

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE

24TH JULY 2023, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors H. D. N. Rone-Clarke (Chairman), J. Robinson (Vice-Chairman), D. J. A. Forsythe, K.J. May, S. R. Peters and D. G. Stewart

Officers: Mr D. Whitney and Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill

1/23 **ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2023/24 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

RESOLVED that

Councillor H Rone-Clark be elected Chairman of the Committee for 2023/24 municipal year.

2/23 **ELECTION OF A VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2023/24 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

RESOLVED that

Councillor J Robinson be elected Vice Chairman of the Committee for the 2023/24 Municipal year.

3/23 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Colella, E Gray, C Hotham, H Jones and R Lambert.

The following Councillors attended as substitutes: D Forsythe for R Lambert, K May for H Jones, S Peters for C Hotham and D Stewart for E Gray.

4/23 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

5/23 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE HELD ON 8TH JULY 2021**

As Councillors who had been present at the previous meeting were not at this meeting of the Committee, it was agreed to defer consideration of the accuracy of the minutes until the next meeting. Officers confirmed that a meeting of the Committee was likely to be required in the autumn.

RESOLVED that a decision be taken on the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on 8th July 2021 at the next meeting of the Committee.

6/23

STATUTORY POLLING DISTRICT PLACES REVIEW

The Committee considered the report of the Electoral Services Manager which set out key stages and a proposed timetable for a formal statutory review of the Polling Districts and Polling Places. The statutory review must be completed before the end of January 2025, but it was proposed that it should be complete before the end of March 2024 to tie in with the forthcoming Westminster Parliamentary Election, due to be held before the end of January 2025.

During discussion of the report, Councillor J Robinson asked for details of changes made to the polling districts in the previous review in 2019. The Electoral Services Manager undertook to provide details to him outside the meeting.

In response to a question about a polling district boundary which ran through a new housing development, the Electoral Services Manager clarified that it was likely to be a District ward boundary which was affected. This would be looked at during the planned ward boundary review which the Local Government Boundary Commission for England was due to carry out, starting in September 2023.

A councillor queried the impact of changes in the number of electors on polling districts. The Electoral Services Manager explained that if there were more than 2,250 electors in a polling district, then more than one polling station would be provided at each election. This was to meet the Electoral Commission's guidance that there should not be more than 2,250 electors allocated to a single polling station. In response to a further question, he reported that comments and queries about specific polling stations used for the District Council elections in May 2023 would be included as part of the proposed Polling Districts and Places review.

The Chairman asked that a meeting of the Committee was arranged in time for members to review the plans for consultation about the review, in particular in case they could propose community groups and interested parties who could be approached for their input during the consultation phase. This was supported and it was agreed that the proposed timetable included with the report would be updated accordingly.

RESOLVED that

- a) The timetable for the review in appendix 2 to the report be agreed, subject to the inclusion of a date for a meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee to agree the plan for communications; and

b) The review formally commences on 2 October 2023.

7/23

POSSIBLE COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - BENTLEY PAUNCEFOOT PARISH (VERBAL UPDATE)

The Electoral Services Manager reported that earlier this year, Bentley Pauncefoot Parish Council had approached the District Council asking how it could remain a rural parish. The Parish was exploring how it could cede the area of land where housing development was taking place, at Foxlydiate. Officers had explained that this could only be considered as part of a Community Governance Review. Further consideration had been deferred until after the elections in May. If the Parish Council still wished to explore change, the Electoral Services Manager suggested that the Chairman of the Committee could meet with them to discuss options.

Members of the Committee queried the timing of any potential review and who would be involved. The Electoral Services Manager reported that if a petition was submitted to the District Council by the Parish Council, the Parish Council would be required to provide maps and reasons for its request. The Committee would be obliged to consider this and decide whether or not to proceed.

A member suggested that the implications of changes to governance might impact on other aspects of Parish Council activity such as involvement in planning applications and certain funding arrangements. The Committee agreed that at this stage officers would write to the Parish Council asking it to confirm whether it wished to continue consideration of a potential community governance review. They would also offer to set up an informal discussion with the Chairman and other members of the Committee and the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council so that process, requirements and potential implications of a review could be explored and understood.

RESOLVED that Officers write to Bentley Pauncefoot Parish Council seeking confirmation that it wishes to explore pursuit of a Community Governance Review and offering an informal meeting to discuss this with the Chairman and other members of the Committee and the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council.

The meeting closed at 6.35 p.m.

Chairman