



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 22 January 2024 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillor M Butt (Chair) and Councillors Donnelly-Jackson, Farah, Georgiou, Grahl, Nerva and Krupa Sheth.

1. **Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members**

Apologies were received from Councillor Tatler (Vice-Chair) and Councillor Knight with Councillor Nerva attending as a substitute for Councillor Knight.

2. **Declarations of interests**

There were no formal declarations of interest made during the meeting.

3. **Deputations (if any)**

There were no deputations received.

4. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 11 December 2023 be approved as an accurate record.

5. **Matters arising (if any)**

There were no matters arising.

6. **Review of Polling Districts & Places**

Amira Nassr, Head of the Chief Executive and Member Services introduced the report from the Corporate Director of Governance detailing the review of the local authority polling districts and polling places undertaken in accordance with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013. Members were advised that the proposals detailed within the report in relation to the polling districts and polling places identified within Alperton, Kingsbury, Queensbury, Sudbury, Wembley Central, Wembley Hill and Willesden Green wards reflected comments received as part of the consultation undertaken as part of the review process with representations sought from a wide range of stakeholders including all elected councillors and groups represented through the Brent Disability Forum.

In considering the detailed proposals outlined within Section 3 of the report and the comments detailed in the accompanying Appendix 3, members noted:

1. In relation to the proposals within Alperton Ward:
 - Whilst recognising the rationale for adding another polling station to enable polling districts AL3 and AL4 to be served by two different polling places in order to avoid the significant congestion and queues experienced at the last election at the Grand Union Hub, concerns were raised in relation to the distance that residents from the Abbey Estate would still need to travel in order to vote. In order to address these concerns it was felt further consideration should be given to alternative arrangements within the AL3 polling district, including the potential use of portacabins as an alternative polling place option within AL3. Members were advised that this had been explored as an option with the Neighbourhoods Team but had not been assessed as a viable given access issues involving trees and overhead cables that would prevent a portacabin being installed in the location identified within the proximity of the Abbey Estate.
 - As it had not been possible to identify any other adequate polling station locations in that area the alternative remained used of the Grand Union Hub, although looking forward it was hoped that the Abbey Estate Community Centre could be used for future elections, once any refurbishment had been completed although this would not be in time for the GLA and London Mayoral elections in May 2024. Recognising the issues raised, members were keen to ensure that as much as possible was done to find the best alternative viable solution looking forward.
2. In relation to Kingsbury ward, following feedback about the suitability of Village School as a polling station, given its status as a Special Educational Needs school and the impact on parents and pupils, an alternative polling station had been identified at Kingsbury Service Club. Members were satisfied with the proposed alternative venue which had also been supported by ward councillors.
3. In relation to Queensbury ward, following representations made in support of moving the polling station from portacabins in polling district QY1 to Queensbury Methodist Church it had been proposed, recognising the need to manage the number of electors within each district and polling place, to split the ward with electors in the vicinity of the portacabin continuing to vote in that location and electors west of Stag Lane voting at Queensbury Methodist Church. As a result, the new polling district boundary would run down Stag Lane removing the need for one of the existing portacabins.
4. In relation to Sudbury ward, following representations made as a result of feedback from the 2022 local elections regarding confusion expressed by electors south of the underground line about which polling station they were required to use, it was proposed (whilst retaining Sudbury Methodist Church as a polling station) to create a new polling district south of the underground line with Sudbury Baptist Church (which it was noted had been used in previous years) identified as the additional polling station.
5. In relation to Wembley Central ward, following feedback from the 2022 local elections regarding congestion at the polling station located within Ealing Road Library work was underway to find an additional polling station location.

Members supported the work being undertaken noting that the existing location currently served two polling districts (WC3 and WC4) with a large combined electorate and the review focussed around the identification of an additional polling station to serve polling district WC3.

6. In relation to Wembley Hill ward, efforts continued to identify a suitable polling location in the Northwest of the ward as it was felt the currently polling location was too far for some electors. Whilst no suitable locations had been identified to date in advance of the GLA and London Mayoral elections members noted that options would continue to be explored looking forward.
7. In relation to Willesden Green ward, members noted and endorsed the minor amendments proposed in relation to the polling district boundary for WN2 and WN3. Whilst representations had also been received in relation to moving the polling station to the new Brent Indian Community Centre, it was noted that the centre was still undergoing building work (due for completion in March 2024) with it therefore agreed that the proposal should be reviewed again after the GLA & London Mayoral election, once the centre was fully operational.

As no further issues were raised, the Committee extended their thanks to all those who had engaged in the consultation process as part of the review and the Elections Team for their efforts in preparing the proposals.

Having considered the report, it was therefore **RESOLVED:**

- (1) To note that a review of the Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations of the London Borough of Brent had taken place along with the resulting recommendations detailed in the report.
- (2) To note that the consultation on the review findings had taken place between 30 October and 8 December 2023. As part of the review representations had been sought from all elected representatives for Brent, the (Acting) Returning Officer for the London Borough of Harrow, the (Acting) Returning Officer for Westminster City Council, the Brent Disability Forum, members of the public and all existing polling stations.
- (3) To note the feedback from the consultation, which had been taken into account in developing the proposals and recommendations set out in the report.
- (4) To agree the following recommendations (as set out in section 2.6 of the report) to be effective from the publication of the revised electoral register on 1 February 2024:

Alperton Ward:

Polling district AL4 be moved to Lyon Park School from the Grand Union Community Hub. Polling district AL3 remain at the Grand Union Community Hub with the polling district boundary to be amended so that AL3 will incorporate the residents of the St Georges, Grand Union area.

Kingsbury Ward:

The polling station currently located at KY1 Village School be moved to Kingsbury Service Club.

Queensbury Ward:

Polling district QY2 be split and allocated to QY1.

Sudbury Ward:

Sudbury Baptist church be used as a polling station and a new polling district created.

Wembley Central Ward:

A new polling location is identified for polling district WC3 subject to further options currently being explored. Polling district WC4 to remain at Ealing Road Library.

Wembley Hill Ward:

The current polling locations remain the same.

Willesden Green:

The current polling locations remain the same, with a minor amendment made to the WN2 and WN3 boundary.

- (5) To delegate to the Chief Executive designation of alternative polling places in the event of any polling place not being available at any election or better provision being identified, following consultation with the Party Whips and respective ward councillors.

7. Appointments to Sub-Committees / Outside Bodies

There were no appointments to be considered in relation to any of the General Purposes Sub Committees.

8. Exclusion of Press and Public

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

9. Any other urgent business

None.

The meeting closed at 10.14 am

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT
Chair