# Concerns grow over Cllr Gardner's controversial appointment at Spaceport Cornwall



During a recent meeting of the Cornwall Council held on April 14, 2023, local councillors were explicitly ordered not to ask questions about a dubious appointment involving former cabinet member for the economy, Cllr Louis Gardner. Gardner has conveniently secured a £70,000 position as the head of future air and space at Spaceport Cornwall, a facility operated by Corserv—a company that is completely owned by the council.

The directive against public discussion was issued by Paul Grant, the newly appointed monitoring officer for the council. In an email to councillors prior to the meeting, Grant acknowledged numerous inquiries surrounding the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Economic Prosperity Board meeting that occurred on February 27. It was during this meeting, which Gardner attended, that a controversial government funding approval of £200,000 for the spaceport was made, yet Gardner astonishingly failed to declare any pecuniary interest in this matter.

This raises significant concerns over accountability and ethical conduct in local governance. Grant's email urged adherence to the council’s code of conduct, but it’s disconcerting that these guidelines seem selectively applied while a police investigation by Devon and Cornwall Police into alleged misconduct in public office looms over the council. The Localism Act may state that a council's decisions aren’t automatically unlawful due to code breaches, but this does little to mitigate the public's eroding trust in their local representatives.

Despite the call for silence on Gardner's appointment, two questions were defiantly submitted during the public questions section of the meeting. One inquiry challenged whether the shareholder for Corserv shares the deep concerns voiced by North Cornwall MP Ben Maguire about the troubling lack of transparency, integrity, and public trust in this entire affair. The second question implored whether the leader of Cornwall Council believes the Nolan Principles—key tenets of honesty, accountability, and openness—should obligatorily apply to all council members, consistently and without exception.

As of now, Cllr Gardner, though still a councillor, has not recorded his lucrative position at the spaceport on his register of interests. His resignation from the cabinet role for the economy occurred only when he accepted this controversial position at Spaceport Cornwall in March. Significantly, Gardner is also set to retire from his councillor position on election day, May 1, 2023.

This unfolding saga surrounding Cllr Gardner's appointment has sparked widespread discussion and scrutiny, particularly from local officials and MPs, including Maguire, who are justifiably raising serious questions about the processes and transparency behind this dubious hiring. As the Cornwall Council's regulation and oversight procedures come under fire, this contentious employment issue will undoubtedly influence the atmosphere leading up to the upcoming local elections, highlighting a critical need for real political change that champions ethics and accountability.

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

## References

* <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/the-council-and-democracy/councillors-and-meetings/> - This URL provides information about Cornwall Council meetings and how they are conducted, which is relevant to understanding the context of meetings like the one mentioned in the article. It also discusses the council's code of conduct, which is important in addressing concerns about ethical behavior.
* <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/the-council-and-democracy/councillors-and-meetings/webcasts/> - This link explains how Cornwall Council meetings are webcast and recorded, allowing for public access to their proceedings, which could include information about recent meetings like the one where Cllr Gardner's appointment was discussed.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This is the source of the article in question, providing details about Cllr Louis Gardner's appointment and the ensuing controversy. However, without specific content about this issue, it serves as a general source rather than direct corroboration of specific claims.
* <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/council-news/council-budgets-and-economy/live-cornwall-council-cabinet-12-february-2025/> - This URL discusses recent Cornwall Council meetings, which although not directly related to the specific controversy involving Cllr Gardner, provide background on council activities and decisions. It highlights challenges faced by the council, such as financial pressures, which could impact broader governance issues.
* <https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/> - This is the website for Devon and Cornwall Police, who are reportedly investigating misconduct in public office related to Cornwall Council. While it does not directly corroborate the specific claims, it is relevant to understanding the larger context of potential misconduct and investigations.