

Minutes of the General Purposes and Arbitration Committee

20th October, 2014 at 6.00 pm
at the Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: Councillor Dhallu (Chair);
Councillor Giles (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Ahmed, S Crumpton, P Davies and
Melia.

Apology: Councillor S Hosell.

5/14

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 30th June, 2014 were confirmed as a correct record.

Further to Minute No. 4/14 (Use of Resources held within Leonard Andrews Poole Trust), the Chair confirmed that, following the visit to Grafton Lodge in August 2014 by members of the Committee, the Chair and Vice Chair had taken the decision not to approve the allocation of resources for the purposes of redecorating the lounges, corridors and bedrooms. At the time of the visit members had been informed that arrangements were in place to relocate to different premises with the new build scheduled for twelve to eighteen months. As such, members did not feel it appropriate to allocate funds for the purposes of redecoration, particularly as the current décor was deemed to be fit for purpose.

Matter not delegated to the Committee

6/14

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 required Local Authorities to review all polling districts and polling places in their area every four years. The current review commenced in the Autumn of 2013.

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]

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Public notice of the review was published on 14th October 2013, both throughout the Borough and on the Council's website, and circulated to other stakeholders (such as local disability groups) for comment.

Consultation on the proposals ran for a seven week period until 2nd December, 2013 and notice was given to all Councillors, local Members of Parliament and special interest groups. The views of polling station staff were also taken into consideration.

The Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Deputy Leaders and the Chief Executive, as Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer, took the decision to trial the new venues at the May 2014 polls and to gather additional feedback on the changes. Due to the Police and Crime Commissioner election being called in August 2014, the electorate had experienced the changes on two separate occasions. On both occasions changes were highlighted to the electorate on their poll cards, however, no objections had been received by the Elections Office from the public.

The proposals (as detailed in Appendix 1) would come into force following consideration by the Council at its meeting on 13th January 2015. Actual changes to polling districts would not be reflected until publication of the following year's register of electors on 1st December 2015.

Following approval, affected electors would be informed of their new polling place and given the opportunity to register to vote by post, should that be more convenient.

Members expressed concern in relation to the distance some electors were required to travel to polling stations. Officers confirmed that there were no polling stations which required more than 1.5 miles travelling and there was no statutory guidance on distance.

The Committee was advised that a presentation would be made to members prior to the Council meeting in January 2015 in relation to individual registration and the proposed changes.

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Resolved that the Council be recommended to approve the polling districts and polling places for Sandwell, as set out in Appendix 1, with the creation of revised polling districts taking effect from the publication of the revised electoral register on 1st December, 2015.

(Meeting ended at 6.34 pm)

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