

Electoral Matters Committee

Tuesday, 22nd October,
2019

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor Mike Rouse (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Michael Chalk, Greg Chance and Bill Hartnett

Officers:

Melissa Bassett, Sue Hanley and Darren Whitney

Senior Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Members were advised that the Chair was running later. Prior to his arrival the Vice Chair, Councillor Mike Rouse, chaired the meeting.

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Michael Chalk advised that he had suggested that the scout hut located off Feckenham Road should be used as a polling station in Headless Cross. Whilst Councillor Chalk was involved with the Redditch Scouts he confirmed that he did not have a pecuniary interest in the matter.

11. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on Wednesday 11th September be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

12. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2019

The Electoral Services Manager explained that following the previous meeting of the Committee a consultation exercise had

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Chair

been held in respect of the proposed locations for polling stations and the review of polling districts. Some feedback had been received and this had been recorded in the report for Members' consideration.

No changes were being proposed to polling district boundaries. However, Members were invited to consider feedback in respect of potential locations for polling stations and to determine where these should be situated.

In Church Hill, as requested by Members, Officers had investigated the potential to introduce a temporary polling station in the vicinity of Maismore Close and Jersey Close. Three potential locations had been identified which had been highlighted on a map for Members' consideration. One of these locations was not overlooked by houses and there was additional room available in which a temporary polling station could be installed and parking would be available as it would be on the site of a former playground area. The second site was located on the eastern side of Maismore Close, but had restricted parking options. The third option was again located on Maismore Close but was considered to be less desirable as it was overlooked by houses.

As requested at the previous meeting of the Committee Officers had contacted Abbeywood First School, the current location of the polling station in the area, about the potential for the school to fund a temporary polling station in the area. No response had been received from the school by the date of the meeting.

Members discussed the position in respect of the polling station currently located at Abbeywood First School. Concerns were raised that the school had not responded in relation to funding a temporary polling station and it was noted that this station would therefore cost the Council £1,500 which would be a budget pressure. Furthermore, it was noted that at the previous meeting Members had suggested that the polling station would not move if the school was not prepared to fund the costs of the temporary polling station. However, concerns were also raised about the impact that school closure could have on both students and their parents.

During consideration of this matter Councillor Bill Hartnett proposed that the polling station in Church Hill polling district CHB should continue to be based in Abbeywood First School. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Greg Chance.

On being put to the vote the proposal was lost.

Members subsequently agreed that the polling station at Church Hill polling district CHB should move to a portable polling station in the Jersey Close and Maisemore Close vicinity and that Officers should write again to the school to request that the school cover the costs of the temporary polling station. Officers explained that should the school not agree to provide financial assistance to fund the temporary polling station the costs of this temporary polling station would need to be included as a budget bid in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

In Headless Cross polling district HOA Officers had investigated the potential for a polling station to be based in the scout hut off Feckenham Road. The Council had received confirmation that the scout hut could be used as a polling station. The building had been assessed and appeared suitable and there were sufficient parking spaces available at the venue which could be used by voters. However, the scout hut was not in the relevant polling district, though this did not preclude it from being used as a polling station for the polling district. There would be a small cost implication to moving the polling station from the Vaynor First School to the scout hut but Officers confirmed that this could be covered by existing budgets. Members agreed to move the polling station in Headless Cross polling district HOA from Vaynor First School to the scout hut off Feckenham Road.

The location of the polling station in Lodge Park polling district LPA, which had been located in Oakhill First School at recent elections, had also been reviewed as requested by Members. Lodge Park Social Club had confirmed that the polling station could be accommodated on the premises. The Committee was advised that the financial costs arising from this change could be covered within existing budgets. Members agreed that the polling station at Lodge Park polling district LPA should move from Vaynor First School to Lodge Park Social Club.

Members considered proposals received at the previous meeting to move the polling station for Lodge Park polling district LPC to Harry Taylor House, the polling station venue for Lodge Park polling district LPB. Concerns were raised that by moving the polling station from Beoley Road West Communal Room to Harry Taylor House some voters, particularly elderly people, might struggle to access the polling station. However, it was noted that people could apply for postal votes and that only 70 people out of a possible 400 had voted at Beoley Road West Communal Room during the local elections in 2018. At the end of the debate Members agreed that the polling station in Lodge Park polling district LPC should move from Beoley Road West Communal Room to Harry Taylor House.

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RESOLVED that

- 1) the final proposals in respect of Polling District Boundaries and Polling Places be approved, subject to the inclusion of the following changes:**
 - a) the polling station at Church Hill polling district CHB should move from Abbeywood First School to a temporary polling station on Jersey Close and Maisemore Close;**
 - b) Officers write to Abbeywood First School to request that the school covers the financial costs of the temporary polling station at Church Hill polling district CHB;**
 - c) the polling station at Headless Cross HOA should move from Vaynor First School to the scout hut off Feckenham Road;**
 - d) the polling station at Lodge Park LPA should move from Oakhill First School to Lodge Park Social Club;**
 - e) the polling station at Lodge Park LPC should move from Beoley Road West Communal Room to Harry Taylor House; and**

- 2) the decisions of the Committee in respect of recommendation 1 above take effect from the date of poll of any election or referendum held or on publication of the Revised Register of Electors on 1st December 2019 whichever is sooner.**

The Meeting commenced at 6.40 pm
and closed at 7.07 pm