

ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Electoral Arrangements Review Committee of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on 14 August 2018 at 10:30am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: C Kemp (Chairman), C Easton, K Kiddie and T Lewis

Apologies: Councillors: J Fuller and L Hornby

Substitute Members: Councillors: M Edney for J Fuller and A Thomas for L Hornby

Officers in Attendance: The Electoral Services Manager (J Tovee-Galey) and the Electoral Services Officer (N Tullock).

31. MINUTES

The minutes of the Electoral Arrangements Review Committee held on 29 November 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Regarding the changes made to the boundary of Bixley, Caistor St Edmund and Poringland, Cllr Lewis stated that he was unhappy with the outcome as he felt it would have been more logical for the area around Octagon Farm to have been moved into Framingham Earl rather than Poringland. He advised members that, although he understood that the Committee's recommendations had been approved by Full Council and formed part of the Order, he regretted that he had not spotted the issue when the Committee had considered its recommendations using the maps provided. Members noted that the Council had recently appointed a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Analyst so future graphics would

be more detailed. The Electoral Services Manager advised that, for future Community Governance Reviews, it might be advantageous for the Committee to consider the District in several smaller parts.

32. POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES REVIEW 2018

The Electoral Services Manager presented her report, advising members that, following the amendment of some parish boundaries as a result of the Community Governance Review, it had been necessary to undertake an interim Polling Districts and Polling Places Review to ensure that suitable and convenient polling arrangements were in place for the May 2019 District and Parish Elections. Members were pleased to note that town and parish councils had been consulted with positive responses received, as detailed in the report.

The Chairman invited members to consider each of the proposed polling district amendments and polling places, as detailed in the report, noting that, if agreed, the changes would be incorporated in time for the May 2019 District and Parish Elections but that there would be a further opportunity to review these again at the end of 2019.

The Committee highlighted potential practical issues regarding the proposal to move the polling station for Tharston residents to Hapton. Members were concerned that the high numbers of Tharston residents, who would need to travel by car, would encounter parking and turning problems in the village. Cllr Thomas suggested that she approach the owner of Picton Farm to try to alleviate the problems with lighting and obstructions in the building. The Committee agreed that, should the venue be improved, it could remain as a polling place for Tharston residents, with a further review being carried out at the end of 2019.

Members noted that an additional Polling District was required for the Parliamentary Election for those electors who were moved from Hethersett into Little Melton and those who were moved from Old Costessey into New Costessey West, following the Governance Review. The Committee also noted that a new Polling District was required for a County Election for those electors who were moved from Bawburgh into Old Costessey. In response to a member's question, the Chairman clarified that although the Council would have a role in the County Boundary Review, this would be on a merely consultative/advisory basis.

It was noted that many of the issues raised by Polling Station Inspectors were minor and could be resolved by the Council working with venue managers.

It was then

RESOLVED:

To agree that, with effect from 1 December 2018:

1. the polling district amendments as indicated in Appendix 1 and Maps 1-12 be implemented;
 2. the polling places as indicated in Appendix 1 be approved, with the exception of Tharston and Hapton (Reference SU1) where Picton Farm would remain as the Polling Place for Tharston residents, should the venue be improved;
- and
3. the Returning Officer retain delegation of alternative polling places, should the designated polling place and therefore polling station be unavailable.

33. PARTICIPATION IN VOTER ID PILOT SCHEME 2019

Members considered the report of the Electoral Services Manager which detailed the request from the Cabinet Office for district councils to take part in a proposed Voter ID Pilot in relation to the scheduled District and Parish elections on 2 May 2019. It was noted that the Council had expressed an interest in taking part in the pilot scheme and that the Cabinet Office had originally required formal applications by 31 August, although this had since been extended to 10 September 2018.

The Committee discussed the list of ID requirements contained in the report and noted that if a resident did not bring their poll card to the polling station and could not produce any of the ID listed, their identity could be attested. Members agreed that it would be inappropriate for a poll clerk to be permitted to verify a resident's identity.

During discussion, members stressed the importance of effective communication between the Council and the electorate, confirming that correspondence should be clearly marked to alert residents that poll cards should be taken to the polling station.

In response to concerns raised around the requirement for poll cards to be barcoded so they could be scanned at the polling station and the extra resources required to facilitate the process, officers confirmed that funding for the costs of

piloting the scheme would be met by the Cabinet Office. The Electoral Services Manager also confirmed that staffing levels for administering election work were currently being addressed and these should be sufficient to enable the Council to undertake the pilot, but added that if the Council agree to take part in the pilot and she did not have confidence that adequate resources were in place, she would request that SNC withdraw from the process.

A brief discussion followed during which members endorsed the Council's application to pilot the scheme, with future arrangements to be delegated to the Electoral Services Manager in consultation with Cllrs C Kemp, K Kiddie and T Lewis. It was also suggested and agreed that, if no significant issues arose, there was no requirement for the Electoral Arrangements Review Committee to consider the item further.

It was then

RESOLVED:

To endorse the Council's application to pilot the Voter ID Scheme 2019 and, if no significant issues arise, future arrangements be delegated to the Electoral Services Manager in consultation with Cllrs C Kemp, K Kiddie and T Lewis.

(The meeting closed at 11:52 am)

Chairman