

13 SEPTEMBER 2019

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee held in the Council Chamber, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Friday, 13 September 2019

* Cllr Steve Clarke (Chairman)

* Cllr Neil Tungate (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- * Ann Bellows
- * Geoffrey Blunden
- * Rebecca Clark
- * Keith Craze
- * Jack Davies
- * Steve Davies
- * John Ward

Councillors:

- * Arthur Davis
- * Barry Dunning
- * David Harrison
- * David Hawkins
- * Alvin Reid
- * Joe Reilly

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Alison Hoare, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regulatory Services

Officers Attending:

Rebecca Drummond, Joanne McClay and Andy Rogers

11 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2019 to be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were made by any Members in connection with any Agenda Item.

13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised during the Public Participation period.

14 GAMBLING POLICY - REVIEW OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The Committee considered a review of the Council's Gambling Policy. Members noted that the Gambling Act 2005 required a review of the Council Statement of Gambling Principles every three years.

A draft Policy had been presented to the Committee in June 2018 and a consultation exercise had taken place between 10 May 2019 and 26 July 2019.

Eight responses were received during the consultation period which were set out in Appendix 2 to the Report. Responses covered a variety of areas together with general support of the Policy from two Parish Councils.

Members noted the consultation undertaken and responses received, and having regard to the suggested amendments in Appendix 3 to the Report, supported the relevant paragraphs in the draft Policy.

Recommended:

That there is a recommendation to the Council that the revised Statement of Gambling Principles in relation to the Gambling Act 2005 be approved.

15 REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND PLACES

The Committee considered the proposals of the Working Party set up by the Committee at the June meeting, to review Polling Districts and Polling Places within the New Forest District, in compliance with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.

The Council was required by law to complete a review of the Polling Districts and Polling Places within the District by the end of 2019. The Working Party had to consider any issues and make recommendations to the Committee which would then be submitted to Council.

The Working Party invited comments from all District Councillors, Parish and Town Councils and the District's two MP's, as well as persons or groups who had particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who had different forms of disability. The closing date for representations was 18 August 2019. Those making comments had been asked to identify alternative places to hold future elections if they were proposing closure of a particular Polling Station.

The report included a plan showing Polling Districts and their identifiers, details of each Polling Place/Station, and a further plan showing proposed Polling District DL.

The Committee noted the nine recommendations for change raised as a result of the representations.

40 responses to the consultation had been received, of which 28 were received from parents, the pre-school and Town Councillors in relation to Lydlynch Infant School, Totton. The Working Party had recommended that transfer of the Polling station from Lydlynch to the Cricket Club and Members supported this. The point was made that Polling Station at Lydlynch had been used for some years and it was anticipated that many local people would expect still to vote there, and it was therefore suggested that the change be advertised and signs be put on site. In response, it was explained that it was intended to write to the electors about the change and include the information clearly on polling cards as well as providing signs at the school.

Members felt that, wherever possible, it would be advantageous not to use schools for Polling Stations to avoid the disruption involved.

In respect of Calmore Village Hall, the Committee noted the objections in respect of the lack of public transport in the area. It was emphasised that the Polling Station experienced low usage and on balance it was considered that the Polling Station should be closed, postal votes offered and the situation be kept under review.

A Member asked whether the statistics used in the review were based on District Council Elections or General Election, and Officers undertook to confirm this after the meeting.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the Working Group had made its deliberations after reviewing extensive information and noted that costings ranged from £2.50 per voter up to approximately £75 per voter at some Polling Stations, and a common-sense balance had to be struck ensuring that the solutions were practical and reasonable.

In answer to a question, it was explained that the current Electoral Review affecting the District would not be implemented until 2023 and therefore further review of Polling Districts and Polling Places would need to be undertaken around that time.

A Member referred to the Polling Station at the Scout Hall, Beckton Lane, where elderly people had difficulty accessing the hall due to the condition of the path. It was explained that some recent repairs had been undertaken to the path, and although the Polling Station was not ideal, there was no viable alternative. It was undertaken that for the next election, the Council would work with the Town Council to ensure the Polling Station was as accessible as possible.

The Committee considered an additional recommendation to Report 5 in respect of a suggested extra delegated power recommended:

RECOMMENDED:

That it be a recommendation to the Council that:

- (1) That with effect from the from the publication of the Revised Register of Electors in December 2019:
 - (a) The Reading Room Polling Place and Polling Station be discontinued; and
 - (b) Existing Polling District BG (approximately 128 electors) be transferred to Polling District BH and the electors allocated to Bransgore Village Hall;
 - (c) The Calmore Village Hall Polling Place and Polling Station be discontinued with electors being transferred to Netley Marsh Community Hall Woodlands Road;
and
 - (d) The existing NA Polling District (approximately 316 electors) be transferred and amalgamated to Polling District NB as a single polling district (approximately 1692 electors);
 - (e) The Lydlynch Pre School be discontinued as Polling Pace and Polling Station and the electors allocated to the Totton and Eling Cricket Club building in Bramtoco Way, Totton;
 - (f) The Sandleheath Methodist Church Hall, Alderholt Road, Sandleheath be

discontinued as a Polling Place and Polling Station and the electors transferred to the Village Hall, Main Road, Sandleheath;

- (g) The Victoria Rooms, Bridge Street, Fordingbridge be discontinued as a Polling Place and Polling Station and the electors transferred to the Town Hall, Fordingbridge;
- (h) Polling District DN (approximately 21 electors) is amalgamated with Polling District as a single DL polling district with approximately 131 electors.
- (2) That all other Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations remain the same as outlined in Appendix 2
- (3) That the Returning Officer be authorised to designate alternative Polling Places and Polling Stations should the need arise prior to the publication of the revised Register in December 2019
- (4) That the Council Scheme of Delegation of Powers to Officers, that are the responsibility of the Council, be amended to delegate the following power:-

Source	Power Delegated	Delegated to
Representation of the People Act 1983	To designate alternative Polling Places and Polling Stations if required at short notice under Section 18 of the Act, in accordance with the Guidance Issue by the Electoral Commission	Returning Officer or acting Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer

16 DATES OF MEETINGS

Resolved that the following dates be agreed for meetings of the Committee in 2020/2021

(Fridays at 9.30 a.m.)

12 June 2020
 11 September 2020
 6 November 2020
 8 January 2021
 12 March 2021

CHAIRMAN