

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Your attendance is requested at a meeting to be held at
The Jeffrey Room, St. Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE.
on Tuesday, 11 September 2012
at 6:00 pm.

**D Kennedy
Chief Executive**

AGENDA

1. Apologies

2. Minutes

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20th of June 2012. Copy attached.

3. Declarations of Interest

4. Deputations / Public Addresses

5. Review of Polling Places and Polling Stations

Report to follow.

6. Matters of Urgency which by reason of special circumstances the chair is of the opinion should be considered

7. Exclusion of Public and Press

THE CHAIR TO MOVE:

“THAT THE PUBLIC BE EXCLUDED FROM THE REMAINDER OF THE MEETING ON THE GROUNDS THAT THERE IS LIKELY TO BE DISCLOSURE TO THEM OF SUCH CATEGORIES OF EXEMPT INFORMATION AS DEFINED BY SECTION 100(1) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS LISTED AGAINST SUCH ITEMS OF BUSINESS BY REFERENCE TO THE APPROPRIATE PARAGRAPH OF SCHEDULE 12A TO SUCH ACT.”

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 20 June 2012

PRESENT: Councillor Patel (Chair); Councillor Parekh (Deputy Chair);
Councillors Aziz, Beardsworth, Begum, I. Choudary, Golby, Hallam
and Oldham

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2012 were signed by the Chair.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 5

Councillors Matt Golby and Suresh Patel declared personal and non prejudicial interests as members of a Parish Council.

Councillor Suresh Patel also declared a personal and non prejudicial interest as a petitioner for St James ward.

Councillor Mike Hallam declared a personal and non prejudicial interest as a petitioner for Parklands ward.

Councillor Nilesh Parekh declared a personal and non prejudicial interest as a petitioner for Sunnyside and Obelisk ward

Councillor Brian Oldham declared a personal and non prejudicial interest as a petitioner for West Hunsbury ward

4. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES

Mr David Huffadine Smith addressed the Committee.

The main points of his address were as follows: -

Mr Huffadine Smith is a Parish Councillor but was not speaking in that context but as a private individual.

He supported the concept of expanding parish council equivalents, as he believed that really local involvement could invigorate new facilities and clubs and

organisations etc with lower level of costs.

He considered that to be successful then the boundaries should be based on natural communities and not necessarily ward boundaries. They should also be kept small as larger areas lost their cohesion.

Some services can be provided by parish councils that would otherwise be the province of principal councils, and who made provision was not the key issue but how funding was raised. The Parish precept should not be so large that it is used to augment other funding streams without check. He believed that there was no legislation in place, which capped a Parish precept.

He believed that as Parish Councillors are elected by the whole community and are rarely affiliated to political parties they were better able to serve the whole of the community.

Mr Liam Costello addressed the Committee.

The main points of his address were as follows: -

He welcomed the recommendations, particularly those for a division of Wootton and East Hunsbury Parish Council, which he considered too unwieldy.

He would have preferred the approach taken by Milton Keynes who have "parished" the whole area.

He welcomed the consultations but considered that if the terms of reference allowed for it there should not be a referendum.

He stated that legislation does not exist to impose a Parish precept cap although it has not yet become legislation.

5. NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW- STAGE 1 RECOMMENDATIONS

Councillor David Mackintosh presented the report asking Committee to that the proposals received for new Parish Councils and boundary changes to existing Parish Councils be taken forward into the detailed consultation stage of the Community Governance Review.

Members asked whether areas that would not be parished would be continuing with the same neighbourhood management system as now. Members were advised that there would be a review of neighbourhood management, with a key aim of involving local Councillors as local leaders, however this was not a matter for the current debate.

A final decision on which areas became parishes would not be made until Council considered the results of the referendum. The new parish councils themselves would determine which services that they would provide. The Leader emphasised that it was very important that if people did support becoming a parish that they understood that

there would be an additional cost, via the precept, and what it was that they would getting for that money.

It was stated that there had been legal advice that the Moulton Leys proposal was not legally possible because of restrictions on making proposals across ward boundaries. It was asked that this be looked at again if the legislation ever changed.

In response to a question about costs Members were advised that budget provision for undertaking the Community Governance Review had been made in the current years budget and that it was hoped to save on the costs of the referendum by holding it in conjunction with the elections for a Police Commissioner.

An addendum was tabled at the meeting in the form of a letter from the Chair of the Finance and Personnel Committee of Wootton and East Hunsbury Parish Council detailing concerns should the parishes split. Committee wee reminded that at this stage they were only determining whether there should be further consultation .

