

CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Governance and Electoral Arrangements Committee

~~Thursday, 4th February, 2016 at 6.30 pm~~

Meeting date changed to:

Wednesday, 24 February, 2016 at 5.30pm

Large & Small Committee Room, King George V House, King George V Road,
Amersham

A G E N D A

- 1 Evacuation Procedures
- 2 Minutes (*Pages 3 - 6*)
To agree the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 January 2015.
- 3 Apologies for Absence
- 4 Declarations of Interest
- 5 Polling Station Review (*Pages 7 - 11*)
- 6 Exclusion of the Public (if required)
To resolve that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Note: All Reports will be updated orally at the meeting if appropriate and may be supplemented by additional reports at the Chairman's discretion.

Membership: Governance and Electoral Arrangements Committee

Councillors: C J Wertheim (Chairman)
J A Burton
I A Darby
A J Garth
P M Jones
N M Rose
M W Shaw
M J Stannard
D M Varley
H M Wallace
E A Walsh

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CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the
GOVERNANCE AND ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE
held on **27 JANUARY 2015**

PRESENT: Councillor N M Rose - Chairman
" - Vice Chairman

Councillors: M Z Bhatti
Mrs I A Darby
A J Garth
P M Jones
D J Lacey
D W Phillips
M Stannard
N Stewert
J F Warder

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Councillors

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors

9 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Governance & Electoral Arrangements Committee held on 10 December 2014, were agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor N Rose declared a personal interest in Minute No. – Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places, due to his role as a trustee of Ballinger War Memorial Hall.

11 REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

At a meeting of the Committee held on 10 December 2014, a report was considered which informed members of the requirement to review UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The Electoral and Administration Act 2013 required that the compulsory review take place between 1 October 2013 and 31 January 2015 (inclusive).

A further report was presented to the Committee for consideration following the completion of the consultation process and the responses received. The consultation period had ended on 9 January 2015 following which 4 email responses had been received.

Based on a full review of polling stations carried out by the Polling Station Inspectors at the European Parliamentary Elections and the Election Team

staff during 2014; and the results of the consultation process, the Committee was invited to consider 2 proposals for change of polling station locations.

Members supported the proposed changes, and in particular the change to use Great Hivings Church Hall instead of Little Spring School which avoided closure of the school on Thursday 7 May 2015 and future elections.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:-

That a new Polling District and Polling Places Order be made to incorporate the following changes and that the Order take effect on 26 February 2015:-

- i) To designate Little Chalfont Library as the polling place for polling district 'KB'; and
- ii) To designate Great Hivings Church Hall as the polling place for polling district 'W'.

12 MEMBER INDUCTION 2015

Consideration was given to the report which provided members with an overview of the proposed Member Induction Programme for 2015.

Members were advised that all Councillors were to receive a welcome pack at the Count Centre on Friday 8 May. An outline of the Councillor Induction Programme was presented to Members which was designed to assist all new and returning Councillors gain knowledge, information and understanding of the Council.

The content of the report was considered in detail and the Committee discussed the relevant topics and timing of development sessions for newly elected members and re-elected members. The view was also expressed that opportunities should be sought to have joint briefing sessions with South Bucks DC members on common issues or topics.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the report was noted.

13 REVIEW OF FORMAT OF FULL COUNCIL

Consideration was given to a report which provided members with an update on the progress of changes to the format for full Council meetings as previously considered by the Governance and Electoral Arrangements Committee.

At a previous meeting of the Governance & Electoral Arrangements Committee held on 10 December 2014, a mock Council Agenda was considered. The Committee discussed the structure of future Council

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Agendas and it was agreed that Council Procedure Rules be amended to reflect the proposed changes.

The Committee considered in detail the timing and order of business for ordinary council meetings as set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report. Members were advised of the new items included in the order of business and agreed the following order of business:-

- 1) elect a person to preside if either the Chairman and Vice-Chairman is not present;
- 2) deal with any item required by statute to be dealt with before any other item;
- 3) to approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the last meeting of the Council;
- 4) receive any declarations of interest from members arising out of any item set out in the summons convening the meeting;
- 5) receive any announcements from the Chairman, Cabinet Leader or Head of the Paid Service;
- 6) dispose of any business carried over from a previous meeting;
- 7) to receive a presentation from relevant individual, organisation including Thames Valley Police as applicable and agreed, in advance of the meeting, by the Chairman on a subject area relevant to the work of the Council or pertinent to a current issue for the Council. It is not necessary for a schedule of speakers for the municipal year as it may be appropriate to invite specific speakers on topical issues arising during the year;
- 8) receive and consider the reports and recommendations of Committees of the Council in date order of the meeting. A Minute Pack of the full set of meetings be made available separately for members' information;
- 9) receive and consider the recommendations of the Cabinet and receive questions and answers on any of those minutes and recommendations in accordance with Rule 8 of these Procedural Rules;
- 10) receive and consider any reports from the Cabinet Leader, Cabinet Members or Chairman of a Committee and receive questions and answers on any of those reports in accordance with Rule 9.1 of these Procedural Rules;
- 11) to receive questions and answers of the Cabinet Leader, Cabinet Members or Chairman of a Committee asked under Rule 9.2 of the Council Procedural Rules;
- 12) to receive questions without notice from any member of the

