



Electoral Matters Committee

Thursday, 7th November,
2024

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair) and Councillors Sachin Mathur and Chris Holz

Officers:

Sue Hanley, Darren Whitney and Melissa Basset

Democratic Services Officers:

Gavin Day

5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Brandon Clayton with Councillor Chris Holz in attendance as substitute.

Apologies were also received from Councillors James Fardoe and Rita Rogers.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

7. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Electoral Matters Committee meeting held on 4th June 2024 were presented to Members.

RESOLVED that

The minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on 4th June 2024 be approved as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair.

Chair

**8. REVIEW OF POLLING PLACE CHANGES POST UK
PARLIAMENTARY GENERAL ELECTION**

The Committee considered a report reviewing the polling location changes which were made for the local and UK parliamentary elections.

Officers detailed that there were four polling locations to be considered.

1. The Red Lion Public House.
2. The portable building at Atworth Close.
3. The Farmhouse Meeting Room, Meadow Farm Hotel
4. St Peter's Church Centre Ipsley

The first two utilised in both the Local and Parliamentary elections, with the latter two only being used for the Parliamentary election.

With the agreement of the Chair, Officers addressed one at a time in order.

The Red Lion Public House was used as a replacement for the temporary building at Banners Lane for electors of polling district AFB. However, following concerns raised by both the Equalities Inspector and Polling Station Inspector, it was not recommended to be retained for future elections.

Members commented that the use of portable building was not ideal, however, there was a duty to ensure that polling stations were accessible for all constituents and therefore, Members were in agreement with the Officers recommendation.

The portable building on Atworth close was used for the first time in May due to the boundary change. There was a lack of community facilities in the area which necessitated the use of a portable building.

Officers further noted that due to the complexities of the ramp which needed to be installed and the lack of on street parking which generated some complaints by constituents. The polling station was not deemed appropriate to be retained.

A potential solution was proposed, which was to combine the polling districts HOC and HOD which would use the same polling station on Grangers Lane, However, as the move would require the

commute of the constituents in the HOD polling district, it was recommended that a consultation take place.

Members agreed that the constituents of the HOD polling district needed to be consulted on the matter and asked that Officers undertake the consultation and bring the findings back to Committee for determination.

The Farmhouse Meeting Room in the Meadow Farm Pub and Hotel was used for the UK Parliamentary Election due to the existing polling station at the Abbey Hotel being unavailable.

No complaints were received from members of the public, Equalities or Polling Station Inspectors, with the only comment being that additional signage would be required. Officers also commented that the costs were significantly less than the Abbey Hotel and that the location was preferable as it was in a separate building and did not require voters to enter the public house.

Members asked if the venue would be able to accommodate an increased electorate as there was a number of developments approved in the area. Officers clarified that a polling station would accommodate up to 2.5k electors at which point they would look to split the districts, however currently there was only an electorate of 308.

Members were in full agreement with retaining the Farmhouse Meeting Room in the Meadow Farm Pub and Hotel as a future polling station.

St. Peter's Church Centre in Ipsley was used as a polling station for the UK Parliamentary elections due to the usual polling station at the Lavender Barn at Old Rectory House Hotel being unavailable.

No complaints or adverse comments were received for the change, however, it was noted that there were some small issues with the pathway, but these were not serious in nature.

Despite the minor pathway issues and that the venue was slightly more expensive, Officers recommended to retain the venue due to the general availability of the Church Centre.

Members were in full agreement with the recommendation by officers

As detailed in the pre-amble above and following individual votes on each recommendation it was

RESOLVED that

1. **The polling station for Polling District AFB be permanently relocated to a suitable building situated on Banners Lane.**
 2. **A consultation be undertaken with the residents of the Polling District HOD with the intent of moving the polling station to Grangers Lane.**
 3. **The polling station for Polling District NRA be permanently relocated to the Farmhouse meeting room at the Meadow Farm Hotel.**
 4. **The polling station for Polling District WID be permanently relocated to St Peter's Church Hall**
9. **POLLING DISTRICT CHANGES AS A RESULT OF THE REVIEW OF WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY DIVISIONS BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND**

The Committee considered a report proposing boundary changes following a review of the Worcestershire County Divisions.

Officers clarified to Members that the proposed changes would not affect voting as they were internal changes so would also not require any amendments to the Borough Wards. Officers further noted that requests for alterations were submitted, however, they were refused by the boundary commission.

The first of two proposed changes was within the Redditch West Division, which would affect 27 electors living on Lower Grinsty Lane and would necessitate the moving of from their usual polling station at the Gazebo on Callow Hill, the location was outlined on page 21 of the Public reports pack.

To retain the usual location, the gazebo would have to accommodate an additional Polling station which was not possible. Additionally, as it did not make economic sense to have an extra polling station for 27 electors, it was recommended that the polling district WCD2 become part of the district WCB and electors vote at Webheath Village Hall.

Electoral Matters Committee

Thursday, 7th November, 2024

Councillor Claire Davies the Ward Member for the Webheath and Callow Hill Ward, contacted residents and found mixed opinions. Despite some negative comments that the polling station would no longer be within walking distance, residents were generally in favour of the move due to the superior parking or it having little impact on them due to postal voting.

Members were generally in agreement with the Officer's recommendation.

Officers then detailed the second of the proposed changes and drew Members to attention to appendix 2 on page 23 of the Public Reports pack, which showed the current boundary (light blue) and the proposed new boundary (red).

The change would be purely administrative in nature with NRB/NRB2 becoming NRB and NRD, and NRC/NRC2 becoming NRC and NRE as shown at Appendix 2 of the report. It was further detailed that there would be no further changes to the polling districts other than the polling district letters and electors would still use existing polling stations.

The following names for the new districts were proposed.

- NRB – Papermill
- NRC – Church Hill North
- NRD – Sevenacres
- NRE – Abbeywood

Members were in agreement with the proposal due to there being no impact on electors.

On being put to a vote it was:

RESOLVED that

the proposals in respect of polling districts, as contained in the report (as amended),

- 1. be approved as per the recommendation; and**
- 2. take effect from the publication of the revised Register of Electors**

The Meeting commenced at 3.00 pm
and closed at 3.25 pm