

Minutes of the General Purposes and Arbitration Committee

**29th October 2018 at 6pm
at the Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Dhallu (Chair);
Councillor P Davies (Vice-Chair);
Councillors S Crumpton, Y Davies, S Hosell and
Melia

9/18 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 20th August 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

Matter not delegated to the Committee

10/18 Changes to Polling Stations to be used for the Local Election 2nd May 2019

The Committee received a report in respect to the proposed changes to two polling stations in the Newton and Langley wards as the current stations were no longer suitable or required further work to address concerns raised. This arrangement would be for the next election which would take place in May 2019 as all Parliamentary Constituency polling places and polling districts would be reviewed as part of the statutory review that would commence in May 2019.

Langley Ward

Members were advised that in respect to the polling station in Langley, which covered polling district LAB/LAG, the existing provision was no longer available as the site had been sold.

There were three alternative options for the relocation of the polling station that were presented to the Committee for consideration:

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1. A grassed area on York Road had been identified as an alternative area to locate a portable cabin. This area was approximately 450 meters from the former polling station. The Electoral Services Manager together with the Property Services Manager had inspected the site and the site would be easily accessible for the electorate. There would be a cost for the portable Cabin, however there would be no additional costs for the use of the land.
2. The Bulls Head public house car park. An initial inspection had been undertaken and it had been noted that although the site was slightly uneven it was considered a suitable alternative site for a portable cabin. The main advantage to this option was that the site was situated opposite the former polling station. The site offered sufficient parking and disabled parking spaces. There would be a cost for the portable Cabin and a £100 charge for the use of the site.
3. The York Road Social and Sports Club had been considered, as this provision would offer potential efficiency savings as a permanent fixture and would remove the need for a portable building. On further investigation, it was found that the building was unsuitable as the bar area within the building could not be secured and this option was therefore withdrawn at the meeting.

Members considered that option two, the public house car park, could create problems for some faith groups within the electorate.

Following consideration of the options, members were minded to recommend option one, the grassed area in York Road, as they considered it to be in a suitable location with ample on road parking available.

Newton Ward

The Committee was advised that the current polling station in Newton Ward covering polling district NEB, was situated on a grassed area on the corner of Meadowside Close.

The Electoral Services Manager had received representations from a resident of Meadowside close expressing concerns and objections to the situation of the portable cabin.

Alternatives to the use of the current site were limited and the following options were presented to the Committee for consideration:

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1. To retain the provision at the existing site on Meadowside Close. The representations received had been in relation to the health and safety implication when the unit was being delivered and collected and the fumes and noise resulting from the generator. Should Members decide to keep the status quo, officers would ensure that additional resources would be allocated to supervise and monitor the delivery and collection of the unit. Officers were also investigating alternative types of portable units that provided a more suitable option.
2. That the polling district NEB be merged with NEC using Ferndale Primary School as the sole polling station for the merged districts. The distance between Ferndale Primary School and the Meadowside Close site was around 1km which exceeded the current maximum distance for some of the electorate in the polling district NEB. Issues in respect to parking and congestion at the Ferndale Primary School site had been raised at previous elections and this would be exacerbated with the introduction of another polling district in the same polling place, particularly if the school took the decision to remain open.

Following consideration of both options, members were minded to recommend option 1, and retain the polling station in its current position.

Resolved

- (1) to recommend to Council that the polling station in respect of polling district Langley LAB/LAG be relocated to the area identified in York Road for the Local Election on the 2nd May 2019.
- (2) to recommend to Council that the polling station in respect of polling district Newton NEB remain unchanged for the Local Election on the 2nd May 2019.
- (3) that a further report in respect to the review on the Parliamentary Constituency polling places and polling districts be brought back to the Committee in May.

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(Meeting ended at 6.19pm)

<p>Contact Officer: Shane Parkes Democratic Services Unit 0121 569 3190</p>
