

Constitution and Ethics Committee: Minutes

Date: Tuesday 27th July 2021

Time: 10:00am – 10:35am

Venue: Eco Hub, Gamlingay

Present: Councillors Sebastian Kindersley (Chair), Alex Bulat, Lorna Dupré, Janet French, Mac McGuire, Kevin Reynolds, Tom Sanderson and Philippa Slatter (substituting for Councillor Neil Gough)

3. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Councillors Gough and Ambrose Smith.

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Conflicts of Interest Guidance for Members

The Committee received a report responding to two recommendations that emerged from the Manor Farm Audit, which had been considered by the Audit and Accounts Committee during March 2021. The first of these related to the Monitoring Officer ensuring that comprehensive training took place for all Members of the Council on the Code of Conduct and associated issues, including how to deal with conflicts of interest. This had been concluded, as set out in section 2 of the report, and a training record would be reported back to the Constitution and Ethics Committee with the aim of ensuring all Members had participated. The second recommendation was for guidance about conflicts of interest to be issued to Members, and it was proposed that the draft guidance attached as Appendix 1 to the report be both circulated to Members and recommended to Full Council as an appendix to the Members' Code of Conduct in the Constitution.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Welcomed the proposed guidance for dealing with more specific declarations of interest, noting that it related to cases when Members had more complex interactions with the Council.
- Observed that there were also occasions when conflicts of interest arose for Members who represented different tiers of local government, such as the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, and suggested that additional guidance on such issues would also be helpful. The Monitoring Officer noted that she provided advice to Members related to representation on multiple tiers on a case-by-case basis. She also informed the Committee that regular meetings were held with the other Monitoring Officers across the County, and

undertook to raise the issue with them to discuss a consistent approach across the tiers.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note that Code of Conduct training had taken place and an update on Members who had attended or watched the training subsequently would be provided at the next Committee meeting; and
- b) Approve the Guidance on Conflicts of Interest (Appendix 1 of the report) and recommend to Full Council that it formed an appendix to the Member's Code of Conduct in the Council's Constitution.

5. Exclusion of Press and Public

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Dupré and resolved unanimously that:

The press and public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the agenda contained exempt information under Paragraphs 1 & 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and that it would not be in the public interest for this information to be disclosed information relating to any individual, and information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

6. Code of Conduct Investigation

It was resolved unanimously to:

Agree the recommendations as set out in the report.

Chair
21st September 2021