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## Policy & Finance Committee

**Date:** 27 February 2023

**Title:** Arrangements regarding elections May 2023

**Purpose of the Report:**

To provide information and seek committee feedback regarding arrangements leading up to and after elections in May 2023.

**Contact Officer:**

Sarah Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk

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<b>Corporate Objective/s</b>	n/a	
<b>Implications:</b>		
<b>Financial</b>	No	Within existing budgets
<b>Human Resources</b>	No	Within existing resources
<b>Operational/Service delivery</b>	Yes	To ensure the new Council can legally operate post election
<b>Procedural/Legal</b>	Yes	LGA 1972 LGA 1986 Localism Act 2011
<b>Risk/Health and Safety</b>	No	
<b>Environmental Aims</b>	No	

### 1 RECOMMENDATION/S

Should the Committee be minded, the proposals are:

**1.1 To note the report.**

**1.2 If applicable, to provide any further feedback to help inform arrangements post-election for the next Council administration.**

### 2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The next unitary and parish council elections will take place on May 4, 2023.

2.2 All matters relating to the election will be handled by the electoral authority, Central Bedfordshire Council. Further information regarding key dates for nominations and polling can be found on their website. Additional details can be found on the Electoral Commission website.

- 2.3 As set out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, there will be some changes in current warding within the parish of Leighton-Linslade for the May 2023 election:

Central Bedfordshire Council: the three parish wards to be re-named Leighton-Linslade North, South and West

Town Council: creation of new Bassett ward, bringing the total of parish wards to 8 and resulting in some changes to previous warding arrangements

- 2.4 Following the publication of the Notice of Election by Central Bedfordshire Council (no later than 27 March), both Councils will be bound to comply with the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority publicity in the pre-election period (Local Government Act 1986) (see **attached** guidance). However, Council business can continue to be undertaken as usual.
- 2.5 In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 s16 (3), current town councillors will stand down and newly elected town councillors will take office on **Tuesday, 9 May** (a day later than usual due to the extra Bank Holiday for the King's Coronation on Monday, 8 May).

### **3. PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR RETIRING AND NEW COUNCILLORS**

#### 3.1 Retiring Councillors:

- (i) Retiring councillors are asked to return any Town Council owned devices by Tuesday, 9 May 2023.
- (ii) Existing O365 and email accounts for current Town Councillors will be decommissioned on Tuesday, 9 May.
- (iii) Councillors are reminded of the requirement to comply with data protection legislation and adopted Town Council policies. Any documentation requiring secure destruction can be brought to the White House. Any data held on personal devices should be deleted where it contains any personal or confidential information.

#### 3.2 Newly elected Councillors:

- (i) Newly elected councillors will be contacted as soon as possible from Tuesday, 9 May and invited to come in between 9-15 May to sign their Declaration of Acceptance of Office (this must be witnessed by the Town Clerk) and collect their induction information as well as the agenda for the first meeting of the Council on 15 May.
- (ii) New councillor O365 accounts and email addresses will be set up as soon as practicable from 9 May.

- (iii) New councillors must have signed their Declaration prior to commencement of the Annual Council Meeting on Monday, 15 May at 1930 hours.
- (iv) Photographs will be taken at the Annual Council Meeting for use in Town Council publicity, website, ID badges and so on.
- (v) New councillors must complete their online Register of Interests via the Central Bedfordshire website within 28 days of taking office, i.e. by Thursday, 8 June 2023.

### 3.3 Induction:

- (i) A survey of current Town Councillors was undertaken in July 2022, with questions including on councillor induction and training. 15 of 21 councillors responded and proposed arrangements for 2023 take this feedback into account.
- (ii) 86% of respondents said their induction folder of key documents had been useful and it is therefore intended to reproduce these for 2023, for all councillors.
- (iii) 60% of respondents also asked for electronic documentation. A new cloud based shared drive will be established to facilitate easier councillor access to a range of documents electronically. This is anticipated to include policies, procedures, NALC briefings etc, along with the various NALC/LGA "Good Councillor" guides.
- (iv) Feedback from the survey indicated that training for new councillors on the following would be useful:
  - What are LLTC duties/responsibilities and what is not
  - How LLTC can work with the local authority
  - LLTC plans, objectives and timelines
  - Protocol & conduct during meetings
  - Councillor/officer protocol
  - Planning
  - Carbon literacy
  - Town major issues and status thereof
  - Legal powers and duties of parish councils
  - Council financial situation and financial processes
  - Standing Orders
  - Chairing meetings
  - How to get things done!
- (v) It is anticipated that initial induction will take place for brand new councillors between 9-15 May and be repeated at a later date, with additional training scheduled on the subjects above.

- (vi) The first meeting of each of the standing committees and sub-committees in June-July 2023 will include an agenda item giving background on that committee's responsibilities, terms of reference, current and planned projects and budget.
- (vii) External training will also be provided as follows:
  - Cloudy IT: using O365 and Decisions
  - Breakthrough Communications: council and councillor communications (e.g. use of social media) & data protection
  - Beds Association of Town & Parish Councils: appropriate sector specific training
- (viii) It is anticipated that a "visioning" exercise will take place in summer 2023 to determine priorities for the new administration, prior to work commencing on the budget for 2024-25.
- (ix) 93% of councillors felt the weekly internal e-newsletter was useful in providing operational and information updates and therefore this will continue to be issued by email and made available on the shared drive.

**End.**

**Appendix A: NALC Legal Topic Note L01-23 (Recommended Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity prior to an election)**