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Council to the Cabinet Leader, individual Cabinet Members or Committee Chairmen in accordance with Rule 9.1 of the Council Procedure Rules;

- 13) to receive petitions and/or deputations from members of the public including provisions allowing members to ask questions of clarification at the discretion of the Chairman and restrictions on deputations covering the same subject or by the same speakers;
- 14) receive any reports about and receive questions and answers relating to any joint arrangements or external organisations;
- 15) consider motions;
- 16) consider any other business specified in the summons to the meeting, including consideration of proposals from the Cabinet in relation to the Council's Budget and Policy Framework and reports of the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee for debate; and
- 17) consider any other items of business set out in the summons convening the meeting.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

That the Council Procedure Rules be amended to include the agreed changes to the order of business for ordinary meetings of the Council and that the revised format be implemented at ordinary meetings of the Council from the commencement of the 2015-16 municipal year.

The meeting ended at 7.15pm

SUBJECT:	<i>Review of Polling Places</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>Leader of the Council – Councillor I A Darby</i>
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	<i>Bob Smith, Returning Officer</i>
REPORT AUTHOR	<i>Lesley Blue, Interim Democratic and Electoral Services Manager</i> lblue@chiltern.gov.uk Tel: 01494 732010
WARD/S AFFECTED	<i>Hilltop and Townsend Ward</i> <i>Little Kingshill and Little Missenden Ward</i> <i>Seer Green Ward</i>

1. Purpose of Report

To review the location of three polling places in light of lessons learnt from the Combined Elections in 2015 and as a result of the implications of the Bucks County Boundary Review 2012.

To review the location of one polling place in Seer Green Ward that is no longer available for use in 2016 and future elections.

RECOMMENDATION

- i) That the following Polling Place be relocated for the reasons set out in the report:
 - Chesham Grammar School be relocated to White Hill Community Centre
- ii) That the following Polling Place venue be retained and not relocated due to lack of a satisfactory alternative location:
 - Methodist Church, Chesham
- iii) That although the implications of the Buckinghamshire County Electoral Review 2012 changes amalgamated the Little Kingshill and Little Missenden Parish wards to form one ward, a polling place will remain in each ward namely Little Kingshill Parish Hall for Little Kingshill and Little Missenden Village Hall for Little Missenden to minimise disruption for electors in each area of the ward; and
- iv) That the following Polling Place be relocated for the reasons set out in the report:
 - Seer Green Parish Hall be relocated to Seer Green Scout Hall

2. Executive Summary

The proposed review of the location of four polling places has been considered due to lessons learnt from the Combined Parliamentary and Local Elections 2015 and the need to review the locations for the reasons as set out below.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

The four polling place locations outlined in this report have been reviewed and the subsequent recommendations proposed for the following reasons:

- Chesham Grammar School – the room provided by the school is small and inadequate for the size of the electorate for this area

- Methodist Church, Chesham – the location was reviewed due to a small amount of electors raising concern in respect of the access to the polling place
- Little Missenden Village Hall – the location of the polling place be retained to minimise disruption to electors in the ward of Little Kingshill and Little Missenden
- Seer Green Parish Hall – the room previously provided is no longer available to be used as a polling place

4. Content of Report

Periodically a review of all polling places is completed to ensure that all polling places within Chiltern District Council are suitable and adequate for the purposes of conducting a poll within each ward of the District. The key factors taken into consideration are ease of access of the location for the electorate for the parish and district ward and the suitability of the location to accommodate polling place staff for a period of 15 hours and to be of suitable size to ensure that the electorate for the ward can easily vote at the polling place.

All Polling Places within Chiltern District Council were reviewed during 2014 – 15 and all polling places are deemed adequate for the purposes of holding an election at the location and accessible to all electors. The next compulsory review will take place during 2019 – 20.

However following the Combined Elections in 2015 further recommendations are proposed.

4.1 Chesham Grammar School

During 2014 Chesham Grammar School underwent substantial refurbishment to improve facilities for the students and the location of a room available for use as a polling place was changed. The room now offered to the Returning Officer for the purpose of a polling location is a small study room in the sixth form area of the school. The room is significantly smaller than previous rooms provided at the school and although this room was used at the 2015 Elections it was wholly inadequate for the size of the electorate eligible to vote at that polling place. The polling place staff also raised concern that the facilities available to them during the day eg. Kitchen and toilet facilities, although they were adequate were not located immediately near to the room used as a polling place. The current electorate eligible to vote at the Chesham Grammar School is 821.

