



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Thursday 27 February 2020 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor M Butt (Chair), Councillor McLennan (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Agha, Hirani, Krupa Sheth, Tatler, M Patel and Kansagra

Also present: Councillor Aden and S Choudhary

1. Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Harbi Farah with Councillor Mili Patel attending as a substitute member, and Councillor Reg Colwill with Councillor Suresh Kansagra as a substitute member.

2. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interests made by Members.

3. Deputations (if any)

There were no deputations received.

4. Review of Polling Places 2020

Melanie Adams (Electoral Manager) introduced the report from the Chief Executive detailing the requirement on all local authorities to undertake a review of their UK Parliamentary polling districts and places at least once every five years. The Committee were advised that the last review had taken place in 2018 and came into force in February 2019.

Members were also advised that prior to any election it was normal practice to carry out an informal review of polling places across the borough in order to take account of any experience from previous elections. Whilst there had been two national polls since the 2019 review it had not, however, been possible to undertake informal reviews due to the short notice under which both had been called. The next full review would be required prior to the 2022 local elections (taking account of the Local Government Boundary Review) but in advance of this it had been possible to undertake an informal review prior to the next scheduled election in May 2020 for the Greater London Assembly and Mayor for London.

Members noted the outcome of the review, as detailed within section 3 of the report, with the only potential changes identified in relation to the following polling districts:

Alperton Ward NAL4 – Abbey Estate Community Centre; and

Dollis Hill Ward CD02 – Kingfisher Community Centre

The following comments were raised in response to the outcome of the review:

- Councillor Choudhary expressed concerns about the use of a portacabin as a polling station in place of the previous station located in the old Town Hall site on Forty Lane, now occupied by the Lycee School. This was in view of the experience highlighted by voters in being able to access the site and potential impact in discouraging people to vote. Whilst recognising the need to balance safeguarding concerns and avoid disrupting the operation of the school and difficulties in being able to secure venues when polls were called at such short notice, members were keen to ensure the position remained under review given the difficulties highlighted.
- The thanks expressed to the Elections Team for the review undertaken in relation to the Northwick Park Ward.

As no further points were raised, it was **AGREED**:

- (1) That the polling stations listed below be adopted for the Greater London Authority elections on 7 May 2020:
 - (a) NAL4: Abbey Estate Community Centre be relocated to a temporary polling station outside of the building, unless the building renovations were completed in time for the election.
 - (b) CDO2: Kingfisher Community Centre be relocated to a temporary polling station in the car park, unless the building renovations were completed in time for the election.
 - (c) That all other polling stations remain as agreed in the 2019 Polling District review.
- (2) That in the event of any other polling places becoming unavailable before the May 2020 elections, authority be delegated to the Returning Officer to make any further changes required to polling places for these elections in consultation with the leaders of the political groups on the Council.

5. **Review of Representation of Political Groups**

Councillor Butt introduced a report from the Director of Legal, HR, Audit and Investigations detailing the outcome of a review of the representation of political groups on the Sub Committees appointed by the General Purposes Committee. This followed a change in the political balance on the Council, as a result of the four recent Council by-elections held in January 2020 in the Alperton, Barnhill and Wembley Central wards.

The Committee noted the outcome of the review and principles on which it had been based, as prescribed in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989

(supplemented by the Local Government (Committee and Political Groups) Regulations 1990) and detailed in section 3 of the report.

Members were advised that the review had resulted in no changes to the overall allocation of seats on the Sub Committee's appointed by General Purposes Committee and on this basis, it was therefore **AGREED**:

- (1) To approve, as detailed in section 3.8 of the report, the size of each sub-committee to be appointed by the Committee;
- (2) To approve the allocation of seats to political groups on each of the sub-committees, as detailed in section 3.8 of the report, in accordance with political balance rules; and
- (3) To approve the appointment of Chairs, Vice-Chairs, Members and Substitutes to each Sub-committee on the basis of the allocations detailed in section 3.8 of the report.

6. **Appointments to Sub Committees**

Following on from the Review of Representation of Political Groups (Item 5 above), the Committee was asked to consider any changes required in the membership of its Sub Committees.

As a result, it was **AGREED** to confirm the current membership of the General Purposes Sub Committees, as detailed in the paper provided for the meeting subject to:

- former Councillor Marquis being replaced by a vacancy as a substitute member on the Brent Pension Board

7. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

There were no items that required the exclusion of the press or public.

8. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 6.10 pm

Councillor Muhammed Butt
Chair