

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY, 24TH OCTOBER 2019, AT 5:58 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors M. Glass (Chairman), R. J. Hunter (Vice-Chairman),  
S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, S. G. Hession and M. Middleton

Officers: Mr D. Whitney, Ms. M. Bassett and Mrs. P. Ross

11/19 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF  
SUBSTITUTES**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor L. C. R. Mallett.

12/19 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor S. G. Hession declared an Other Disclosable Interest in respect of Agenda Item 4 - Polling Places Review (Minute No. 14/19, stating that, she was a Trustee of Wythall Community Association.

13/19 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on 10th September 2019 were submitted.

Councillor M. Middleton asked for it to be noted that, during the meeting, Members considered all proposals for each Ward and that the ones listed warranted further discussion, and that if no changes were proposed, then no changes were agreed by the Committee.

**RESOLVED** that, subject to the comments as detailed in the pre-ambble above, the minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on 10th September be approved as a correct record.

14/19 **POLLING PLACES REVIEW 2019**

The Electoral Services Manager introduced the report and reported that at the meeting held on 10th September 2019, Committee Members had considered, for all Wards, the results and the recommendations of officers and the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) to the initial consultation conducted.

Following on from that meeting and taking into account the decisions as agreed by the Committee, the final recommendations were opened for further consultation from 12th September to 7th October.

The Electoral Services Manager drew Members' attention to page 9 of the main agenda report, which detailed the issues arising from the consultation on recommendations from 12th September to 7th October. Members were further informed that there had been some minor changes since the agenda had been published, for which he would provide a verbal update.

Information on the following Wards was considered:

**Cofton COA** – The Parish Council had sent in a submission to inform the Committee that the new Parish Village Hall was now open. The Committee agreed with no change, as the existing village hall was pivotal to the community. Officers agreed to see how the new housing development progressed, in order to review and assess the future needs of Cofton Hackett. Therefore the Committee agreed with no change.

**Rubery North RNA** - Members were further informed that the District Councillor had supported the Polling Station being moved to Rubery Social Club. Therefore the Committee agreed that the Polling Station be moved to Rubery Social Club.

**Rubery South RSA** – Members were informed that a District Councillor had requested that this be reviewed with a view to moving the Polling Station to Rubery Social Club. Members considered the verbal update provided on behalf of the Ward Councillor that, all of the residents he had liaised with were quite happy with the current Polling Station at the Memorial Club and that parking was easier at the Memorial Club. Therefore Members agreed that the Polling Station be kept at the Memorial Club.

**Slideslow SSA and SSB** – The Electoral Services Manager reported that Aston Fields Middle school had stated that they were not interested in the school being used as a Polling Station. Members were further informed that following publication of the Electoral Matters Committee agenda, information had been received from the Head Teacher at Rigby Hall Special School stating that the offer to use the school as a Polling Station had been withdrawn.

In response to questions from Members with regard to possible alternative venues, the Electoral Services Manager and the Senior Electoral Services Officer explained that:

Portable buildings – these could be used for Polling Stations; however, these were significantly more expensive and often provided inadequate accommodation and accessibility for voters with disabilities.

Schools - Officers did not insist that schools used as Polling Stations had to close. It was at the discretion of the schools Head Teacher / Chair of Governors and their safeguarding policies.

As detailed at the meeting held on 10th September 2019, St. Godwalds Church Hall was already used as a Polling Station and would not accommodate another Polling District.

The Electoral Services Manager asked the Committee to note that, a further consultation would have to be conducted should the Committee decide on another alternative venue to Finstall First school and that any meaningful consultation would take a period of 3 to 4 weeks.

Members were minded to support the views of the schools; however, having taken all of the information into account, the Committee agreed that Finstall First School, Polling Station should continue to be used.

Officers were asked to consider other venues such as Aston Fields Sports and Social Club which could be the basis of a further review by the Committee.

Members were reminded that, First Schools were normally selected as Polling Stations because of reduced impact on important examination processes for older pupils.

**Wythall West WWA** – Concerns had been raised in regard to moving the Polling Station to Park Hall. The Chairman of Wythall Residents Association had commented that the current Polling Station was within the ward and that it was important that a Polling Station should be located in the ward; voters that lived in South Wythall knew the venue well. He had also expressed his concerns about car park charges at Park Hall.

Councillor Hession also raised concerns with regard to car parking charges at Park Hall and asked if Park Hall could be approached to confirm that there would be no car parking charges on polling days.

The Electoral Services Manager reported that, as detailed in the report, those making submissions may have been confused and thought that the whole of Wythall West Ward electors moving to Park Hall as the majority of those in polling district WWB would certainly be able to walk to the village hall. Most electors in WWA did not live within easy walking distance of the current Polling Station.

With regard to car parking charges, if Park Hall were considering charging for parking, this would also affect polling districts DRA and HWA.

Having raised their concerns with regard to car parking charges at Park Hall, Members agreed that the Polling Station be moved to Park Hall; on the proviso that confirmation was received from Park Hall to confirm that

there would be no car parking charges on polling days. Should car parking changes be introduced at Park Hall, than Officers be tasked to review the situation along with polling districts DRA and HWA which would also be affected.

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the final proposals in respect of Polling Places, as contained in Appendix 1 to the report (as amended), and taking into account the Committee's comments, as detailed in the preamble above, be approved; and
- b) the decisions of the Committee in respect of a) above take effect from the date of poll any election/referendum held or on of publication of the revised Register of Electors on 1st December 2019 whichever is sooner.

The meeting closed at 6.27 p.m.

Chairman