

CIVIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Wednesday 17 September 2003
6.00 pm – 7.30pm

PRESENT: Councillors C Rosenstiel (Chair), Adey, Boyce, Durrant, Hart, R Smith, Stebbings and Ward.

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

03/CIV/44 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th June were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

03/CIV/45 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

03/CIV/46 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were none.

03/CIV/47 MINIMUM AGE FOR VOTING AND CANDIDACY

Members considered a consultation paper from the Electoral Commission asking for views on whether the age at which a person can vote and stand as a candidate for all elections in the UK should be lowered. The paper mentioned the Commission's concern at the falling levels of participation rates, particularly by young people, in UK elections.

The Council had carried out its own consultation exercise with a small group of young people who were represented at the meeting by Aran Mathai (Deputy Member of Youth Parliament for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire and Katherine Gamble (Member of UK Youth Parliament Cabinet for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire). They addressed the meeting and explained their views, their report having been circulated shortly prior to the meeting. The recommendations set out in their paper were for a minimum age of 16 for voting and of 18 to be a candidate. The Committee members discussed the issues raised by the consultation paper and the views expressed by the young people. It felt that the age to be a candidate was more a matter for the electorate to judge and should therefore not differ from the age for voting.

Resolved that the Council should make representations to the Electoral Commission in favour of

- 1 Reducing the minimum voting age to 16 for all elections in the UK; and

- 2 Reducing the minimum age at which a person is eligible for candidacy in elections held in the UK to 16.

03/CIV/48 **STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2003**

The Committee had received, for comment and approval, a copy of the draft statement of accounts for the Council's financial year ending 31st March 2003, together with a covering report by the Director of Finance setting out the process for preparing, approving and publicizing a final version of the accounts later this year.

In her verbal update to the Committee, the Head of Accounting Services commented that the audit matters outstanding at the dates of the report had all been dealt with subject to the satisfactory inclusion of the Council's Pension Fund data for which the deadline was 30th September. She reminded the Committee that members of the public still had until the 22nd of September to make comments on the draft accounts. The City Council's external auditors' Annual Audit letter to Members was expected to be available for circulation by the end of 2003 and would be presented to members of the Committee at the meeting in January 2004.

Resolved

- 1 That the content of the draft statement of accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 2003 as set out be approved;
- 2 That Councillor C Rosenstiel be authorised, as the Chair of the Committee, to sign the final Statement of Accounts (as approved by the Director of Finance) on behalf of the Council, for the financial year ending March 2003.

03/CIV/49 **ANNUAL MEETING AND SUMMER CYCLE 2004**

The Committee considered possible dates for the Annual Council meeting and committee meetings for June/July next year in view of the change of date for Local Government elections to coincide with the European Parliament elections on Thursday 10th June and the implications for delaying the Spring 2004 meetings cycle.

The proposed date for Annual Council was 24th June, this being the earliest that the Council could meet following the elections. Members discussed the consequences of splitting the Summer meetings cycle between July and September and how to manage Council business. The Director of Finance expressed concern that there might be problems relating to the various financial approvals which would need to be given if the Spring cycle was delayed. The Chair suggested that this could be addressed by using Executive and delegated powers, any necessary Executive decisions being taken before the recess, and any decisions for Council in early September.

Resolved (5 votes to 0)

- 1 That the Spring 2004 Committee cycle be amended as follows:
- | | | |
|-----------------------|---------|---|
| Monday 19 April | 5.30pm | Housing Management Board |
| Tuesday 20 April | 4.30pm | Commercial and Human Resources
Scrutiny Committee |
| Wednesday 21
April | 5.30pm | Housing and Health Scrutiny
Committee |
| Tuesday 27 April | 10.00am | Environment Scrutiny Committee |
| Thursday 29 April | 2.30pm | Community Development and
Leisure Scrutiny Committee |
| Tuesday 4 May | 6.00pm | Strategy Scrutiny Committee |
| Wednesday 5 May | 6.00pm | Civic Affairs Committee |
| Thursday 20 May | 6.00pm | Council |
- 2 That the local elections on 10 June 2004 be followed by:
- | | | |
|------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| Monday 14 June | 6.00pm | Civic Affairs Committee |
| Thursday 24 June | 11.00am | Council (Annual meeting) |
- 3 That Council and Committees meet following the City Council local elections on Thursday 10 June 2004, any necessary Executive decisions to be agreed before the recess and any decisions for Council to be made in early September;
- 4 That the Summer 2004 meetings cycle be amended as follows:
- | | | |
|-------------------------|---------|---|
| Monday 5 July | 5.30pm | Housing Management Board |
| Tuesday 6 July | 4.30pm | Commercial and Human Resources
Scrutiny |
| Wednesday 7 July | 5.30pm | Housing and Health Scrutiny
Committee |
| Tuesday 13 July | 10.00am | Environment Scrutiny Committee |
| Thursday 15 July | 2.30pm | Community Development and
Leisure Scrutiny Committee |
| Monday 19 July | 6.00pm | Strategy Scrutiny Committee |
| Thursday 9
September | 6.00pm | Council |

