

CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Corporate Affairs Committee was held on 5 March 2014.

PRESENT: Councillors Clark, (Chair), Arundale (as substitute for Mrs H Pearson, OBE), Junier (as substitute for Brunton), McIntyre and P Purvis

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Hawthorne and S Khan

OFFICERS: S Harker, S Reynolds and J Stuart

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were submitted on behalf of Councillors Brunton, Mawston and Mrs H Pearson, OBE.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Interest at this point in the meeting.

13/16 MINUTES - CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE - 29 JANUARY 2014

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Affairs Committee held on 29 January 2014 were taken as read and approved as a true record, subject to the following amendment:

Councillor McIntyre's name to be added to the Apologies for Absence.

13/17 WARD BOUNDARY AND POLLING PLACES REVIEW

A report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services was presented to seek approval for the implementation of the recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission's electoral review of Middlesbrough and for the change of an individual Polling Station within the Ayresome Ward prior to the European Election in May 2014.

In June 2013, the independent Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) commenced an electoral review of Middlesbrough. The aim of the review was to make local elections more balanced by ensuring that all Councillors represented a broadly similar number of people across the Borough and that the Council had the appropriate number of Councillors to represent the area effectively.

The Commission published its final recommendations for the new electoral arrangements in November 2013 and, subject to Parliamentary approval, these arrangements would come into force in May 2015. In summary, the Council would have 46 members representing two single-member, ten two-member and eight three-member wards, which equated to a reduction from twenty-three wards to twenty. Some minor anomalies had been raised with the Boundary Commission that affected some individual houses for electoral purposes. However the Boundary Commission had informed the Council that no further amendments could be made to the final recommendations.

As a result of the new arrangements and the requirement under the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, the Council would have to conduct a full review of its polling districts and places. A full consultation would be undertaken with Elected Members, community groups and the public and the review completed by 31 January 2015.

Current and proposed new ward boundary maps were available to Members only in the first instance, on the Council website. A document showing previous and proposed polling stations, current polling districts and current electorate number for each station, was tabled for Members' information. A street index would be created on the website to allow electors to identify which Ward they would be in. Briefings would be arranged for Elected Members and Officers during the next month and a link to the website would be emailed to all Members. A public consultation would be conducted from April to June 2014, giving members of the public and other interested parties the opportunity to comment on the polling places review.

Electoral Services proposed a change to the current Polling Station at Teesside and District Society for the Blind on Stockton Road. The Centre had expressed some dissatisfaction with payment and increased the price for hire to £400 per day, which was significantly higher than any other Polling Stations' fees. Other issues had previously been experienced on polling day due to the centre being open to patrons. An alternative Polling Station had been identified at Goals Soccer Centre, located on Stockton Road. A further alternative, St Cuthbert's Church Hall, had been suggested by the Ward Councillor for Ayresome Ward.

Members were informed that the Residents' Association building on Broughton Avenue at Easterside, which had previously been used as a Polling Station had now closed. An alternative Polling Station had been identified at the Community Hub on the opposite side of the shopping precinct and it was felt this would have very little impact on the community. Due to the forthcoming European Election on 22 May 2014, and the need for an urgent decision, approval for this change had been sought from, and granted by, the Local Returning Officer.

ORDERED as follows that:

1. the recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission's electoral review of Middlesbrough be noted and a review of polling districts and places was undertaken and completed by January 2015.
2. the current Polling Station based at Teesside and District Society for the Blind would be moved to a new location at Goals Soccer Centre, Stockton Road, for the European Election on 22 May 2014 and would be further reviewed as part of the public consultation.