



**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY 16TH FEBRUARY 2017**  
**AT 6.00 P.M.**

**COMMITTEE ROOM, PARKSIDE COMMITTEE - PARKSIDE**

MEMBERS: Councillors C. Allen-Jones, M. Glass, J. M. L. A. Griffiths,  
L. C. R. Mallett, M. Thompson, L. J. Turner and M. J. A. Webb

**AGENDA**

1. Election of Chairman
2. Election of Vice Chairman
3. To receive apologies for absence and notification of substitutes
4. Declarations of Interest
5. To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.
5. To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on 17th March 2016 (Pages 1 - 4)
6. Polling Places Alterations Bromsgrove Report (Pages 5 - 8)
7. Polling Places Delegation Report (Pages 9 - 12)
8. To consider any other business, details of which have been notified to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services prior to the commencement of the meeting and which the Chairman considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting

K. DICKS  
Chief Executive

Parkside  
Market Street  
BROMSGROVE  
Worcestershire  
B61 8DA

8th February 2017



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- Meeting Agendas
- Meeting Minutes
- The Council’s Constitution

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## **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE**

**17TH MARCH 2016 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors J. M. L. A. Griffiths (Chairman), C. J. Bloore, K.J. May, P.L. Thomas, M. Thompson and L. J. Turner

Observers: Councillor S. R. Colella

Officers: Mrs. C. Felton, D. Whitney, Mrs. T. Hurst and Ms. A. Scarce

7/15 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Allen-Jones, H. J. Jones and L. C. R. Mallett. Councillor P. Thomas was present as a substitute for Councillor Allen-Jones and Councillor C. J. Bloore as a substitute for Councillor Mallett.

8/15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest, however Councillor L. J. Turner asked for it to be noted that he was the Ward Councillor for Wythall East.

9/15 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Matters committee held on 6th October 2015 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on 6th October 2015 be approved as a correct record.

10/15 **POLLING PLACE ALTERATIONS 2016 REPORT**

The Electoral Services Manager introduced the report and in so doing highlighted the following:

- The notice of election was due to be posted on 21<sup>st</sup> March and therefore agreement was needed in respect of the polling places highlighted in the report.
- The full boundary review which had been carried out in 2014 and the areas where potential problems had been identified.
- The New Song Community Church was already used as a polling station and could accommodate the additional electors that currently attended the Masonic Hall, which was scheduled for demolition prior to the May election.

# Agenda Item 5

Electoral Matters Committee  
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- This would be reviewed once the planned retirement village was up and running.
- In the 2014 review a number of electors were moved from Park Hall polling place to the Woodrush Youth Centre at Shawhurst Lane. The Youth Centre no longer existed and therefore alternative arrangements needed to be put in place.
- The Youth Centre had moved to the Woodrush Academy Community Hub which shared an entrance and some car parking facilities with St Mary's Wythall Parish Church Hall.
- The proposal was for the central hall at the Community Hub to be used.
- The relevant Members had been consulted and concerns had been raised in respect of car parking facilities and whether these would be able to cope with both electors from the Hub and St Mary's.
- Plans with the relevant areas highlighted were provided for clarity, together with details of the number of those who would be affected and estimated distances that they would need to travel.

Following presentation of the report Members discussed a number of points in detail:

- The ongoing problems of parked cars on Shawhurst Lane during the day time and particularly during school drop off and pick up times. It was believed that moving such a large number of electors to the Community Hub would only exacerbate this.
- Whether consideration had been given to closing the school during polling day.
- The use of the Community Hub due to the Coppice School been unavailable.
- Whether the staff had visited the site at particularly busy times to assess the traffic problems.
- The option to reinstate Park Hall as a polling place for at least 2 of the areas which would be affected by the changes proposed.
- The car parking facilities at Park Hall and whether they were suitable as it was understood that the car park was in need of resurfacing.
- The need to ensure that all those who were entitled to vote were able to do so in a reasonable manner with easy access to a polling place.
- The possibility of electors having to go to 2 different polling places for 2 elections in a short period of time.

