

Crown Prosecution Service could announce decision over South Thanet Conservative election expenses inquiry before poll

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The South Thanet Conservative candidate Craig Mackinlay could be told whether he is to face charges over allegations concerning election expenses before voters go to the polls on June 8.

Reports suggest that Mr Mackinlay and a number of other Conservative candidates will learn from the Crown Prosecution Service if they are to be charged in early June.

It could cast a shadow over the party's campaign in the run-up to the election both locally and nationally.

Mr Mackinlay has persistently denied the claims, which focus on allegations that the party's election expenses during the 2015 campaign in South Thanet were not properly reported to the Electoral Commission.

Had they been, it is claimed they would have breached laws on the spending limits.

The development comes just weeks after the KM Group revealed that Kent Police had passed a dossier on its investigation to the CPS.

Mr Mackinlay was interviewed under caution for six hours about the claims as part of the police inquiry.

In an interview for KMTV's Paul on Politics show recently, he shrugged off the suggestion the inquiry would overshadow the Conservative campaign.

"I have done nothing wrong and acted honestly and properly throughout the campaign so no, I'm not concerned at all," he said.

Mr Mackinlay defeated the former Ukip leader Nigel Farage in 2015 after a bitter battle in South Thanet. Mr Farage finally ruled out standing again only recently having indicated he probably would go for a re-run.