a case-by-case basis on any specific activity until a formal communications protocol is established.~~ **The Council works closely with the Combined Authority in a number of ways, both as a partner organisation involved in the overarching development of public services for people in Cambridgeshire, including transport, education and skills and economic development, and also through being commissioned to deliver specific projects to make infrastructure improvements funded by the Combined Authority.**

9.2 **Both organisations will work on the basis of 'no surprises' on communications issues that affect them both, sharing approaches from media outlets and proposed responses in advance.**

9.3 **Pro-active communications for projects funded by the Combined Authority, but delivered by the Council, will be planned and devised in consultation between the two authorities via a communications plan which will identify such things as agreed key messages, use of spokespeople, and which organisation will take the lead on issuing statements, putting forward members or officers to be quoted/used for interviews.**

- **Communications plans for funded projects will also clearly identify the communications involvement of any external contractors, who will not issue independent communications on projects without the approval of the lead authority's communications team.**
- **Spokespeople on projects undertaken by the Council on behalf of the Combined Authority will largely be the chair (or vice-chair in their absence) of the relevant committee, unless previously agreed.**

- **Pro-active and re-active statements on projects will, as far as possible, be seen and any relevant quotes approved for the Council by the chair, or the vice-chair in their absence, of the relevant committee, and highlighted to the Combined Authority’s Communications team in advance of issue.**

9.4 Communications on overarching strategy or policy involving or affecting both organisations, after approval by the relevant Chief Executives, will be seen and quotes/direction approved by the Mayor of the Combined Authority and the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council, who will act as lead spokespeople for interview.

9.5 To maximise opportunities or to avoid communications vacuums, there will inevitably be occasions when a statement or response needs to be issued dynamically or swiftly to a deadline. It is recognised that, on such occasions, these will be approved by the Chief Executive of either the Combined Authority or the Council and their Communications lead, but will be shared with each other before issue.

9.6 On occasion, it will be relevant for the Council to issue a communication which is linked to Combined Authority activity outside project work or major government announcements (for example, referencing activity in a committee report which is proactively publicised). In this event, the Council should liaise with the Combined Authority’s Communications Manager or Programme Director prior to publication.

10. Communications Support for Schools

10.1 Practical support for schools is offered in times of particular difficulties or success. This is a traded service primarily for local authority maintained schools and the support can be in the form of general advice and guidance, media releases, supporting with letters to parents, fielding media calls, media briefings and news conferences. However in the event of a significant issue the team will work with Academy Trusts to support schools in times of major crisis and where the reputation of the Council as the local education authority would otherwise be put at risk.

10.2 In general terms:

- The content of all media releases or statements will be cleared in advance with the Headteacher and, if possible, the Chair of Governors (or where necessary the head of the academy trusts).
- Any media release will make it clear it is being issued on behalf of the school concerned and headed with the name of the school governing body as appropriate.
- Relevant school contact names and numbers will be included on any release except where prior agreement has been reached that

Communications team staff should field all calls in the first instance.

- The Chair of the Children and Young People Committee and the director with responsibility for Education will be kept fully informed on media issues affecting schools in line with the 'no surprises' principle and statements will be shared with the local Member as they are issued.
- Where schools are not buying into the traded service, communications support will still be offered at an agreed hourly rate.

Governance Review – Implementation of Recommendations

- To: Constitution and Ethics Committee
- Meeting Date: 13 September 2023
- From: Service Director of Legal and Governance
- Outcome: Following Full Council's consideration on 18 July 2023 of some of the recommendations set out in the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's Review of the Committee System, the committee is asked to consider and implement the remaining recommendations in order to help the Council achieve its outcomes through improved governance and scrutiny.
- Recommendation: The committee is recommended to:
- a) Note the arrangements for Member and officer training set out in Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 of the report;
 - b) Ask the Constitution Working Group to review the Member/Officer Protocol and Members' Code of Conduct before being presented to the full committee for consideration;
 - c) Agree the Terms of Reference attached at Appendix 2 for Spokes meetings;
 - d) Agree the arrangements for Chair/Vice-Chair briefing meetings at Section 2.3.3 of the report;
 - e) Advise officers on how best to manage the reinstatement of the Members' Seminar programme;
 - f) Ask Spokes to review the advisory groups and panels relating to their area and recommend to the relevant policy and service committee whether they should continue;
 - g) Ask Spokes to consider the actions relating to Recommendation 4 set out in Section 2 of the report;
 - h) Keep under review what aspects of social care decision-making can be moved to Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee; and
 - i) Request the Chair of Adults and Health Committee hold health scrutiny meetings on the reserve dates for Adults and Health Committee.

Officer contact:

Name: Michelle Rowe
Post: Democratic Services Manager
Email: michelle.rowe@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01223 699180

1. Background

1.1 At its meeting on 20 June 2023, the committee considered and commented on the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's (CfGS) report on the review of the Council's committee system, attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

1.2 The committee recommended the following proposed changes to the constitution:

1.2.1 Recommendation 1:

(a) Officer training on the following:

- Member/Officer roles
- Political awareness
- Report Writing

(b) Member training on the following:

- Member/Officer roles
- Work programming and prioritisation
- Questioning skills
- Skills in interrogating and understanding data and evidence
- Councillors' corporate parenting responsibilities
- Councillors' and councils' obligations and opportunities regarding equality, diversity, and inclusion.

(c) Review of the Member/Officer Protocol.

(d) Introduction of report writing guide.

1.2.2 Recommendation 2:

(a) Refocus Spokes meetings to be briefing sessions about key issues for the Committee and relevant directorate, and less focussed around reports going directly to committee. They should be led by the Executive Director and meet every month or six weeks.

(b) Retain Chairs and Vice-Chairs meeting to focus on meeting/agenda planning.

(c) Reinstate a Members' Seminar programme to deal with information items that do not require a decision.

1.2.3 Recommendation 3:

Review and rationalise current Member Working Groups.

1.2.4 Recommendation 4:

(a) Remote meetings/workshops/task and finish groups for enhanced scrutiny and policy development which give capacity on decision making agendas.

- (b) Spokes to consider diverse ways of disseminating information items to all Councillors to avoid them being included on agendas.
- (c) Proactive use of reserve meetings.
- (d) The current scheduling should remain with four programmed meetings a year and four reserve meetings.