## **RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the polling place for the electors in Polling District SAC be moved to New Song Community Church and reviewed once the retirement village is completed;

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- (b) that the polling places for electors in Polling districts DRA and HWA be at Park Hall and WTC be moved to Woodrush Academy Community Hub and reviewed after the 5<sup>th</sup> May poll;
- (c) that the review to be carried out and agreed by the (Acting) Returning Officer and Ward Members; and
- (d) that the decisions of the Committee take effect immediately.

The meeting closed at 5.37 p.m.

Chairman

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## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE**

**16 February 2017**

### **Polling Place Alterations 2017**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Geoff Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal & Democratic Services
Wards Affected	Sidemoor, Slideslow, Norton
Ward Councillor Consulted	Yes
Non-Key Decision	(Electoral Matters Committee has full devolved powers)

#### **1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 The report sets out where changes need to be made to polling places in advance of the 4 May Elections 2017. These are temporary changes for County Council Elections.
- 1.2 The recommendations below set out Officers' proposals arising from investigations and Members comments.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **that the electors from Polling Districts SMB, SSB, NTD and NTB be moved to a different polling place for stand alone County Council Elections;**
- 2.2 **that the temporary polling place for electors in Polling District SMB be Girl Guide Hut, Kidderminster Road, Bromsgrove;**
- 2.3 **that the temporary polling place for electors in Polling District SSB be All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove;**
- 2.4 **that the temporary polling place for electors in Polling Districts NTD and NTB be The Wheel, St Catherine's Church, St Catherine's Road, Blackwell;**
- 2.4 **that the decisions of the Committee take effect immediately.**

#### **3. KEY ISSUES**

##### **Financial Implications**

- 3.1 There are some minor financial implications for the Council which arise from this report but will be contained within existing budgets.

#### Legal Implications

3.2 a) Authority to set Polling District boundaries and to designate polling places rests with the Council (Statutory elements of the Council's Constitution under the Local Government Act 2000). Bromsgrove District Council has delegated full relevant powers to this Electoral Matters Committee.

b) Decisions about the situation of Polling Stations within designated Polling Places are for the (Acting) Returning Officer. Arrangements must comply with relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Acts and Regulations and the Equality Act 2010.

#### Service / Operational Implications

3.3 In some areas within the Bromsgrove District the County Divisions are not co-terminus with District Boundaries. Some of areas can be dealt with by the (Acting) Returning Officer but there are some issues that require a Committee Decision.

3.4 The effect of non co-terminus boundaries means that electors from two different County Divisions would be going to the same polling station.

The polling districts where there are potential problems with polling places are:

a) SMB – Parkside, Sidemoor Ward; 7 Electors affected

b) SSB – Slideslow North, Slideslow Ward, 8 Electors affected

c) NTD – Norton East, NTB – Crows Mill; Norton Ward, 8 Electors affected

3.5 There are three options to able resolve this, two of which the (Acting) Returning Officer can make the decision the third requires the Committee to decide:

**Option 1:** The Presiding Officer has two ballot boxes one for each Division. The Presiding Officer has to be very careful a ballot paper from one Division does not go into the wrong box. If this happens it could cause delays at the count.

**Option 2:** There are two stations in the Polling Place with staff at each station. This does not make economic sense as staff costs would be hundreds of pounds for a maximum of 8 voters.

## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### **ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE**

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**Option 3:** That electors are moved to a different polling place where the same Division is voting. This change would be for the County elections only and would not take effect if there was a by-election on the same day.

- 3.6 Officers consider that Option 3 is the preferred option and if agreed the following proposals should be considered.
- 3.7 Polling District SMB: it is proposed to move the 7 electors from New Song Polling Station to the Girl Guide Hut. This is in walking distance for the electors.
- 3.8 Polling District SSB: It is proposed to move the 8 electors from Finstall First School polling station to All Saints Church Polling Station. In essence travel by car is required to get to either of the polling stations. It should be noted that 3 of the electors are already Postal Voters.
- 3.9 Polling Districts NTD and NTB: It is proposed to move 8 electors from Lickey End First School Polling Station to The Wheel at St Catherine's Church Polling Station. There would be approximately be an extra 0.4 mile to travel. It should be noted 4 of the electors are already postal voters.
- 3.10 Members have been consulted and the Portfolio Holder is satisfied with option 3 and the Ward Member for Slideslow is content for the changes in thier ward to be made.