RESOLVED:

1. That the following proposals received in Stage 1 of the Community Governance Review be agreed as the subject of detailed consultation in Stage 2 of the Review:
 - I. The Parklands Ward proposal for a new Parish Council.
 - II. The Rectory Farm proposal for a new Parish.
 - III. The Sunnyside Ward and Obelisk Ward proposal for a new Parish Council.
 - IV. The West Hunsbury Ward proposal for a new Parish Council.
 - V. The Westone Ward proposal for a new Parish Council.
 - VI. The St James Ward proposal for a new Parish Council.
 - /II. The Hunsbury Meadow proposal for a new Parish Council.
 - III. The proposal for a boundary change to the north of Wootton & East Hunsbury Parish Council.
 - IX. The proposal for a boundary change between Wootton & East Hunsbury Parish Council and Collingtree Parish Council.
 - X. The proposal for a boundary change between Hardingstone Parish Council and Great Houghton Parish Council.
 - XI. The proposal for a boundary change to the east of Upton Parish Council.
 - (II. The proposal for a division of Wootton & East Hunsbury Parish Council into two

separate Parishes.

2. The recommendation of the Steering Group that the three proposals received by petition which did not meet the community support threshold requirement as set out in the Community Governance Review Terms of Reference are not the subject of detailed consultation in Stage 2 of the Review. The three proposals were a proposal for Moulton Leys, Castle Ward and Phippsville Ward.

6. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

There were none.

The meeting concluded at 6:25 pm

Appendices
1



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE REPORT

Report Title	Polling Places and Polling Station Review
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Committee Meeting Date:	11 September 2012
Directorate:	Borough Secretary's Department

1. Purpose

- 1 The report seeks the General Purposes Committee's approval of amendments to polling places in six polling districts in Northampton for all elections, referenda and polls which will take place from November 2012 onwards.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The General Purposes Committee is asked to note the feedback and proposals outlined in appendix 1 and agree changes to the polling place that will be used by electors in the following wards and polling districts from November 2012 onwards:

Delapre & Briar Hill Ward	Polling District SDBD
East Hunsbury Ward	Polling Districts SNEHF and SNEHG
Rectory Farm Ward	Polling District NRFD
Semilong Ward	Polling District NSMA and NSMB
Talavera Ward	Polling District STVF
Westone Ward	Polling District NWT A

- 2.2 The General Purposes Committee is asked to delegate to the Returning Officer the ability to amend the polling districts, polling places and polling stations as required for operational purposes.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1 A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a constituency, ward or division into smaller parts. A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer. A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the local authority, polling stations are chosen by the (Acting) Returning Officer for the election.
- 3.1.2 In early 2011, a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations was conducted in response to changes that were made to ward boundaries as a result of the Further Electoral Review of Northampton.
- 3.1.3 The review altered a significant number of polling districts, polling places and polling stations in the Borough in advance of the Referendum and Local Election in May 2011.
- 3.1.4 Between formal reviews, it is good practice to keep polling places and polling stations under consideration and for an evaluation of their suitability to be carried out after each election.
- 3.1.5 On Polling Day in May 2011, Presiding Officers and Polling Station Inspectors conducted assessments on the suitability of the polling stations, as well as reported back any feedback from the public. Following the election, feedback was also sought from ward councillors regarding the suitability of the new arrangements. All feedback has been considered in order to identify whether it is necessary to make any changes to voting arrangements in preparation for the Police and Crime Commissioner and any subsequent elections.
- 3.1.6 Earlier in the year, the Electoral Registration Officer was informed that Bective Mobile, a polling station that had previously been used in Westone Ward was no longer available for use. As a result, a new polling station in this area has had to be identified.
- 3.1.7 Premises which have not been used before for polling purposes are indicated in appendix 1 as being “new”. New polling stations have been inspected and checked as to their suitability.
- 3.1.8 The rest of the premises have been used for polling in the past, and have been deemed of adequate size and accessible to disabled electors. In the main, the proposals in this report seek to reallocate electors to alternative polling stations in order reduce overcrowding in polling stations that are used for electors from multiple polling districts.
- 3.1.9 If changes are approved by the General Purposes Committee, a note will be put on the poll cards to advise electors of any new arrangements.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Resources and Risk

4.1.1 The proposals do not have any impact on staffing levels and the additional hire charge of approximately £150 can be contained within the existing election budgets.

4.2 Legal

4.2.1 The Police and Crime Commissioner Elections Order 2012 makes provision for the polling districts and polling places at Police and Crime Commissioner elections to be aligned with those used for Parliamentary elections.