1.2.5 Recommendation 5:

- (a) Create a Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee to replace Strategy and Resources Committee to provide strategic direction and be responsible for strategic partnerships/budget (and budget monitoring) / Medium Term Financial Strategy / performance at a corporate level/risk associated with these.
- (b) Establish a new Assets and Procurement Committee to reduce the workload of Strategy and Resources Committee.

1.2.6 Recommendation 6:

Create a Communities Committee to replace the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, but remove strategic partnerships so they come within the remit of the new Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee.

1.2.7 Recommendation 7:

As referred to above, move aspects of social care decision-making to the new Communities Committee.

Move consideration of public health to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Reserve meetings of Adults and Health Committee to be used to focus on scrutiny of health.

1.3 Members were informed that only Recommendations 5, 6 and 7 would require constitutional changes to be approved by Council, and it was agreed to recommend these changes. A member seminar was held on 5 July 2023 to consider the impact of these recommendations only before the Council meeting on 18 July 2023.

1.4 At its meeting on 18 July 2023, the Council approved the following:

- (i) the draft terms of reference for the revised Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee;
- (ii) the establishment of a new Assets and Procurement Committee and its terms of reference;
- (iii) the draft revised terms of reference for the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee;

- (iv) to maintain the current position in relation to statutory public health functions for the reasons set out in Section 2.3.3. of the report to Council.

2. Main Issues

2.1 The committee is asked to consider how the remaining recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7, which do not require constitutional changes, should be implemented.

2.2 Recommendation 1:

2.2.1 The Monitoring Officer and the Democratic Services Manager will work with the Learning and Development team to prepare officer training on the following:

- Member/Officer roles
- Political awareness
- Report Writing

2.2.2 The Monitoring Officer and the Democratic Services Manager will arrange internal or external training, if appropriate, on the following:

- Member/Officer roles
- Work programming and prioritisation
- Questioning skills
- Skills in interrogating and understanding data and evidence
- Councillors' corporate parenting responsibilities
- Councillors' and the Council's obligations and opportunities regarding equality, diversity, and inclusion.

2.2.3 As part of the Member Induction Programme, following the election in May 2021, training was held for Members, as follows:

- each Policy and Service Committee had a briefing session on the role and responsibilities of its members;
- a corporate parenting training session was held;
- numerous Local Government Finance sessions were held as well as a session on Risk and Performance Management;
- a session on Fair and Inclusive Decision Making was held as well as a Local Government Association webinar (Introducing and implementing social value – a councillor's guide), which was open to all members.

2.2.4 Further to the recommendation in the CfGS report to review the Member/Officer Protocol, the recent statutory guide for best value authorities "Best Value Standards and Intervention" published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) states in its section on governance that codes of conduct and HR processes should be to sector standard. An indicator of potential failure is that Member/officer codes of conduct and arrangements for reviewing standards complaints, are not regularly reviewed. It is therefore proposed that the working group proposed in Agenda Item 3 (Annual Review of the Constitution), review both the Member/Officer Protocol and the Members' Code of Conduct to align them with the Local Government Association Model Code of Conduct.

2.2.5 The Democratic Services Manager will prepare a report writing guide, for approval by the Monitoring Officer, which can be circulated to officers.

2.3 Recommendation 2:

2.3.1 Draft terms of reference, attached at Appendix 2, have been prepared to refocus Spokes meetings to be briefing sessions about key issues for the committee and relevant directorate, and less focussed around reports going directly to committee. These meetings will be led by the Executive Director and operated in accordance with the terms of reference, regardless of when the next committee meeting is scheduled. It is proposed that separate sessions should be held for the Joint Administration Spokes and Conservative Spoke unless it is the wish of all Spokes to meet together.

2.3.2 Article 7 (The Council Leader, Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees and Spokes) in the constitution refers to Spokes as follows, although it is not considered necessary to change this section to reflect the proposed new terms of reference:

7.05 Spokes

Each of the Council's political groups may designate one of their group members as spokes for each Policy and Service Committee.

The Chief Executive, executive directors, and directors shall hold briefing meetings with their relevant Policy and Service Committee chair and vice-chair to plan the agenda for future service committee meetings and consider any other issues the officer may think appropriate. They will also hold one briefing meeting with all spokes to brief them on the agenda for future service committee meetings and consider any other issues the officer may think appropriate. All these meetings will be confidential subject to any relevant legal requirements to the contrary.

Spokes shall also be entitled to individual private and confidential briefings from executive directors and service directors on any relevant policy matter within the remit of that director. Information shall be provided at these briefings on a confidential basis in accordance with the Guidance on Confidentiality attached to the Members' Code of Conduct. Requests for such briefings must be reasonable in extent and number, as determined by the Chief Executive in consultation with the relevant group leader, in accordance with paragraph 7.9 of the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations in Part 5 of the Constitution. Such requests will only be considered for items not covered by a briefing meeting.

2.3.3 Meetings involving the relevant Chair and Vice-Chair only to focus on meeting/agenda planning will take place after agenda publication and before the meeting. They will be attended by the relevant Democratic Services Officer. Ad hoc meetings can be arranged as required.

2.3.4 The committee is asked to consider how the Members' Seminar programme to deal with information items that do not require a decision should be reinstated. At the moment, briefing sessions are held on an ad hoc basis over the lunch period for about an hour and half maximum when needed. Many Members work full-time, so it would be difficult to run

the previous Members' Seminar programme which was held in person once a month for two hours on a Friday morning, before Policy and Planning Panels. Therefore, Members are requested to identify a process which would work, be accessible and attract good attendance, including remote and recorded options.

2.4 Recommendation 3:

2.4.1 The proposed changes to the Spokes system and the establishment of a new Assets and Procurement Committee provide an opportunity to review and rationalise current Member Working Groups. There are currently 44 Internal Advisory Groups and Panels. It is therefore suggested that Spokes should review the groups and panels relating to their area and decide, for committee approval, which should continue and which can be incorporated to the work of the Spokes meetings.

2.5 Recommendation 4:

2.5 It is proposed that Spokes should be asked to consider the following:

- Remote meetings/workshops/task and finish groups for enhanced scrutiny and policy development which give capacity on decision making agendas.
- Consider diverse ways of disseminating information items to all Councillors to avoid them being included on agendas.
- Proactive use of reserve meetings.