### **Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.11 The Council's policies directly cross-relate, particularly in relation to Access issues. Accessibility for members of minority or disadvantaged groups is a key issue in the selection of suitable Polling Stations.

### **4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 Risks are included in paragraphs 3.5 to 3.9 above.

### **5. APPENDICES**

None

### **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Local Government Boundary Commission for England and Electoral Commission Guidance.

**7. KEY**

Bromsgrove Returning Officer, Mr Kevin Dicks, is designated (Acting) Returning Officer for Parliamentary Elections.

This is because formally the Returning Officer for a County Constituency such as Bromsgrove is the High Sheriff for that County, which is a purely honorific title/role.

**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

Name: Darren Whitney  
E Mail: darren.whitney@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk  
Tel: 01527 881650

### **Polling Place Delegation**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Geoff Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal & Democratic Services
Wards Affected	N/A
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	(Electoral Matters Committee has full devolved powers)

#### **1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 The report sets out change of delegation regarding polling places outside of the compulsory review period. This would allow decisions to be made where changes to polling places are required quickly.
- 1.2 The recommendations below set out Officers' proposals arising from investigation.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **that the (Acting) Returning Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Ward Members be allowed to alter polling places outside compulsory review periods;**
- 2.2 **that the decision of the Committee take effect immediately.**

#### **3. KEY ISSUES**

##### **Financial Implications**

- 3.1 There are some minor financial reductions for the Council in not holding extra Electoral Matters Committees.

##### **Legal Implications**

- 3.2 a) Authority to set Polling District boundaries and to designate Polling Places rests with the Council (Statutory elements of the Council's Constitution under the Local Government Act 2000). Bromsgrove District Council has delegated full relevant powers to this Electoral Matters Committee.

b) Decisions about the situation of Polling Stations within designated polling places are for the (Acting) Returning Officer. Arrangements must comply with relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Acts and Regulations and the Equality Act 2010.

#### **Service / Operational Implications**

- 3.3 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced timing of compulsory reviews of polling districts and polling places. The next compulsory review must be started and completed within the period of 16 months that starts on 1 October 2018.
- 3.4 Outside of this period the Electoral Matters Committee has full delegation to deal with reviews. A review of a polling district can be significant but the change of a polling place is often quite simplistic but requires rapid action ie a polling place becomes unavailable due to a change of ownership, or a fire at the current polling place.
- 3.5 Officers have looked at how other Local Authorities deal with changes to polling places outside of the compulsory review period. Many Local Authorities (including most of Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Herefordshire and Shropshire) delegate Authority. The most popular form of delegation is to the (Acting) Returning Officer in consultation with Ward Members. Although some Authorities delegate just to the (Acting) Returning Officer.
- 3.6 After looking at different models, Officers consider to expedite the polling place review process so there is the least disruption to the electorate it is recommended that outside of the compulsory review process the (Acting) Returning Officer be able to alter polling places in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and affected Ward Members.

#### **Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.7 The Council's policies directly cross-relate, particularly in relation to Access issues. Accessibility for members of minority or disadvantaged groups is a key issue in the selection of suitable polling stations.

#### **4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 Changes to polling places, when necessary, should be completed as soon as possible especially during the election timetable.

#### **5. APPENDICES**

None

#### 6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Local Government Boundary Commission for England and Electoral Commission Guidance.

#### 7. KEY

A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency for the purposes of a UK Parliamentary election.

A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district.

A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Polling Stations are chosen by the relevant Returning Officer for the election.

Bromsgrove Returning Officer, Mr Kevin Dicks, is designated (Acting) Returning Officer for Parliamentary Elections.

This is because formally the Returning Officer for a County Constituency such as Bromsgrove is the High Sheriff for that County, which is a purely honorific title/role.

#### AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Darren Whitney  
E Mail: darren.whitney@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk  
Tel: 01527 881650

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