

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 25 March 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Hibbert (Chair); Councillor Parekh (Deputy Chair);
Councillors Aziz, Begum, Ford, Gowen and King.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Duncan.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2013 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

4. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

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

There were none.

6. EUROPEAN ELECTIONS COUNT VENUE 2014

The Borough Secretary presented a report advising the Committee that the count for the European Elections on 22/23 and 25 May would be held at the Royal and Derngate, rather than at Lings Forum as in previous years for reasons of better access, improved facilities and cost savings. Members were asked for their comments on this change and invited to ask questions.

A further report would be brought to the Committee evaluating the operation of the venue after the European Elections, and to consider options to use the same venue for the Borough Council elections and General Election in 2015.

The Chief Executive answered Members' questions, as summarised below:

- The use of the Royal and Derngate for the European Elections would be a "dry run" for the much larger and more complex combined Borough and General Election (two constituencies) which would be held in 2015;
- Should the Derngate not prove satisfactory for the combined elections following the "dry run" there were two options available – being either to return

the count to Lings Forum or to count the Parliamentary constituencies (Northampton North and Northampton South) at two separate venues. As the law requires the verification process for Borough and Parliamentary elections to be undertaken before the count can begin then if both Parliamentary constituencies are to be counted at a single location all the Borough ballot boxes will be verified at that location as well. If there are two Parliamentary counts in separate venues then the Borough ballot boxes from the polling stations within each constituency will be verified at the location for that constituency;

- The auditorium in the Derngate would be used for the count, with the seats lowered into the floor and retractable flooring in place over them;
- Postal votes would continue to be validated at the Guildhall, without the need to re-locate as is currently the case, and delivered to the count venue;
- The costs of European, General, County and Police elections are re-charged to the responsible authority and the Borough Council had to meet the cost of Borough elections. Where two elections are combined, as in 2015, basically 50% of the total cost is charged to the responsible authority;
- Northampton Leisure Trust realised the limitations of Lings Forum as a count venue and were comfortable with the count being transferred to another venue, particularly as the count for the European elections would be held on a Bank Holiday Sunday (25 May) which was usually a busy time for customers;
- The management of the Royal and Derngate had not programmed any events in for the weekend of the count in 2014 and had “pencilled in” the dates for the verification and counts in 2015.

RESOLVED:

1. That the change of counting venue from Lings Forum to the Royal and Derngate for the European Elections 2014 be noted.
2. That it be noted that a further report would be brought forward to the Committee evaluating the operation of the venue after May 22/23 and 25, and considering options to use the same venue for the Borough Council elections 2015 and related options for the next General Election.

The meeting concluded at 6:19 pm.