2.6 Recommendation 7:

2.6.1 It is not clear which aspects of social care decision-making can be moved to the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee. It is therefore proposed that the Constitution and Ethics Committee keeps this proposal under review.

2.6.2 The CfGS report states that "Reserve meetings of Adults and Health Committee to be used to focus on scrutiny". The committee is asked to consider whether to ask the Chair of Adults and Health Committee to hold health scrutiny meetings on the reserve dates for Adults and Health Committee. External Health Scrutiny training is taking place on the same day as the September reserve date.

3. Appendices

3.1 Appendix 1 – CfGS Review of the Committee System

3.2 Appendix 2 – Spokes Meetings – Role and Purpose

4. Source Documents

4.1 [Constitution and Ethics Committee - 20 June 2023](#)

4.2 [Council - 18 July 2023](#)

4.3 [Council Constitution - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
REVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM**

Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS)

Ed Hammond

12 May 2023 (Draft 5)

Introduction

Cambridgeshire County Council moved from the leader-cabinet system to the committee system in 2014. At the time, the council was run by a minority Conservative administration under no overall control; the Conservatives gained majority control of the council in 2017. In the 2021 elections a joint administration took executive responsibility, with the Conservative Party remaining as the largest group but in opposition. The Joint Administration chose to make some changes to the terms of reference of committees, and the committee structure overall, at this time.

The Local Government Association (LGA) carried out a Corporate Peer Challenge exercise in 2021. It made some overall positive comments on council governance, although noting that (amongst other points):

- Some member behaviours needed to be addressed and improved;
- The council's approach to EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) required improvement, although the LGA (Local Government Association) noted that action was being taken to address this; and
- The revisions to the committee system made in 2021 required more time to bed in before being separately assessed.

CfGS was asked to provide independent assistance on the third of these issues. We consider that, in doing so, we can also provide some assistance on the first and second.

The bulk of the work to support this review was carried out in the latter part of 2022, with the report being finalised in mid-2023. Steps have been taken to ensure that changes at the Council, since primary evidence-gathering ended, have been considered.

Objectives

The objectives of this work were to:

- Review and evaluate the effectiveness of the revised committee system introduced in 2021;
- Review and evaluate the effectiveness of committees in carrying out scrutiny work as part of the revised system, regarding the operation of health scrutiny arrangements;
- Review the way that the work of the audit and accounts committee intersects with wider member decision-making;
- In doing so, consider how the way that decisions are made and overseen can be most effectively aligned with the council's objectives on EDI; and
- Consider wider cultural and behavioural expectations around the relationships between members, and members and officers, in the governance system. In doing this we will have regard to informal arrangements for member briefing, as part of the council's wider approach to political management.

Methodology

Evidence was gathered through:

- Interviews with councillors and officers. 19 people were interviewed in total. A semi-structured approach was taken, where the review's general lines of enquiry were supplemented with discussion on matters raised by other interviewees, and other parts of the evidence-gathering process;
- Documentary analysis. There was a detailed review of agendas, minutes, and reports for meetings of policy and service committees. A review was also made of other corporate documents, including the Council constitution, and any material (such as the joint administration agreement) which we considered provides context for the operation of the committee system. In respect of committee business, we sought to understand:
 - The level of detail provided in officer reports, and in background papers, particularly in respect of the council's obligations on equality, diversity, and inclusion;
 - The nature and quality of debate in committee (judged by review of minutes, watching YouTube recordings of meetings and through interview);
 - The ability of debate in committee, and debate in other places (Spokes, for example) to lead to enhanced decisions (again, judged by minutes and interviews);
 - The ability of committees to direct and hold to account the delivery of the Council's priorities, in particular the Joint Administration's actions;
 - Committees' agendas, and the overall work programme for committees individually and collectively (including committees' ability to focus on the right things at the right time and the timing of meetings); and
 - The way in which informal discussion (for example, at Spokes, and elsewhere) feeds into the way that decisions are made formally.
- Member survey. A survey of members was carried out – 24 responses were made over the course of a two-and-a-half-month period; and
- Dip testing. A closer analysis was made of the way in which a small selection of decisions was taken through the system. This was not to review the substantive impact of those decisions or to critique the process by which they were made individually. Our intention was to get a sense of the usual process that decision-making involves – the review was therefore predominantly desk-based.

Outline of key findings

Overall, the committee system at Cambridgeshire is working effectively.

Members and officers work well together. There is a mutual understanding of the strengths and challenges of the current system. That understanding is, from both members and officers, mature and sophisticated – people are (by and large) able to step outside of their roles and understand how others perceive them and the way that they act and behave. Senior officers and leading members in the joint administration recognise that some aspects of the current system do not work as they ought and want to make improvements. Members of the opposition, meanwhile, have been frustrated by some of the changes made since May 2021 but have attempted to work within them (although the ongoing operation of “spokes” meetings presents a challenge).

People can understand others’ motivations and objectives even if they do not share them. This bodes well for some of the needs for behavioural change identified by the LGA.

As with any authority there are always refinements and improvements to be made. Inevitably this report focuses more on the areas where those refinements are necessary, but this is not to say that Cambridgeshire is beset by an unusual range of challenges and problems.

We think that there is scope for some change to the terms of reference, number, and frequency of committee meetings – in part to allow for more effective cross-party member oversight on delivery. If this does happen, it must be in concert with wider changes focused on culture, behaviour, attitudes, and relationships – which we cover at some length. The Council has begun to act on these needs by introducing a new strategic framework, which will assist in the management of committee workload.

What committees are for

Before evaluating the efficacy of the current committee system, it is necessary to set out what we think committees are “for.” This is based on our own views, informed by the experiences of other committee system authorities, and the views expressed by members and officers in interviews. It is also informed by survey evidence.

Committees are spaces for councillors to:

- Set an overall strategic direction for the relevant service area. Members set priorities, which involves making political choices. Based on the priorities and wider direction that councillors set, officers can develop proposals to deliver those priorities;*
- Make decisions on matters of importance to the Council and the local area. While a scheme of delegation exists and is necessary, councillor decision-making needs to ensure clear member ownership of critical matters. The exact definition of matters where member input is necessary is driven as much by political judgement as it is by financial thresholds and other criteria – but consistency and transparency are required; and*
- Exercise strategic management functions. While officers are responsible for the operational, day to day management of services, members play a vital role in oversight – particularly on finance, performance, and risk issues.*

Importantly, the operation of service committees also must bear in mind the partnership dynamics within which the Council operates. Cambridgeshire has a uniquely complex governance landscape – with parish councils, district councils, a neighbouring unitary authority, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and the Greater Cambridge Partnership, not to mention community safety, health, and other partners, such as those in the important Higher Education and research sectors.