4.2.2 Local authorities are required to divide every constituency into polling districts for the purpose of UK Parliamentary elections and to designate a polling place for each polling district. Polling places should be within the polling district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area outside the district.

4.2.3 The (Acting) Returning Officer must comment during any review of polling districts and polling places on both existing polling stations and the polling stations that would probably be used if any new proposal for polling places were accepted.

4.2.4 The (Acting) Returning Officer is required to decide how many polling stations are required for each polling place and must allocate electors to the polling stations in such a manner as he or she thinks most convenient.

4.3 Equality

4.3.1 As part of the review process, local authorities must:

- Seek to ensure that all electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
- Seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable the polling places are accessible to those who are disabled, and
- When considering or reviewing the designation of a polling place, have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.

4.3.2 An Equalities Risk Impact Assessment has been conducted in respect of these proposals and considered the issues outlined above. No issues have been identified that require reporting to the committee.

4.4 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.4.1 The (Acting) Returning Officer has been consulted on the proposals for changes to polling places and has confirmed that in light of the feedback that has been received regarding the polling places that were previously used, he is supportive of the proposals as they are deemed to improve the electors' voting experience and has no further comments to add.

- 4.4.2 Consultation took place with both Presiding Officers and Polling Station Inspectors on Polling Day in May 2011. This included the conduct of assessments on the suitability of the polling stations, as well as reports of any feedback from the public. Further feedback was also collected from ward councillors regarding the suitability of the new arrangements after the election had taken place. All of the feedback has been reviewed in order to identify whether it is necessary to make any changes to voting arrangements in preparation for the upcoming Police and Crime Commissioner election and any subsequent elections.
- 4.4.3 Ward councillors in the affected wards have been informed of the proposals and any feedback that has been received is noted in appendix 1.

5. Background Papers

- 5.1 The Equalities Risk Impact Assessment is available on request from the Democratic & Chief Executive Services Manager.

Cassie Triggs, Democratic & Chief Executive Services Manager, ext. 7680

APPENDIX 1

Polling Places and Polling Station Review - Proposals and Feedback

The following tables outline the changes that are being proposed to the polling place and polling station within existing polling districts. The changes are being proposed either because the polling place that was previously used is no longer available or in order to improve the experience for electors in Northampton.

Borough Ward	Delapre & Briar Hill				Polling District	SDBD
No. councillors	3					
County Division	Delapre			Constituency	South	
Parish	None			Parish Ward	N/A	
Polling Station	St Mary's Church Rooms					
Address	St Mary's Church					
	Abbey Road					
	Northampton			Post Code	NN4 8EZ	
Polling Station / Polling Place	Existing	X	New		Change	X
Feedback and summary of the proposal	<p>Feedback was received, from one of the ward councillors, that Far Cotton Community Centre was too small to host 3 polling stations. It was also asked whether a polling station could be identified closer to the properties in SDBD. It is therefore proposed to allocate St Mary's Church Rooms as the Polling Station for electors in SDBD. There will therefore be two polling stations in this polling place, but it is considered large enough for this purpose. St Mary's Church Rooms are a similar distance from electors in SBDB, but this is less than a mile and therefore considered to be a reasonable distance to travel on foot. The other ward councillors have been informed of the proposal and are supportive of it.</p>					

Borough Ward	East Hunsbury				Polling District	SNEHF
No. councillors	2					
County Division	West Hunsbury			Constituency	South Northants.	
Parish	Wootton & East Hunsbury			Parish Ward	Grange Ward	
Polling Station	Grangewood Club					
	50 Barn Owl Close					
	East Hunsbury					
	Northampton			Post Code	NN5 0UA	
Polling Station / Polling Place	Existing	X	New		Change	X
Feedback and summary of the proposal	<p>Feedback was received from one of the ward councillors that it would be more practical for electors in SNEHF to vote at the Grangewood Club and electors in SNEHG to vote at the Abbey Centre Baptist Church because the Grangewood Club is located at the heart of polling district SNEHF and the Abbey Centre Baptist Church is closer to the majority of properties in SNEHG.</p>					

Borough Ward	East Hunsbury		Polling District	SNEHG			
No. councillors	2						
County Division	West Hunsbury		Constituency	South Northants.			
Parish	Wootton & East Hunsbury		Parish Ward	Grange Ward			
Polling Station	Abbey Centre Baptist Church						
Address	Overslade Close						
	East Hunsbury						
	Northampton		Post Code	NN4 0RZ			
Polling Station / Polling Place	Existing	X	New		Change	X	Polling Station used previously: Grangewood Club
Feedback and summary of the proposal	Feedback was received from one of the ward councillors that it would be more practical for electors in SNEHF to vote at the Grangewood Club and electors in SNEHG to vote at the Abbey Centre Baptist Church because the Grangewood Club is located at the heart of polling district SNEHF and the Abbey Centre Baptist Church is closer to the majority of properties in SNEHG.						

