



Electoral Matters Committee

Wed 26 Feb
2025
5.00 pm

Arrow Valley Visitors Centre
Arrow Valley Park,
Redditch,
Worcestershire,
B98 0LJ.



**If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
Jo Gresham**

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If you have any questions regarding the agenda or attached papers, please do not hesitate to contact the officer named above.

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Notes:

Although this is a public meeting, there are circumstances when Council might have to move into closed session to consider exempt or confidential information. For agenda items that are exempt, the public are excluded.

Electoral Matters

Wednesday, 26th February,
2025

5.00 pm

Arrow Valley visitors Centre -
Arrow Valley

Agenda

Membership:

Cllrs:	Joe Baker (Chair)	Sachin Mathur
	James Fardoe	Rita Rogers
	(Vice-Chair)	
	Brandon Clayton	

1. Apologies for absence and named substitutes

2. Declarations of Interest

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting (Pages 5 - 10)

4. Review of Polling Place for Polling District HOD - Wirehill (Pages 11 - 14)

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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

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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

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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

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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.

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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

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE
2025**

26 February

Review of Polling Place for Polling District HOD - Wirehill

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Baker, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Governance
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton
Report Author	Job Title: Darren Whitney, Electoral Services Manager Contact email: darren.whitney@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881650
Wards Affected	Headless Cross & Oakenshaw
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	Yes
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	N/A
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RESOLUTION

- 1.1 **that the Committee notes the contents of the report and makes changes, if any, in respect of the polling place as contained in the report (as amended).**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The report revisits the polling place for Polling District HOD - Wirehill which was considered by this Committee on 7 November 2024. Members of the Committee asked officers to carry out a consultation with householders within the polling district.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 No direct costs from this report.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Authority to set polling district boundaries and to designate polling places rests with the Council (Statutory elements of the Council's

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Constitution under the Local Government Act 2000). Redditch Borough Council has delegated full relevant powers to this Electoral Matters Committee.

- 4.2 Decisions about the situation of polling stations within designated polling places are for the (Acting) Returning Officer. Arrangements must comply with relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Acts and Regulations and the Equality Act 2010.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

- 5.1 This report deals with statutory functions but relates to the strategic purpose of an effective and sustainable council.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 None for this report.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 The current polling place for polling district HOD – Wirehill is a portable building near the entrance to Atworth Close.
- 6.3 At the meeting of this Committee held 7 November 2024 it was noted that the venue was used for the first time in May 2024 and again in July. Previously electors went to vote at Woodrow Community Centre, but the 671 electors of polling district are in a different borough ward so a portable building on Atworth Close was decided to be the best option for polling.

The portable building was sited near the entrance to Atworth Close on a strip of grassy land.

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

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

- 6.4 A survey letter was sent to all households within the polling district asking for their preference on where they would like to vote in the future.

In total, 67 responses were received of these 39 wanted to remain voting at Atworth Close, 13 were content with Grangers Lane and 15 use an absent vote.

There was an additional option regarding suggestions for an alternative venue which no one completed.

- 6.5 Although a Committee decision the Returning Officer has suggested that the polling place remain the same due the resident responses received.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Any changes agreed must be likely to be sustainable for a reasonable number of years, as frequent changes of Polling Station are not helpful for electors and undermine their knowledge of, and confidence in, electoral systems.

- 7.2 Choice of Polling Place / Polling Station should not give rise to significant grounds of complaint which might put election results at risk of challenge.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder		
Head of Service		
Financial Services		
Legal Services		