Detailed findings and recommendations

Organisational context

On its formation, the Joint Administration entered into an agreement, which provides a foundation for decision-making at the Council, and this has been further developed by the introduction of the Strategic Framework. The Framework is ambitious and wide-ranging and sits under a high-level joint administration agreement which sets out joint working arrangements between the parties forming the administration.

The management of decision-making in a committee system authority run by a joint administration is uniquely challenging. It requires organisational deftness, political maturity, continued dialogue between administration partners and strong member-officer working relationships.

There is an approach to decision making and delivery which creates an expectation that members will take a significant role in many aspects of the design, direction and delivery of services, which leads to committees' workloads looking heavy. Another concern is the time and effort taken by the Joint Administration to shepherd decisions through the committee system – in part exacerbated by the uncertain and overlapping terms of reference of certain committees, and an overly loose sense of when things ought to be “referred up” for decision at Strategy and Resources Committee, which results in inefficiency in how time in committee is used.

These trends are understandable given the political context – the need for strong member grip in a multi-party administration is important. But as things stand the balance between member and officer roles in this space could be better articulated.

We think that the Council could make a few changes to its arrangements for decision-making and oversight. These changes are focused on both structures and behaviours. Many of these are framed around the way that committee business is planned and managed on a cross-party basis. The proposal and implementation of any change should be predicated on the need for that change (and changes overall) to enhance member leadership, ownership, and scrutiny of Council business.

The presence of the Strategic Framework has provided an anchor for committee activity over the course of the last two years, particularly with the development of the Strategic Framework as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process. The administration is now at the point in its life where a renewed focus on delivery, and the management of performance, is necessary. This involves a rebalancing of committee business away from the current focus on decision-making and information sharing, towards more oversight of delivery. While we acknowledge that there have been some efforts to rebalance business in the latter part of 2022/23, more needs to be done. The Council needs to create the space for meaningful, rigorous oversight of ongoing delivery by rethinking its approach to committee working, and to agenda management.

The Strategic Framework sets the key tasks and delivery plans for the committees, so it is important that delivery is then scrutinised as part of the work programme of the committees.

This will involve monitoring the Strategic Framework and seeking to understand where action has been taken, where action is due to be taken, where delivery is ongoing and requires member oversight, and how these various required actions will be managed through the committee work programme.

Currently, meetings are lengthy because of the amount of business that needs to be transacted at each meeting which means that there is a danger that business is not considered as thoroughly as perhaps it should be.

Culture and Governance

Relationships between members is strong in the joint administration – between those members and members of the opposition, relationships are more challenging, which is to be expected.

Member-officer relationships are positive and professional; members trust officers. There is a general sense that member-officer relationships have improved and are continuing to improve.

Members want to exert a leading role in owning and directing decision-making, and oversight, at the authority. With this should come a recognition that training, and development is required to operate at a strategic level, to bring challenge to officers on matters of delivery, to understand and act on financial, performance and risk information.

As is common in many councils there is some difference of opinion on the delegation of decisions. The Joint Administration is keen to keep strong control, and member ownership, of its policy agenda – these feeds through into a will to bring decisions to committee by default. That said, the scheme of delegation as it stands is not unusually restrictive and does provide the opportunity to reset the understanding of what decisions are made by officers, when and how.

We understand the democratic needs for members to be “front and centre” in decision-making, especially in the committee system. This is not a matter of officers not being trusted. Visible member accountability for decisions is important, especially for a joint administration where collective responsibility and consensus are important principles. However, it can serve to make the governance system top-heavy, funnelling business through committee where that is not strictly necessary, and leading to a situation where most of the time cannot be spent on the most critical issues. We consider it unlikely that significant changes need to be made to the scheme of delegation – we think that the issue is more to do with ensuring there is clear understanding of both the principles that underpin it, and a practical understanding of how and where members (and which members) will be consulted when officers use their delegated powers.

The quality of officer reports is variable. Some of this relates to the volume of work happening at committee. This places a particular burden on officers to produce large volumes of material to support member decision-making.

Signoff arrangements for officer reports also feel, in some cases, unclear.

When reports do come, some material is “for information.” The Joint Administration, and senior officers, have yet to alight on a straightforward, streamlined way for information to be shared between officers and members. There does not appear to be meaningful, regular briefing of members on key topics between meetings. If committee meetings are the first and only place where members learn about what the Council is doing, and what local people need, it provides little space for meaningful debate.

The drafting of officer reports could be improved to provide clarity on their purpose/objective and the exact decision or direction members are being asked to deliver. The content of officer reports should be informed by members’ objectives (i.e. those of the Joint Administration). There will usually be a need for earlier legal and financial awareness of

reports coming through the system, and more explicit ownership of reports by individual officers who have specific responsibility for ensuring they meet certain standards.

Recommendation 1

(a) Officer training on the following;

- **Member/Officer roles**
- **Political awareness**
- **Report Writing**

(b) Member training on the following;

- **Member/Officer roles**
- **Work programming and prioritisation**
- **Questioning skills**
- **Skills in interrogating and understanding data and evidence**
- **Councillors' corporate parenting responsibilities**
- **Councillors' and councils' obligations and opportunities regarding equality, diversity, and inclusion.**

(c) Review of the Member/Officer Protocol

(d) Development of a guide of officers on report writing

Work Programming and agenda management

Enhanced decision making will require better management and member direction of committee agendas, and work programmes, across the piece. Currently this done through Chairs and Vice Chairs and Spokes meetings which act as pre-meetings for the committee meeting.

Currently Spokes meetings are focussed on discussion of agenda items for the next meeting. This is potentially a wasted opportunity and could be a space where they are briefed on emerging issues. Many items that appear "for information" could be directed into Spokes for discussion in a less formal environment or into briefings for all Members. This is already in their terms of reference so is simply a matter of refocussing the meetings.

This would assist senior officers and members of the administration could work to identify politically sensitive issues ahead of time, and to think more proactively about what future items are moving through the committee/briefing process and how they should be dealt with.