Due to the high turnout for the Combined Elections 2015 at times the electors visiting the polling place to cast their vote were often required to queue outside the room to maintain the secrecy of the vote and to enable capacity of the room to be adhered to.

An alternative location to the Chesham Grammar School has been sought in the location area and a suitable venue is available within less than a mile of the School and is located at the White Hill Community Centre.

The White Hill Community Centre offers an excellent alternative location within the immediate vicinity of the Grammar School. The location has adequate parking, the location is accessible for disabled electors, the rooms at the venue are of adequate size and the facilities available for polling place staff are suitable and appropriately located for ease of access during the polling day.

District Councillors representing Hilltop and Townsend ward were consulted on their views of the suitability of this polling place.

4.2 Methodist Church, Chesham

During the Combined Elections in 2015 negative feedback was received in respect of the polling place located at the Methodist Church, Chesham due to the access of this location. The Methodist Church has a steep access drive to the location and although parking and direct access is on the level the drive to the car park can be difficult to access for less mobile or disabled electors. The location has been approved by the Disability Access Group during a previous review of polling places in 2011 and no changes have been made to the location since this review. The current electorate eligible to vote at the Chesham Methodist Church is 1242.

The rear access to the Methodist Church does provide easy access for a large residential area immediately at the rear of the venue.

Alternative locations were sought in this area but no other venues were deemed suitable as appropriate alternatives. Locating an additional polling place at the Chesham Town Hall was considered as an option but this was ruled out as although the Town Hall could easily accommodate another polling place it would result in a significant walk or further journey for electors in the immediate area of the Methodist Church. This may then result in more electors considering a change in location to be unsatisfactory.

District Councillors representing Hilltop and Townsend ward were consulted on their views of the suitability of this polling place.

4.3 Little Missenden Village Hall

Due to the Buckinghamshire County Electoral Review 2012 which merged the Little Kingshill and Little Missenden parish wards to form one ward which came into effect from October 2014 it was considered whether two polling places should be retained in this ward ie. Little Kingshill Parish Hall and Little Missenden Village Hall.

The current electorate eligible to vote at Little Missenden Village Hall is 599. The current electorate eligible to vote at the Little Kingshill Village Hall is 658. Therefore the combined electorate for Little Kingshill and Little Missenden is 1257.

Following further discussion with the ward member and the Chairman of the Governance and Electoral Arrangements Committee it has been agreed that the two polling places will remain to minimise disruption to the electorate in this ward.

4.4 Seer Green Parish Hall

The Interim Democratic and Electoral Services Manager has been advised that the Parish Hall will no be available in the future for use as a polling place.

The Interim Democratic and Electoral Services Manager has visited alternative locations in the Seer Green ward namely Seer Green Jubilee Hall and Seer Green Scout Hall. Each location is suitable in terms of accessibility and facilities available. The Jubilee Hall is within the confines of the Seer Green C of E Combined School and although separate access to the hall is available, facilities within the Hall are used on a daily basis by the school and therefore if this location was used as a polling place the school would be required to partially close for some activities. In accordance with the Electoral Commission Guidance closure of schools due to use of premises as a polling place should be avoided where possible.

The alternative location in Seer Green is the Scout Hall, Park Place, which, although is near to the Chiltern Montessori School in the village and shares a car park it does not impede on the school facilities and premises. The Scout Hall is completely separate from the school and has good accessibility and facilities.

The electorate eligible to vote in Seer Green Ward is 1755.

5. Consultation

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager has consulted with the relevant ward members on the proposed changes for the polling places. As a requirement of an interim polling place review political parties within the Chiltern District have also been consulted.

6. Options

- i) That no change be made to the location of polling places
- ii) That a polling place remains at Chesham Grammar School but this would result in potential negative feedback from electors and staff at this venue.
- iii) That a polling place at Little Missenden Village Hall but this would cause unnecessary disruption for the electorate in the Little Kingshill and Little Missenden Ward.
- iv) That the Jubilee Hall Seer Green is used as a polling place but this would result in partial closure of the Seer Green C of E Combined School.

7. Corporate Implications

There are no identified direct corporate implications as a result of this report.

8. Links to Council Policy Objectives

The report links to the need to maintain accessibility for all electors to polling places within the District.

9. Next Step

If the recommendations are agreed by the Committee the necessary changes will be made to the electoral software to reflect the changes in the system and on the correspondence sent to electors in the District.

Background	Bucks County Electoral Review 2012
Papers:	Electoral Commission Polling Place Review Guidance 2012

