

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE

22ND NOVEMBER 2024, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors E. M. S. Gray (Chairman present from Minute Item No. 14/24), S. Ammar, S. R. Colella, K.J. May, S. T. Nock and J. Robinson

Officers: Mr D. Whitney and Ms M. Bassett

9/24

NOMINATION OF VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2024/25 MUNICIPAL YEAR

In the absence of the Chairman, Councillor K. May was nominated to chair the start of the meeting until the Chairman arrived. This was proposed by Councillor Ammar and Seconded by Councillor Robinson.

Members agreed to defer making a decision on the appointment of the Vice Chairman until the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Councillor K. May be appointed to Chair the meeting until the arrival of the Chairman of the Committee; and
- 2) The election of the Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the 2024/25 Municipal Year be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee.

10/24

TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor S.J. Baxter.

11/24

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

12/24

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE HELD ON 3RD JUNE 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd June 2024 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3rd June 2024 be approved as a correct record.

13/24

POLLING DISTRICT CHANGES AS A RESULT OF THE REVIEW OF WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY DIVISIONS BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

The Electoral Services Manager presented a report on the subject of polling district changes to the Committee. There had been a number of polling district changes as a result of the review of Worcestershire County Divisions by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

Members were informed of the changes to the Bromsgrove Central Division. Polling District LWB - Lowes Hill would be moving from Bromsgrove West division to Bromsgrove Central division. It was proposed to combine this with polling district LWC - Shenstone as both polling districts voted at All Saints Church Hall. It was suggested to keep the new polling district name as LWB - Lowes Hill and that polling district name LWC - Shenstone be made redundant.

During consideration of the item Members suggested that Polling District LWA for Lowes Hill be reviewed and that the polling station be changed to All Saints Church Hall for consistency. The Electoral Services Manager responded that this could be reviewed and he undertook to report back to the Committee.

The Committee was also informed that Polling Districts NTB - Crows Mill and NTD - Norton East would be moving from Bromsgrove East division to Bromsgrove Central division. It was proposed to combine these with polling district NTA - Norton North. Electors for NTB and NTD were voting at The Wheel, St Catherine's Church for County Council elections but at Lickey End Social Club for all other elections. As electors from NTA had voted at Lickey Social Club it was suggested to keep this as the polling station. The new polling district would be retaining the name NTA - Norton North. As the current polling districts of NTB and NTD would be redundant it was proposed to change the polling district name of NTC - Norton South to NTB - Norton South so the polling district letters would run consecutively.

The Woodvale Division was then discussed with Members. The polling district MAC - Lydiate Ash was moving from Beacon division to Woodvale division. It was proposed to combine this with polling district MAD - Staple Hill as both polling districts voted at St Luke's Church Centre. Polling districts MAA and MAB also voted at St Luke's Church Centre but related to parish wards so could not be combined as a polling district. It was suggested to have the new polling district letters as MAC making MAD redundant.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The proposals in respect of polling districts, as contained in the report (as amended), be approved; and
- 2) That the decisions of the Committee in respect of the above take effect from the publication of the revised Register of Electors.

14/24

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND
BOUNDARY REVIEW FOR BROMSGROVE - WARDING PATTERN
PROPOSALS

Members considered a report providing a detailed review of electoral boundaries in the District, being conducted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).

The draft Council Ward Pattern proposal had been drawn up by Officers with input from individual Members, reviewed and agreed by the member led BDC Ward Patterning Working Group. Once the draft proposals had been agreed by the Committee, draft proposals would be considered by the Council for endorsement. It was suggested that as the consultation period closed before the next Council meeting the LGBCE had agreed to accept a late final submission if the agreed draft submission was submitted before the closing date. Proposals were supposed to be made to the LGBCE by 2nd December 2024.

Members were informed that part of the draft proposals included a methodology for the working group comprising of an Introduction, Current Ward Analysis, Approach to New Ward Patterning, Proposed Ward Pattern, Proposed Change Detail and a Conclusion.

The Committee expressed their gratitude to the Officers and Members involved in assisting with the production of the proposed draft report.

During consideration of this item, the following proposal was made Councillor J.W. Robinson.

“The ward pattern for the Rock Hill Ward be changed to Rock Hill and Stoke Heath Ward”.

Members discussed this proposal and in doing so agreed that a combined ward for the Rock Hill and Stoke Heath Ward would be suitable. In response, the Senior Electoral Services Officer informed Members that included in the working group comments was the suggestion that a potential name change for the ward might be appropriate. It was for the Electoral Matters Committee to discuss further. It was concluded that the suggestion should be reflected in the draft proposal report.

Also, during consideration of the item, a recommendation was proposed by Councillor J.W. Robinson. The recommendation was:

“The Catshill Ward be considered as a single-member ward and not a two-member ward, as suggested”.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor J.W. Robinson and seconded by Councillor S. Ammar.

In proposing the recommendation, Councillor Robinson suggested that his proposal was designed to improve the ward boundary for electoral balance purposes.

Members discussed the proposed recommendation. In doing so, it was noted that considerable work had been undertaken in producing the draft report, including that of the working group. It was also suggested that the proposals were still only in draft form and needed to be considered by the Council and through various consultations. Therefore, Members commented that at this stage the proposed Catshill and Washingstocks Ward should remain as a two-member ward.

On being put to the vote the recommendation was lost.

In conclusion, Members were informed that the LGBCE would publish draft recommendations regarding warding patterns in March 2025. A consultation on the draft recommendations would run from 6th May 2025 to 14th July 2025, which the Council might want to respond to, and a final recommendation would be published in November 2025. It was suggested that a working group could be established to consider the draft recommendations and collate a suitable response to the LGBCE.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) The Council endorse the Council Warding Pattern submission including any amendments made.
- 2) Council delegates authority to the Chief Executive following consultation with Group Leaders to produce and submit the formal submission document to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

15/24

TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC AND PROPERTY 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

There was no urgent business on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 6.50 p.m.

Chairman