

## Electoral Arrangements Committee

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Minutes of a meeting of the **Electoral Arrangements Committee** held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich on **Wednesday 29 January 2020** at **6pm** when there were present:

Mr P E Bulman – Chairman

Cllr S C Beadle

Mrs C Karimi-Ghovanlou

Mrs K A Vincent

Mr J F Fisher

Mrs J Leggett

Mrs S C Gurney

Mr M L Murrell

In attendance were the Governance Manager, the Elections Services Manager and the Committee Officer (DM).

### **1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE NO 8**

No declarations of interest were received.

### **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies were received.

### **3 POLLING DISTRICT AND PLACES REVIEW 2019/20**

Members received the report on the Polling District and Places Review 2019/20 and the Chairman explained that the Council was required to undertake and complete a review of all polling districts and polling places at least once every five years with the last review having been undertaken in 2014/15. The report set out the process and decisions required for the review which needed to be completed by 31 January 2020. The review was a Council function but Council had delegated this responsibility to the Electoral Arrangements Committee. Following the formal review, arrangements for polling districts and places would continue to be kept under review as situations changed and new facilities became available or populations changed. It was noted that where possible efforts were made to avoid using school buildings unless the facilities were independent of the main school facility to avoid school closures.

Existing polling arrangements had been used as a starting point for the review and the consultation, together with feedback from the recent district, EU and Parliamentary elections. Comments from the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) had also been sought. No adverse comments or alternative suggestions had been received in relation to the Broadland constituency but suggestions had

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been received from the Labour Party in respect of the Norwich North constituency.

Members then considered the responses received as follows:

- ARO suggestion – to make a small change to the boundary between the two polling districts (HK1 and HK2) in Thorpe St Andrew NW, so that the existing polling station (St Andrews Centre) would be located in the polling district. However, a suggestion had been received to find an alternative building in a more suitable location. An inspection of the St Andrews Football Clubhouse had now taken place and this premises would be suitable and available. The Committee supported this proposal.
- Labour Party suggestions - that additional polling districts are created in the Norwich North constituency for Hellesdon, Sprowston and Thorpe St Andrew NW due to the high number of electors, so that additional polling stations can be allocated in those areas. The Governance Manager drew attention to the Electoral Commission guidance recommending that not more than 2,500 electors should be allocated to a polling station. There were twelve polling places in the district currently with almost or more than 2,500 electors allocated in person and, in line with the guidance, these places were split so that two stations were allocated in one building. There had been no complaints from the public about these stations or indeed any of the stations in the Norwich North constituency. The suitability of the arrangements at these stations had been tested at the recent Parliamentary election which had a high turnout and no issues had arisen. There were also limited options for suitable venues which could be considered as additional stations and some of the respondent's suggested possible options were not viable. Members supported the retention of the existing arrangements in these stations.
- Ward councillor for Sprowston Central (HF1) suggestion that a second polling station was needed for that ward as the existing arrangements were insufficient. The existing polling station was central to the area, the station was currently a split station in accordance with the guidance and no complaints had been received. Other options had been explored including use of the Methodist Church and a response from them regarding use of this facility was awaited. For the forthcoming Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May 2020, the venue would remain as the Senior Citizens Club, unless the Methodist Church hall became available. Members noted and supported this position.
- Representations received suggesting alternative polling stations for Sprowston West (HE3) and Thorpe St Andrew NW (HK2), as the current stations were outside the polling districts. With regard to arrangements at Sprowston (HE3), there were concerns this station was not ideal but there was a lack of viable alternatives. Enquiries would continue to find an

alternative and this station would be kept under review. The arrangements at Thorpe St Andrew (HK2) were considered to be satisfactory, with the station being relatively central to the area and no change was proposed. Members supported these proposals.

In addition to these representations, the Committee also considered changes proposed in the Broadland constituency which had arisen since the review, namely at Blofield (BC1), Strumpshaw (BD4) and Rackheath (BY2) and a small modification at Hellesdon (HC1) which would see the venue alternate between the large community centre and the smaller parish room depending on availability and the type of election – Members supported these proposals.

With regard to Thorpe St Andrew (HL1) and (HL2), the Governance Manager drew attention to her suggestion for a small tweak to the boundary line to include a few houses on Yarmouth Road who would then be able to vote at the Dussindale Centre. Members supported this suggestion.

In answer to a question, the Governance Manager commented that the Norfolk County Council boundary review of 2019 would not impact on the proposals contained in this report.

It was then

### **RESOLVED**

to note the outcome of the consultation of the review of polling district and places and, having formally considered the representations received for alternative proposals and the responses of the Acting Returning Officer (ARO), including updated comments following the recent Parliamentary election, to:

- (1) Retain existing arrangements in place except for the following:
  - a) BC1 (Blofield) – use the Court House, Yarmouth Road, Blofield.
  - b) BD4 (Strumpshaw) – use the new Community Hall, Mill Road, Strumpshaw.
  - c) BY2 (Rackheath) – continue to use the Church Centre but use the smaller room so that the community groups can still operate.
  - d) HC1 (Hellesdon NW) – use the Community Centre, Wood View Road for higher turnout elections and the Parish Council Chamber for lower turnout elections (RO making the decision for each election).

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- e) HL1 (Thorpe St Andrew SE) – make a small change to the southern boundary of the polling district so that it includes the small row of houses before the railway line.
  - f) HK1 (Thorpe St Andrew NW) – use the St Andrews Football Clubhouse premises.
- (2) Monitor the following polling places, in case more suitable alternative polling places become available:
- a) HE3 (Sprowston West) – continue to investigate whether there are any alternative polling places within the polling district, including the possibility of using a mobile unit.
  - b) HF1 (Sprowston Central) – if it is available and suitable, to consider the use of Sprowston Methodist Church, instead of the Senior Citizens Club.

*The meeting closed at 6.40pm*