Chairs and senior officers should come together in advance of individual committee meetings for operational discussion of the technical aspects of those meetings. Chairs and Vice Chairs meetings would be retained in this model but would be focused on the operational planning/management of individual committee meetings.

There will be a clear need to ensure that Spokes are well connected back into the individual political groupings.

Making these changes would make it easier to balance and control committee business in a more consistent and streamlined way.

Recommendation 2:

- (a) Refocus Spokes meetings to be briefing sessions about key issues for the committee and Directorate, and less focussed around reports going directly to committee. They should be led by the Executive Director and meet every month or six weeks.**
- (b) Retain Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting to focus on meeting planning.**
- (c) Reinstate Members' Seminar programme to deal with information items that do not require a decision.**

Working groups provide an opportunity for councillors to come together, cross-party, outside of the confines of committee meetings, to work through complex policy issues.

The use of informal working groups in both committee system and leader-cabinet authorities is not uncommon. They can be particularly useful in finding opportunities for consensus between groups.

The Council currently has more than 40 member working groups and it would be sensible to review these to ensure that they are focussed on policy rather than operational decision making.

Recommendation 3:**Review and rationalise current Member Working Groups****The operation of individual committees**

Committee business is dominated by decision-making and (often unproductive) information-sharing. Overall, this means that some committee agendas are very heavy indeed. The regular convening of daytime meetings that can last all day (in some cases up to eight hours) is not normal and is a practice that needs to be addressed. Challenges with agenda management hinge on the limited effectiveness of "spokes" meetings as identified above.

Expecting both members and officers to prepare for, and then actively engage in, long and complex meetings is unreasonable, and risks that certain issues and items will not be treated with the concentrated attention they deserve. It also places an unreasonable burden on officers, especially staff tasked with committee administration. Furthermore, there is a risk that members have a false sense of security, feeling that they have reviewed or taken ownership of a given issue where actually their treatment of the matter in question may only have been superficial. This is exacerbated by the inconsistent approach to information sharing and report-drafting that we have raised elsewhere in this paper.

As things stand, business planning and agenda management feel opaque. There is a lack of clear and obvious ownership of committee agendas. The joint administration plan provides direction on the act of decision-making, but committees have other tasks, and there is not consistent prioritisation across all committees.

This may feed into the worry that some hold about the current operation of the committee system is that it does not provide sufficient opportunity for members to hold the administration to account on performance and delivery matters, or to hold partners to account.

Moving meetings from monthly to quarterly may have been intended to reduce the burden of the committee cycle but it may have had the opposite effect. Although decision-making has been managed, less frequent meetings do risk problems around resilience and effectiveness, especially when a quick turnaround on some decisions may be needed. We do not think that a return to monthly meetings for every committee is proportionate but there is probably a middle ground.

Delivery is important and the Council needs to increase capacity in committees for managing performance/policy development/scrutiny.

The Strategic Framework sets the key tasks and delivery plans for the committees, so it is important that delivery is then scrutinised as part of the work programme of the committees.

Currently, meetings are lengthy because of the amount of business that needs to be transacted at each meeting which means that there is a danger that business is not considered as thoroughly as perhaps it should be. The Council could create additional capacity within the meeting schedule to accommodate this, which could be addressed in several ways.

The use of reserve dates will assist. The Council could also consider use of remote non-decision-making meetings and focussed working groups “task and finish” where appropriate which will allow for more room within the work programmes of each committee for oversight and policy development work.

Recommendation 4;

- (a) Remote meetings/workshops/task and finish groups for enhanced scrutiny and policy development which give capacity on decision making agendas.**
- (b) Spokes to consider diverse ways of disseminating information items to all Councillors to avoid them being included on agendas.**
- (c) Proactive use of reserve meetings.**
- (d) The current scheduling should remain with four programmed meetings a year and four reserve meetings.**

Strategy and Resources Committee

Strategy and Resources Committee (S&R), holding responsibility for delivering the Council's overall strategy and budget needs to be able to focus more on performance management, delivery, and risk of that programme. It should also be leading on the Council's key strategic partnerships. To allow focus on key strategic performance and delivery issues, it will be necessary to move some of the current workload to a new committee.

There are concerns about divorcing high level strategy (Strategic Framework) from finance, performance, and risk as it potentially dilutes and reduces accountability. It is recognised that there is too much substance on the S&R agenda (particularly assets and procurement) which prevent a sufficient level of scrutiny, so it is suggested that decisions relating to assets and procurement are passed to a new committee which will enable these decisions to be examined more fully. Key strategic relationships should remain with S&R.

S&R should be a space focused on the council's strategic direction. To a significant extent it is, but there is a degree of confusion about its overlap with other committees (in particular Communities, Social Mobility, and Inclusion Committee (COSMIC)).

S&R also carries out duties relating to the council's financial management, including detailed financial monitoring.

Uncertainty about the duties of S&R and how those duties connect to the role of COSMIC means that there continues to be a significant degree of cut-across between the work of both bodies. Similarly, there is cut across on financial oversight, where the connection between S&R's role on financial monitoring, oversight and direction is insufficiently clear as far as it connects with the role of Audit and Accounts Committee (A&A).

There is merit in retaining A&A in its current form particularly with the addition of independent members underway.

Recommendation 5:

- (a) Create a Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee to replace Strategy and Resources Committee to provide strategic direction and be responsible for strategic partnerships/budget (and budget monitoring) /MTFS/performance at a corporate level/risk associated with these.**
- (b) Establish a new Assets and Procurement Committee to rebalance the way that councillors direct and oversee policy in this critical area of council finances.**

Communities, social mobility and inclusion (COSMIC)

COSMIC, too, has experienced problems with focus and workload. Inclusion and support of communities is an understood focus of the Joint Administration and there was a clear logic underpinning the revisions to the Communities and Partnerships Committee but, because the administration rightly sees inclusion as cutting across a wide range of other policy areas, there is the risk that this committee duplicates and overlaps with others – especially S&R. There is no clear, defined rationale underpinning where and how decisions are submitted for decision at S&R, COSMIC or other committees. This means that business at S&R can also be difficult to predict, with S&R (which notionally, under this model, ought to be holding responsibility for the overall management of the council's business, and delivery) becoming preoccupied with the churn of decision-making. It is difficult to see how COSMIC, as currently organised, can continue to be fit for purpose under the current model.

