

Electoral Arrangements Committee

Agenda

Members of the Committee:

Cllr P Bulman (Chairman)
Cllr M Murrell (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr S Beadle
Cllr J Fisher
Cllr S Gurney
Cllr N Harpley

Cllr C Karimi-Ghovanlou
Cllr E Laming
Cllr J Leggett
Cllr K Vincent

Date & Time:

Monday 26 September 2022
6.00pm

Place:

Council Chamber, Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich, NR7 0DU

Contact:

Leah Arthurton tel (01508) 533610
Email: committee.bdc@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk
Website: www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk

PUBLIC ATTENDANCE:

If a member of the public would like to observe the meeting in person or to speak on an agenda item, please email your request to committee.bdc@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk, no later than 5.00pm Wednesday 21 September 2022.

Large print version can be made available

If you have any special requirements in order to attend this meeting, please let us know in advance.

AGENDA

1. **To receive declarations of interest from members;**
(guidance and flow chart attached – page 3)
2. **To report apologies for absence and to identify substitute members;**
3. **To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2020;**
(attached – page 5)
4. **Monitoring Officer Report;**
(report attached – page 8)

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AT MEETINGS

When declaring an interest at a meeting Members are asked to indicate whether their interest in the matter is pecuniary, or if the matter relates to, or affects a pecuniary interest they have, or if it is another type of interest. Members are required to identify the nature of the interest and the agenda item to which it relates. In the case of other interests, the member may speak and vote. If it is a pecuniary interest, the member must withdraw from the meeting when it is discussed. If it affects or relates to a pecuniary interest the member has, they have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public but must then withdraw from the meeting. Members are also requested when appropriate to make any declarations under the Code of Practice on Planning and Judicial matters.

<p>Have you declared the interest in the register of interests as a pecuniary interest? If Yes, you will need to withdraw from the room when it is discussed.</p>
<p>Does the interest directly:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. affect yours, or your spouse / partner's financial position? 2. relate to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to you or your spouse / partner? 3. Relate to a contract you, or your spouse / partner have with the Council 4. Affect land you or your spouse / partner own 5. Affect a company that you or your partner own, or have a shareholding in <p>If the answer is "yes" to any of the above, it is likely to be pecuniary.</p> <p>Please refer to the guidance given on declaring pecuniary interests in the register of interest forms. If you have a pecuniary interest, you will need to inform the meeting and then withdraw from the room when it is discussed. If it has not been previously declared, you will also need to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days.</p>
<p>Does the interest indirectly affect or relate any pecuniary interest you have already declared, or an interest you have identified at 1-5 above?</p> <p>If yes, you need to inform the meeting. When it is discussed, you will have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public, but you should not partake in general discussion or vote.</p>
<p>Is the interest not related to any of the above? If so, it is likely to be an other interest. You will need to declare the interest, but may participate in discussion and voting on the item.</p>
<p>Have you made any statements or undertaken any actions that would indicate that you have a closed mind on a matter under discussion? If so, you may be predetermined on the issue; you will need to inform the meeting, and when it is discussed, you will have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public, but must then withdraw from the meeting.</p>

**FOR GUIDANCE REFER TO THE FLOWCHART OVERLEAF.
PLEASE REFER ANY QUERIES TO THE MONITORING OFFICER IN THE FIRST
INSTANCE**

DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF



Minutes of a meeting of the **Electoral Arrangements Committee** held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich on **Wednesday 29 January 2020** at **6pm** when there were present:

	Mr P E Bulman – Chairman	
Cllr S C Beadle	Mrs C Karimi-Ghovanlou	Mrs K A Vincent
Mr J F Fisher	Mrs J Leggett	
Mrs S C Gurney	Mr M L Murrell	

In attendance were the Governance Manager, the Elections Services Manager and the Committee Officer (DM).

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE NO 8

No declarations of interest were received.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received.

