# Cornwall councillors restricted from discussing Cllr Gardner's appointment amid police investigation



At a recent council meeting in Cornwall, councillors faced a directive preventing them from raising questions about the recent appointment of Cllr Louis Gardner to a £70,000 position at Spaceport Cornwall, which is operated by Corserv, a company owned by the council. This meeting, held before the upcoming local elections on May 1, was the final full council gathering where the matter of Cllr Gardner’s new role, along with ongoing investigations, was to be discussed.

Cllr Gardner has been under scrutiny following a complaint resulting in an investigation by Devon and Cornwall Police. The complaint concerns "misconduct in public office" linked to the approval of £200,000 of government funding for the spaceport during a meeting he attended on February 27. Notably, he did not declare a pecuniary interest in the matter, and just days later he was appointed to the head of future air and space job at the spaceport.

Paul Grant, the newly appointed monitoring officer for the council, communicated via email to all councillors on April 14, advising them against discussing any aspects of this sensitive topic at the meeting. His email underlined the importance of adhering to the council’s code of conduct, which outlines members' interests and responsibilities and includes provisions for dealing with complaints. He clarified that the ongoing police investigation takes precedence over any internal council inquiry, thus ensuring that no comments would be made that might affect the police's work or could be construed as speculation about the investigation's outcome.

In his correspondence, Grant noted, "We would not do anything to prejudice any police inquiry and therefore any corporate view on this would have to be 'no comment'." He emphasised that while the investigation is ongoing, the council’s actions cannot be deemed unlawful simply due to a breach of the code of conduct, which remains unproven until assessed.

Despite the restrictions imposed by Grant, two questions related to the situation were permitted during the public questions segment of the meeting. The first inquiry asked whether the Corserv shareholder agreed with North Cornwall MP Ben Maguire, who expressed “deep concerns about transparency, integrity, and public trust” regarding Cllr Gardner’s appointment. The second question addressed whether the leader of Cornwall Council believes that the principles of honesty, objectivity, accountability, selflessness, openness, and leadership apply to all members of the council cabinet at all times.

Although Cllr Gardner is still serving as a councillor, he has not included his new position within the register of interests, raising further questions about transparency. Following his appointment to head of air and space at Spaceport Cornwall, he resigned from his role as the cabinet member for the economy at the start of March. Furthermore, he is expected to retire from his position as councillor on election day.

The situation surrounding Cllr Gardner’s appointment continues to draw attention and scrutiny, with various members of the community and local leaders expressing concerns about the implications for governance and public trust in the council. As the investigation progresses, the outcome will likely influence the political landscape in Cornwall, particularly as the local elections approach.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.cornish-times.co.uk/news/latest-revelation-about-councillors-top-job-raises-serious-questions-780356> - This article discusses the controversy surrounding Cllr Louis Gardner's appointment to a £70,000 position at Spaceport Cornwall and the subsequent ethical questions raised. It also touches on the ongoing police investigation into misconduct allegations related to his role in approving government funding for the spaceport.
* <https://www.thepost.uk.com/news/councillor-set-to-leave-cabinet-for-new-role-with-cornwall-airport-newquay-773468> - This news piece reports on Cllr Louis Gardner's departure from his role as cabinet member for the economy to take on a new position at Cornwall Airport Newquay, specifically as the head of future air and space. The article highlights his transition while still serving as a councillor.
* <https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/> - This is the official website of the Devon and Cornwall Police, the department responsible for investigating misconduct allegations involving Cllr Louis Gardner. Although it does not directly discuss the case, it provides context on police investigations in the region.
* <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-constitution/code-of-conduct> - This link provides information on Cornwall Council's code of conduct, which outlines the principles and responsibilities for councillors, including declaring interests and handling complaints. This is relevant to Cllr Gardner's situation given the focus on transparency and conduct.
* <https://committees.cornwall.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=145&MId=8506> - This page lists documents related to council meetings and decisions in Cornwall. While not directly referencing Cllr Gardner's case, it provides access to official council records and minutes that might address similar issues of governance and accountability.