We have sought to understand whether there is a way to maintain COSMIC, or a committee like it, in a new model. There is significant strength in having a cross-cutting committee (like Adults and Health Committee) able to embed the Joint Administration's focus on inclusion as a central priority. Simply seeking to "abolish" COSMIC, and redistributing its responsibilities amongst other, existing, committees, would be very unwise. It would hinder the council's approach to inclusion and its ability to keep tabs of delivery across a complex policy agenda.

Community partnerships sit at the heart of the strategic direction of the council so there is value in having the time to consider these in a dedicated committee space which would complement the work of Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee – but in doing so, there needs to be recognition that the agendas of the two committees will require close co-ordination. There is benefit in retaining some form of communities committee to manage the following areas and avoid overloading the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee

agenda. This presents a rebalancing and refocusing of COSMIC, with its more obviously strategic functions sitting elsewhere.

Overall, this committee could hold policy and delivery for the following services:

- Adult careers information and guidance
- Adult skills
- Anti-poverty
- Learning services including online
- Community learning
- Libraries
- Archives
- Cultural Services
- Registration Service
- Coroner Service
- Trading Standards
- Community safety (including domestic abuse and sexual violence)
- Community development and resilience
- Prevent and hate crime
- Homelessness prevention

Reflective of the administration's priorities, and the need to rebalance the focus of Adults and Health Committee (see below), the Council should consider bringing certain matters relating to social care policy to this new committee, to integrate an awareness of personal support to adults with the wider support to, and from, the community.

Recommendation 6:

Create a Communities Committee to replace COSMIC but remove strategic partnerships so they come within the remit of the new Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee.

Adults and Health Committee

The Adults and Health Committee has terms of reference that are too broad. Drawing together these two areas provides vital clarity to the integration agenda and the logic of having done so is extremely sound – however, it results in very lengthy agendas that struggle to do justice to the importance of issues under the committee's purview. It is important to note that the decision to conjoin these two functions was not necessarily an error at the start. It could have worked, and indeed does in other councils but the model is not right for Cambridgeshire.

The current chair has made several innovations to better plan the agenda – consciously setting aside time for more strategic thinking and planning, and dividing the agenda so that health, and social care, issues are effectively balanced. There is no doubt that these actions will have made the operation of the committee more effective but in our view, there is no straightforward way to manage a workload which is likely to increase with the development by the NHS of further plans for change to services, further to the Integrated Care System (ICS) agenda. This is compounded by widespread member discussion and consideration of matters which are quite operational in nature.

As things stand the committee does not have the capacity to embark on meaningful health scrutiny activity. Councils' health scrutiny powers – although they are expected to change soon – are still significant and need to have the time and space to be managed properly. Alongside this, the Council needs a way to properly highlight and act on public health issues. Now, these feel buried within the weight of other work.

A split between “Adults” and “Health” was something suggested by several interviewees, and something which appears attractive from a committee management point of view. However, there is not the appetite on the part of many members for such a change – in part because of the recognised need for cross-cutting member thinking and direction across the health and care space. Instead, more careful agenda management and the movement of certain functions

We have considered the possibility of passing public health functions to the Health and Wellbeing Board. Although we recognise that this poses logistical challenges (we understand that its meetings are conjoined with those of the ICP) we consider that the need to integrate public health into wider health system decision-making are such that the organisation of these meetings should be replanned to provide for public health matters to be considered by the HWB.

The terms of reference of other bodies (including the Children and Young People Committee) would remain the same.

On balance we are not recommending the establishment of a separate scrutiny committee. Oversight and scrutiny of Council activity will be adequately dealt with, we think, through the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee, and through more focused agenda management in other committees.

Recommendation 7:

As referred to above, move aspects of social care decision-making to the new Communities Committee

Move consideration of public health to the Health and Wellbeing Board

Reserve meetings of Adults and Health Committee to be used to focus on scrutiny of health.

Audit and Accounts Committee

While the operation of the Audit and Accounts Committee does not technically sit within the service committee system, it is adjacent to and supports the business that policy and service committees carry out.

Audit Committee roles are stipulated by detailed Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy guidance. The regulatory functions of Audit are recognised as being vitally important – the Council has taken steps to improve its approach to the audit function, and its intersection with the wider governance framework. This is evidenced through the most recent Annual Governance Statement.

The Audit and Accounts Committee's role and function intersect with those of policy and service committees in several ways. For our purposes, the most important relate to financial management and oversight, and risk.

The Council has a new risk management framework. In the past, risk issues do not appear to have been raised and considered at committees other than Audit and Accounts Committee. Members do have different, less consistent, ways to talk about and decide on corporate risks – but this needs to be formalised, and made more consistent, in how service committees operate, with the treatment of risk being seen as central to service committees' more robust review of ongoing delivery as discussed elsewhere.

There is a recognition that there needs to be an increased focus by members on financial issues. The coming months and years will be challenging ones for the organisation from a financial perspective and proper member direction and oversight is needed to steer the authority through this period.

Other committees

For other committees problems are less obvious, although weight of agendas and a lack of direction on the content of agendas is a common feature. At the right time we think there might be scope to explore changes to the terms of reference of some other committees, but this wider work is not urgent.

We have looked at the operations of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee and recognise that there are workload issues present. Given the ongoing importance of corporate parenting, and children's services issues, we do not recommend rolling the responsibilities of this committee into those of the wider children's services committee. However, we consider that members and officers consider later in the year if changes ought to be made to this part of the committee model, considering the success of the other changes we describe in this section.

Spokes meetings – Role and Purpose

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The primary purpose of Spokes meetings is to ensure that the Policy and Service Spokes are briefed on any key issues relating to the service area, in particular, on items which it is anticipated will be discussed at a future meeting of the committee.
- 1.2. Spokes meetings are not decision-making meetings but the aim is that, as far as practicable, they will provide an opportunity for officers to have a preliminary discussion with Members on key issues affecting the service area and for an exchange of views to take place between the political groups.
- 1.3. A success measure for such meetings will be that:
 - Members are not confronted with significant items at committee meetings for the first time without having been briefed via the Spokes meetings;
 - That Spokes provide information back into the political Group structures so that there is general awareness of key themes for committee and future issues for decision making (confidentiality permitting); and
 - There is a general awareness of any concerns that a political group has on any issue coming before the committee in advance of the committee meeting.
- 1.4 Spokes meetings will be led and chaired by the relevant Executive Director.