Borough Ward	Rectory Farm		Polling District	NRFD			
No. councillors	1						
County Division	Lumbertubs		Constituency	North			
Parish	None		Parish Ward	N/A			
Polling Station	Blackthorn Community Centre						
Address	Longmead Court						
	Blackthorn						
	Northampton		Post Code	NN3 8QD			
Polling Station / Place	Existing		New	X	Change	X	Polling Station used previously: Arlbury Road Community Room
Notes	Feedback was received from the Presiding Officer at Arlbury Road Community Room that the venue was too small to accommodate three polling stations. A new venue has therefore been identified in this area at Blackthorn Community Centre. The venue has been visited and deemed suitable for use as a polling station. Electors will be advised of the change to their polling station on their Poll Card and the Ward Councillor has been informed and is supportive of the proposal.						

Borough Ward	Semilong		Polling District	NSMA			
No. councillors	1						
County Division	Kingsthorpe		Constituency	North			
Parish	None		Parish Ward	N/A			
Polling Station	Holy Trinity Church Hall						
	Edinburgh Road						
	Queens Park						
	Northampton		Post Code	NN2 6PH			
Polling Station / Polling Place	Existing		New		Change	X	Polling Station used previously: Kingsthorpe Community Centre
Feedback and summary of the proposal	Feedback was received from one of the ward councillors, a presiding officer and a member of the public that Kingsthorpe Community Centre is too far to walk for residents in NSMA and NSMB. It is therefore proposed that electors in Polling District NSMA are allocated to the polling station in Holy Trinity Church Hall. There will be three polling stations in this polling place, but with less than 400 electors allocated to polling districts NSMB and NSMA it is deemed that the polling place will be large enough to accommodate the increased electorate.						

Borough Ward	Semilong				Polling District	NSMB	
No. councillors	1						
County Division	Kingsley				Constituency	North	
Parish	None				Parish Ward	N/A	
Polling Station	Holy Trinity Church Hall						
	Edinburgh Road						
	Queens Park						
	Northampton				Post Code	NN2 6PH	
Polling Station / Polling Place	Existing	X	New		Change	X	Polling Station used previously: Kingsthorpe Community Centre
Feedback and summary of the proposal	Feedback was received from one of the ward councillors, a presiding officer and a member of the public that Kingsthorpe Community Centre is too far to walk for residents in NSMA and NSMB. It is therefore proposed that electors in Polling District NSMB are allocated to the polling station in Holy Trinity Church Hall. There will be three polling stations in this polling place, but with less than 400 electors allocated to polling districts NSMB and NSMA it is deemed that the polling place will be large enough to accommodate the increased electorate.						

Borough Ward	Talavera				Polling District	STVF	
No. councillors	2						
County Division	Ecton Brook				Constituency	South	
Parish					Parish Ward	N/A	
Polling Station	Northampton Church of Christ						
Address	Shadowfax Drive						
	Overstone Lodge						
	Northampton				Post Code	NN3 8DB	
Polling Station / Place	Existing	X	New		Change	X	Polling Station used previously: Rectory Farm Community Centre
Notes	Feedback was received from the Presiding Officer at Rectory Farm Community Centre that the venue was too small to accommodate three polling stations. It is therefore proposed that electors from polling district STVF vote at Northampton Church of Christ on Shadowfax Drive. This is a similar distance to Rectory Farm Community Centre where they previously voted. The polling place at the Church of the Christ will therefore accommodate two polling stations, as it has done in the past. The ward councillors have been informed of the proposal and a positive response has been received from one of them, with no response from the other as yet.						

Borough Ward	Westone				Polling District	NWTA	
No. councillors	1						
County Division	Headlands				Constituency	North	
Parish	None				Parish Ward	N/A	
Polling Station	Northampton College						
Address	Booth Lane						
	Northampton				Post Code	NN3 3RF	
Polling Station / Polling Place	Existing		New	X	Change	X	Polling Station used previously: Bective Mobile, Russell House
Feedback and summary of the proposal	The Returning Officer has been informed that Bective Mobile is no longer available for use as a polling station. A new location has therefore been identified at Northampton College. The venue has been visited and deemed suitable for use as a polling station. Electors will be advised of the change to their polling station on their Poll Card and the ward councillor has been informed and is supportive of the proposal.						