

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held at Room 15, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford on Thursday, 27 October 2016

PRESENT

Cllr Mrs J G Lawrence (Chairman)
Cllr G Perham (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs L Birt
Mrs C F Chapman MBE
P Hollick
M R Jones

Cllrs K C Matthews
R D Wenham
A Zerny

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Mrs A L Dodwell
J G Jamieson
N Warren

Substitutes: Cllrs E Ghent
D J Lawrence

Officers in Attendance: Mr Q Baker – Assistant Director Legal and Monitoring Officer
Ms M Damigos – Corporate Lawyer
Mr B Dunleavy – Democratic Services Manager
Ms M Peaston – Committee Services Manager

GPC/16/13. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Jamieson, Dodwell and Warren.

GPC/16/14. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

GPC/16/15. **Members' Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

GPC/16/16. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

There were no Chairman's announcements or matters of communication.

GPC/16/17. **Petitions**

There were no petitions.

GPC/16/18. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

There were no questions, statements or deputations from members of the public.

GPC/16/19. **The 2018 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies**

The Committee received a report setting out the initial proposals by the Boundary Committee for England on the current review of the Parliamentary constituencies for England. Illustrative maps were included and large copies were tabled at the meeting to enhance understanding of the proposals.

Points and comments were made, as follows:

- although not ideal the proposals were considered acceptable as they currently stood
- ideally, Elstow should be within the Mid Bedfordshire boundary and Kempston Rural within the North East Bedford constituency
- representations could be made seeking the inclusion of Elstow within the Mid Bedfordshire boundary.

RESOLVED:-

- 1. to note the initial proposals for the new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England; and**
- 2. to accept the initial proposals, however to establish whether an amendment could be incorporated, such that Elstow would remain in the Mid Bedfordshire constituency and Kempston Rural be removed and included in the North East Bedford constituency.**

GPC/16/20. **Report on the Arrangements for Ethical Standards**

The Committee received a report summarising the Council's ethical governance and arrangements since March 2016. The report included explanations relating to the following:

- the Council's Code of Conduct, including the sanctions available when a breach is found
- an update on the maintenance of the Register of Interests
- the maintenance of an appropriate number of Independent Persons
- a proposal to publish the outcomes of decisions following complaints against Council members
- training of Clerks to parish and town councils in respect of ethical matters.

Points and comments were made, as follows:

- the range of information included in published decisions following a complaint against a member of Central Bedfordshire Council could vary,

depending on the circumstances, but would generally include the name of the Council member and the person who made the complaint with brief details of the complaint and the decision.

- a recommendation should be made to Council to amend the Constitution to enable the Monitoring Officer to publish such decisions
- A reduction in the number of Independent Persons from seven to four was appropriate and the proposal to extend the appointment of four existing Independent Persons to 2020 should be the subject of a recommendation from this Committee to Council.

RESOLVED:

- 1. to note how the Council has complied with its obligations in respect of ethical standards under the Localism Act for the eight months since March 2016;**
- 2. that the number of Independent Persons maintained on the Panel be reduced from seven to four.**

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

- 1. that the outcome of reports relating to complaints made under the Councillor Code of Conduct be published, and that the Constitution be amended to enable the Monitoring Officer to publish such decisions;**
- 2. to extend the appointment of four Independent Persons to 2020.**

GPC/16/21. Review of Policy and Procedure under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

The Committee received a report of the Monitoring Officer apprising the Committee of a review of the Council's Policy and procedures to promote the terms of the Regulation Of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) following an inspection by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners at the end of April 2016. The Committee was reminded that as covert surveillance may infringe the rights of individuals, it must be carried out in accordance with RIPA.

Points and comments included:

- concern by a minority of members of the Committee that the words "shall" or "must" replaced the term "should" in the revised Policy, as those Members considered that the revised wording was disproportionately directive; a vote indicated that the majority of members of the Committee were in favour of the revised wording as it related to compliance requirements.
- the wording of the beginning of paragraph 4.9.3 required amending to make it grammatically correct
- endorsement that the designation of three additional Authorising Officers, as recommended by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners to bring the total number up to five, was acceptable

- that the proposed annual review to be brought to the Committee should include a summary of covert surveillance that had been undertaken by the Council.

RESOLVED

- 1. to endorse the updated Policy and Procedure Guide on the use of covert surveillance and covert human intelligence sources by the Council, subject to the grammatical amendment of paragraph 4.9.3;**
- 2. to endorse the designation of three additional Authorising Officers by the Senior Responsible Officer;**
- 3. that an annual review of the Council's Policy and Procedure Guide informed by RIPA be brought to this Committee to ensure it remains fit for purpose;**
- 4. that the annual review include summaries of the Council's covert intelligence activities governed by the Policy.**

GPC/16/22. Work Programme

The Committee received a report setting out details of its work programme.

Points and comments included:

- due to the required publication framework, the Council's Pay Policy Statement must be considered at the Committee's meeting on 8 December 2016
- it would be helpful to have an indication of the proposals for the re-ordering and indexing of the Constitution at the December meeting, prior to the work being brought in draft to the Committee
- the work programme for 2017/18 would include an annual review of the Council's covert surveillance policy informed by RIPA (minute GPC 16/21 above refers).

RESOLVED

- 1. to note the Work Programme;**

2. to add a report to the 8 December meeting setting out proposals for the re-ordering and indexing of the Constitution;
3. to add to the work programme for 2017/18 an annual review of the Council's covert surveillance policy informed by RIPA, including examples of work the Council had undertaken governed by the Policy.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 10.55 a.m.)

Chairman

Dated