2. Frequency and Timing

- 2.1. The Spokes meeting shall normally be scheduled on a monthly or six weekly basis and at a time agreed with the Spokes either virtually or in person.
- 2.2. The relevant Executive Director may cancel a meeting where there is insufficient business following consultation with all Spokes first.

3. Attendance

- 3.1. The Spokes meeting shall normally be attended by the Chair, Vice-Chair, together with the Spokes appointed by each political group, the relevant Executive Director and other officers as required by the business under consideration. The Joint Administration Spokes (the Chair and Vice-Chair are the spokes for their groups) and Conservative Spoke meetings will be held separately unless it is the wish of all Spokes to meet together.
- 3.2. In the event that a Spokes is unable to attend a particular meeting, they shall appoint a substitute member from their group to attend in their absence.

- 3.3 If Spokes agree to invite an officer who supports or reports to another Policy and Service Committee to their committee meeting to respond to questions, the Chair of the committee making the request will instruct the relevant Democratic Services Officer to notify the Chair of the relevant committee.

4. Agenda and Meeting Papers

- 4.1. An agenda shall be prepared for each meeting and shall be circulated, together with any supporting papers, as early as possible before the meeting in order to allow Spokes sufficient time properly to review the papers and to consult with their Groups as necessary. Papers will not normally be circulated less than five working days before a meeting.

5. Spokes Meeting

- 5.1. It is anticipated that the Spokes meeting will: -
 1. Provide an opportunity for a general update on issues affecting the service area which may not necessarily come forward to committee but may be politically sensitive or be of significant public interest (eg: staffing, budgets or performance issues, service pressures etc.).
 2. Provide an update on any key external issues affecting service areas (eg: impact of changes in Government Policy etc.).
 3. Provide an update on key corporate issues affecting the service area.
 4. Provide an update on progress on any key projects of a commercial nature to enable continued Member oversight and engagement with the development of major projects.
 5. Provide an opportunity for Spokes to exchange views and provide any initial group views, pending further discussions with groups.
 6. Advise Spokes of any significant decisions taken under delegated powers.
 7. Consider training needs of members of the committee and review the Committee Training Plan.
 8. Review at each meeting the agenda plan for the Policy and Service Committee including the items scheduled for forthcoming meetings and whether, in the interests of agenda management, it is necessary to re-schedule any items.
 9. Provide an opportunity to update Spokes on forthcoming items scheduled for committee meetings, including summary reports outlining issues to be considered so that Spokes can feedback to officers on any additional information or changes required to the final report.

10. Consider any member requests for items to be included on a future agenda [Section 7 - Agenda Items Requested by Councillors](#) of Constitution.

6. Action Notes

- 6.1. Brief action notes will be prepared by an officer of the relevant Directorate following each Spokes meeting and circulated to Spokes and relevant officers.

7. Communication of Issues discussed at Spokes

- 7.1. Spokes are expected to act as a communications channel taking group views to Spokes meetings and reporting back to the group information from, and discussions at, those meetings.
- 7.2. Spokes should be briefed on proposals in sufficient time to enable them to consult with their group members.

8. Confidentiality

- 8.1. Spokes must comply with the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct – Guidance on Confidentiality as set out in Part 5.1(a) of the Constitution [\[Constitution\]](#) in handling information submitted to, or discussed at, meetings of Spokes. Therefore, Spokes must not disclose such information to the public, other organisations and public bodies. They may disclose confidential or exempt information to other Cambridgeshire County Council elected members within their political groups, unless the relevant Executive Director or other officer indicates either within the report, or verbally at the meeting, that the matter is of such sensitivity that it may not be disclosed outside the Spokes meeting.

[Note - Councillors have a wider, common law, right of access to information not otherwise available to the public, referred to as the "need to know" principle. A Councillor has a right to request information where he or she can show a need to know that information in order to perform his or her duties as a Councillor. In many instances, that "need to know" is presumed by officers in making information available to Spokes, in order to enable them to carry out their roles. On occasion, however, the Executive Director or other officer may indicate that, in view of the nature of the information it may not be appropriate to disclose the information beyond the Spokes.]

- 8.2. In cases of doubt, the Member must seek advice from the Monitoring Officer on the disclosure of confidential or exempt information in advance of the information being disclosed.

9. Application to Policy and Service Committees

- 9.1. This guidance shall apply to meetings of Policy and Services Committees (Adults and Health, Assets and Procurement, Children and Young People, Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion, Environment and Green Investment, Highways and Transport, and Strategy, Resources and

Performance). Whilst arrangements for meetings may vary according to individual preferences and circumstances of committees, the key principles within this guidance should be adhered to.

A Review of the Complaints Received Under the Members' Code of Conduct

To: Constitution and Ethics Committee

Meeting Date: 13 September 2023

From: Monitoring Officer

Outcome: To brief the Constitution and Ethics Committee on the number and nature of the complaints received about Members under the Code of Conduct from 20 June 2023 to date, along with details of other complaints which are in process or have been concluded.

Recommendation: The Constitution and Ethics Committee is recommended to:

Note the contents of the report.

Officer Contact;

Name: Emma Duncan
Post: Director of Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Email: Emma.Duncan@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01223 715943

1. Background

- 1.1 The Localism Act (“the Act”) places a statutory duty on the Council to promote and maintain high standards of conduct amongst its Members and co-opted Members. This includes the obligation on the Council to have in place a Code of Conduct setting out the standard of conduct expected of Members when acting in their capacity as County Councillors.
- 1.2 The requirements of the Act are supported by Article 2 (Members of the Council) in the Council’s Constitution, and by Part 5.1 (Members’ Code of Conduct). The Constitution and Ethics Committee’s terms of reference give it authority to monitor the operation of the Code of Conduct and the complaints received under it.
- 1.3 This report serves to provide the Constitution and Ethics Committee with an overview of the complaints received under the Code of Conduct since the last update on 20th June 2023.

2. Overview of Complaints

2.1 Ongoing Complaints

- 2.1.1 There are no ongoing complaints. The publication of details of complaints only takes place after conclusion of the complaint and only if a breach of the code has been established. The purpose of this restriction is to reduce speculation on limited information, to ensure there is no compromise of any assessment or investigation, and to uphold the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- 2.1.2 Since the time of last reporting, there have been 26 new complaints which have been resolved. These all related to one incident.