03/CIV/50 **INDEPENDENT MEMBERS' REMUNERATION PANEL
2003/04**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services setting out proposals for the revision of the Panel's Terms of Reference following changes introduced by the new Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The new Regulations extended the Panel's remit to cover allowances to be made to co-opted members, the backdating of payments, annual adjustments of allowances and

additions to the levels of travel and subsistence allowances. The Council was required to have a revised allowances scheme in place by 31 December this year.

Resolved –

That the amended terms of reference set out in paragraph 5 of the report be approved, subject to the fifth term being reworded to read “Is easy to understand, to explain and to administer”, and that the Panel be requested to report back to the Civic Affairs Committee meeting on 19th November.

03/CIV/51 CYCLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

The Committee considered the July 2003 Electoral Commission Consultation Paper ‘The Cycle of Local Government Elections in England’ together with a report by the Director of Central Services summarizing the key points of the Commission’s Paper and how they related to Cambridge. The Paper had been produced following an invitation by Government to review the cycle of local elections and to identify options for change which would make the cycle easier to understand, improve democratic legitimacy and accountability together with local authority performance, improve participation by the electorate and facilitate new ways of polling. The Commission was seeking a response by 3 October.

In relation to the issue raised at paragraph 4.1 of the officer’s report about the rapid turnover of the electorate, Councillor Rosenstiel commented that the turnover of the electorate in Cambridge was broader than just students and that this was an argument for elections by thirds. Councillor Durrant supported the view that elections should be held by thirds. Councillor Rosenstiel was also concerned that the Commission’s Paper had implications for local groups other than the political groups making up the Council; for instance, potential candidates would have more limited opportunity to put themselves forward if local elections were held only every four years.

Resolved -

That the Council should write to the Electoral Commission supporting the continuation of the present arrangements, allowing local discretion and variations across the country, as this would permit councils such as Cambridge to continue to be elected by thirds.

03/CIV/52 HONORARY COUNCILLORS

In accordance with the scheme for Honorary membership of the Council, the Committee considered a request from Councillor Durrant that former Council members Peter Cowell, Gaynor Griffiths, Evelyn Knowles, Chris Lakin and Raith Overhill be given the title Honorary Councillor.

Resolved –

That Council be recommended to make former Councillors Cowell, Griffiths, Knowles, Lakin and Overhill Honorary Councillors.

03/CIV/53 GENERAL REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSITUENCIES

The Committee noted the Head of Legal Services' report set out as an additional agenda item that on 18th September the Boundary Commission for England would publish its proposals for revising the boundaries of the parliamentary constituencies which fell within the City with a closing date for receiving representations of 31 October. The changes were to be brought into effect on 10 June 2004.

Councillor Rosenstiel expressed concern that the Commission's deadline would make it difficult to consult local people, political parties and neighbouring authorities on alternative proposals which the Council might wish to put forward. He mentioned a number of existing boundary anomalies, in particular the one in Cherry Hinton the City Council and neighbouring local authority. He suggested that a longer consultation period, which would allow consideration of the issues by the full Council, would be desirable.

Resolved –

1. That the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be instructed to request the Commission to extend the period for making representations until after the Council meeting on 4 December;
2. That, if the Commission refused to extend the period for making representations, a special meeting of this Committee be held before the end of October, the meeting to be in two parts, the first part being a discussion of the issues with agents for the political parties that contested the last General Election in either Cambridge constituency being invited to attend, and the second part being a formal meeting of the Committee to determine the Council's response to the Commission.

The meeting ended at 7.30pm.

Chair