

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 24 OCTOBER 2014

Present: Councillor Parvin (Chairman), and
Councillors Black, English, Mrs Gooch, Mrs Parvin and
P Watson

Also Present:

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs Hinder and Vizzard.

14. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following substitute members were noted:-

Councillor English for Councillor Vizzard

Councillor Black for Councillor Mrs Hinder

15. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

16. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

17. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

It was noted that Councillor English had been lobbied on the Report of the Head of Finance and Resources – Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations.

18. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That the items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

19. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 SEPTEMBER 2014

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed.

20. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Minute 5 – Election of Vice-Chairman

The Chairman informed the Board that Councillor Vizzard had confirmed acceptance of his appointment as Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year 2014/15, the nomination to which had occurred in his absence.

21. APPOINTMENT OF POLITICAL GROUP SPOKESPERSON FOR THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

RESOLVED: That Councillor Vizzard be appointed Group Spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats for the Municipal Year 2014/15.

22. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES - BROOMFIELD AND KINGSWOOD AND SUTTON VALENCE PARISH COUNCILS INCREASE NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS

The Head of Finance and Resources introduced the report detailing the requests of the Broomfield and Kingswood, and Sutton Valence Parish Council's for an increase in the number of Councillors from 9 to 11 members. The Group heard that both Parish Councils had provided commentaries outlining the duties undertaken by Members, and stating that there had been a significant increase in work load over the past 3 years.

It was explained that the Local Government Boundaries Commission for England (LGBCE) provided a scale setting out a suggested number of Councillors commensurate with the size of the electorate of that Parish. Using this scale, the Group was advised that both Broomfield and Kingswood Parish, and Sutton Valence Parish, had a number of electorate between the figures of 701 – 1350, and as such both Parish Council's had the number of Councillors commensurate with this size of electorate, at 9 Members.

During discussion it was noted that, where a Parish Council has a temporary increase in workload or is undertaking a large project, it may benefit from the co-opting of members or seeking voluntary assistance. It was suggested that a meeting take place outside of the Group between the Head of Finance and Resources, the Chairman of Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC), and the two Parishes in question, in order to advise further on the co-opting process and other options available.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to COUNCIL: That, in accordance with the adopted scale, the requests of Broomfield and Kingswood Parish Council and Sutton Valence Parish Council for increases in the number of Parish Councillors from nine to eleven be refused.

23. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES - REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

The Head of Finance and Resources introduced the report on the Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations, and advised the Group that every local authority with a responsibility for electoral administration must carry out a review of its polling districts and places at least once every five years. It was explained that a polling place was the building, and the polling station was the room in that building. A review commenced in 2013 which included physical inspections and assessment of each district to ensure polling stations remained fit for purpose. The review was conducted over four stages, and produced a series of proposals for alterations in some of the areas reviewed.

During discussion the following points were raised:

The potential for confusion caused by the use of a single polling station to accommodate two wards, and the need to be mindful of sign posting and early notification of voters, alongside ensuring all staff are properly briefed to assist. It was suggested that the borough update could be used to inform voters, and that Ward Members and Parish Councillors may be able to assist with the placement of posters and signs.

The benefits of encouraging postal voting as this minimises the pressure on polling stations and allows the electorate an easier method of voting.

Parking on main roads such as Tonbridge Road causes problems for those who are travelling to polling places by car, especially when there is minimal parking space. A Member enquired as to whether the enforcement of double yellow lines could be lifted or suspended for the duration of the election day to allow greater ease of temporary parking.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to COUNCIL: That the following changes to Polling Places be approved:-

1. Bridge Ward - That the use of St Simon Stock R C Comprehensive School be discontinued. Electors in Polling District FA who currently vote at this polling station will vote at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This polling place to become a double station.
2. Heath Ward - That St Andrews Church Hall is re-instated as a polling station to accommodate electors outside of the former Oakwood hospital site. Electors in Polling District N will be split between Beechwood Community Hall and St Andrews Church Hall. All electors to the East of Queens Road and to the South of St Andrews Road will vote at St Andrews Church Hall.

3. Marden and Yalding Ward, Collier Street Parish – That the polling place be moved from St Margaret’s Church to St Margaret’s School for electors in polling district RR.
4. Harrietsham and Lenham Ward, Lenham South Parish - That St Edmunds Centre, Platts Heath becomes a polling station for use by electors in Polling District LC.
5. Headcorn Ward, Headcorn Parish –That the position of the station within the polling place will change from the games room to the small restaurant at the Hawkenbury Public House for electors in Polling District MB.
6. Sutton Valence and Langley Ward, Sutton Valence Parish – That the position of the station within the polling place will change from the games room to the small restaurant at the Hawkenbury Public House for electors in Polling District ZB.

24. DURATION OF MEETING

2.01 p.m. to 2.31 p.m.