2.2 Concluded Complaints

- 2.2.1 The following complaints have been concluded since the time of last reporting:
 - CONDCOMP/CCC29. A complaint was received from a member of the public on 4 April 2023 which concerned comments the Subject Member had made on social media. This complaint is linked with CONDCOMP/CC/30. The complaint was considered by the Deputy Monitoring Officer and a ‘no breach’ finding was issued on 15 June 2023.
 - CONDCOMP/CCC30. A complaint was received from a member of the public on 4 April 2023 and concerned comments the Subject Member had made on social media. This complaint is linked with CONDCOMP/CCC/29. The complaint was considered by the Deputy Monitoring Officer and a ‘no breach’ finding was issued on 15 June 2023.
 - CoCo/2023/04 (a) and (b). A complaint was received by a member of the public on 28 May 2023 which raised concerns about whether the Subject Member’s views were predetermined by not considering new facts/evidence presented and making false and misleading statements. The complaint was considered by the Monitoring Officer and a ‘no breach’ finding was issued on 4 July 2023.

- CoCo/2023/05 (a) and (b). A complaint was received by a member of the public on 5 June 2023 which raised concerns about whether the Subject Member's views were predetermined by not considering new facts/evidence presented and making false and misleading statements. The complaint was considered by the Monitoring Officer and a 'no breach' finding was issued on 4 July 2023.
- CoCo/2023/06 (a) and (b). A complaint was received by a member of the public on 6 June 2023 which raised concerns about whether the Subject Member's views were predetermined by not considering new facts/evidence presented and making false and misleading statements. The complaint was considered by the Monitoring Officer and a 'no breach' finding was issued on 4 July 2023.
- CoCo/2023/07 (a) and (b). A complaint was received by a member of the public on 6 June 2023 which raised concerns about whether the Subject Member's views were predetermined by not considering new facts/evidence presented and making false and misleading statements. The complaint was considered by the Monitoring Officer and a 'no breach' finding was issued on 4 July 2023.
- CoCo/2023/08 (a) and (b). A complaint was received by a member of the public on 7 June 2023 which raised concerns about whether the Subject Member's views were predetermined by not considering new facts/evidence presented and making false and misleading statements. The complaint was considered by the Monitoring Officer and a 'no breach' finding was issued on 4 July 2023.
- CoCo/2023/09 (a) and (b). A complaint was received by a member of the public on 7 June 2023 which raised concerns about whether the Subject Member's views were predetermined by not considering new facts/evidence presented and making false and misleading statements. The complaint was considered by the Monitoring Officer and a 'no breach' finding was issued on 4 July 2023.
- CoCo/2023/10 (a) and (b). A complaint was received by a member of the public on 7 June 2023 which raised concerns about whether the Subject Member's views were predetermined by not considering new facts/evidence presented and making false and misleading statements. The complaint was considered by the Monitoring Officer and a 'no breach' finding was issued on 4 July 2023.
- CoCo/2023/11 (a) and (b). A complaint was received by a member of the public on 8 June 2023 which raised concerns about whether the Subject Member's views were predetermined by not considering new facts/evidence presented and making false and misleading statements. The complaint was considered by the Monitoring Officer and a 'no breach' finding was issued on 4 July 2023.
- CoCo/2023/12 (a) and (b). A complaint was received by a member of the public on 8 June 2023 which raised concerns about whether the Subject Member's views were predetermined by not considering new facts/evidence presented and making false and misleading statements. The complaint was considered by the Monitoring Officer and a 'no breach' finding was issued on 4 July 2023.
- CoCo/2023/13 (a) and (b). A complaint was received by a member of the public on 8 June 2023 which raised concerns about whether the Subject Member's views were

predetermined by not considering new facts/evidence presented and making false and misleading statements. The complaint was considered by the Monitoring Officer and a 'no breach' finding was issued on 4 July 2023.

- CoCo/2023/14 (a) and (b). A complaint was received by a member of the public on 8 June 2023 which raised concerns about whether the Subject Member's views were predetermined by not considering new facts/evidence presented and making false and misleading statements. The complaint was considered by the Monitoring Officer and a 'no breach' finding was issued on 4 July 2023.
- CoCo/2023/15 (a) and (b). A complaint was received by a member of the public on 11 June 2023 which raised concerns about whether the Subject Member's views were predetermined by not considering new facts/evidence presented and making false and misleading statements. The complaint was considered by the Monitoring Officer and a 'no breach' finding was issued on 4 July 2023.
- CoCo/2023/16 (a) and (b). A complaint was received by a member of the public on 22 June 2023 which raised concerns about whether the Subject Member's views were predetermined by not considering new facts/evidence presented and making false and misleading statements. The complaint was considered by the Monitoring Officer and a 'no breach' finding was issued on 4 July 2023.

3. Source Documents

- 3.1 The Council's Code of Conduct, information about how to make a conduct complaint, and the process that will be followed can be found via the following link:

[Complain about a councillor or co-opted member - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

Constitution and Ethics Committee Agenda Plan

The following are standing agenda items which are considered at every Committee meeting:

- Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest
- Minutes of previous meeting and Minutes Action Log
- Committee Agenda Plan

Committee date	Agenda item	Lead officer	Deadline for draft reports	Agenda despatch date
13/09/23	Annual Review of the Constitution	E Duncan	29/08/23	05/09/23
	Governance Review - Implementation of Recommendations	E Duncan		
	A Review of the Complaints Received Under the Members' Code of Conduct - End August 2023	E Duncan		
14/11/23	Live Action Plan to Mitigate the Risks of Intimidation and Abusive Behaviours towards Members and Officers	J Atkin E Duncan	30/10/23	06/11/23
	Disciplinary Procedure for Statutory Officers	M Rowe		
	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Joint Health and Wellbeing Board – Revisions to Terms of Reference	M Rowe		
23/01/24	A Review of the Complaints Received Under the Members' Code of Conduct - End December 2023	E Duncan	08/01/24	15/01/24
26/03/24	No reports scheduled		11/03/24	18/03/24
23/04/24	A Review of the Complaints Received Under the Members' Code of Conduct - End March 2024	E Duncan	08/04/24	15/04/24

Please contact Democratic Services (democraticservices@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) if you require this information in a more accessible format.