3 POLLING DISTRICT AND PLACES REVIEW 2019/20

Members received the report on the Polling District and Places Review 2019/20 and the Chairman explained that the Council was required to undertake and complete a review of all polling districts and polling places at least once every five years with the last review having been undertaken in 2014/15. The report set out the process and decisions required for the review which needed to be completed by 31 January 2020. The review was a Council function but Council had delegated this responsibility to the Electoral Arrangements Committee. Following the formal review, arrangements for polling districts and places would continue to be kept under review as situations changed and new facilities became available or populations changed. It was noted that where possible efforts were made to avoid using school buildings unless the facilities were independent of the main school facility to avoid school closures.

Existing polling arrangements had been used as a starting point for the review and the consultation, together with feedback from the recent district, EU and Parliamentary elections. Comments from the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) had also been sought. No adverse comments or alternative suggestions had been received in relation to the Broadland constituency but suggestions had been received from the Labour Party in respect of the Norwich North constituency.

Members then considered the responses received as follows:

- ARO suggestion – to make a small change to the boundary between the two polling districts (HK1 and HK2) in Thorpe St Andrew NW, so that the existing polling station (St Andrews Centre) would be located in the polling district. However, a suggestion had been received to find an alternative building in a more suitable location. An inspection of the St Andrews Football Clubhouse had now taken place and this premises would be suitable and available. The Committee supported this proposal.

- Labour Party suggestions - that additional polling districts are created in the Norwich North constituency for Hellesdon, Sprowston and Thorpe St Andrew NW due to the high number of electors, so that additional polling stations can be allocated in those areas. The Governance Manager drew attention to the Electoral Commission guidance recommending that not more than 2,500 electors should be allocated to a polling station. There were twelve polling places in the district currently with almost or more than 2,500 electors allocated in person and, in line with the guidance, these places were split so that two stations were allocated in one building. There had been no complaints from the public about these stations or indeed any of the stations in the Norwich North constituency. The suitability of the arrangements at these stations had been tested at the recent Parliamentary election which had a high turnout and no issues had arisen. There were also limited options for suitable venues which could be considered as additional stations and some of the respondent's suggested possible options were not viable. Members supported the retention of the existing arrangements in these stations.
- Ward councillor for Sprowston Central (HF1) suggestion that a second polling station was needed for that ward as the existing arrangements were insufficient. The existing polling station was central to the area, the station was currently a split station in accordance with the guidance and no complaints had been received. Other options had been explored including use of the Methodist Church and a response from them regarding use of this facility was awaited. For the forthcoming Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May 2020, the venue would remain as the Senior Citizens Club, unless the Methodist Church hall became available. Members noted and supported this position.
- Representations received suggesting alternative polling stations for Sprowston West (HE3) and Thorpe St Andrew NW (HK2), as the current stations were outside the polling districts. With regard to arrangements at Sprowston (HE3), there were concerns this station was not ideal but there was a lack of viable alternatives. Enquiries would continue to find an alternative and this station would be kept under review. The arrangements at Thorpe St Andrew (HK2) were considered to be satisfactory, with the station being relatively central to the area and no change was proposed. Members supported these proposals.

In addition to these representations, the Committee also considered changes proposed in the Broadland constituency which had arisen since the review, namely at Blofield (BC1), Strumpshaw (BD4) and Rackheath (BY2) and a small modification at Hellesdon (HC1) which would see the venue alternate between the large community centre and the smaller parish room depending on availability and the type of election – Members supported these proposals.

With regard to Thorpe St Andrew (HL1) and (HL2), the Governance Manager drew attention to her suggestion for a small tweak to the boundary line to include a few houses on Yarmouth Road who would then be able to vote at the Dussindale Centre. Members supported this suggestion.

In answer to a question, the Governance Manager commented that the Norfolk County Council boundary review of 2019 would not impact on the proposals contained in this report.

It was then

RESOLVED

to note the outcome of the consultation of the review of polling district and places and, having formally considered the representations received for alternative proposals and the responses of the Acting Returning Officer (ARO), including updated comments following the recent Parliamentary election, to:

- (1) Retain existing arrangements in place except for the following:
 - a) BC1 (Blofield) – use the Court House, Yarmouth Road, Blofield.
 - b) BD4 (Strumpshaw) – use the new Community Hall, Mill Road, Strumpshaw.
 - c) BY2 (Rackheath) – continue to use the Church Centre but use the smaller room so that the community groups can still operate.
 - d) HC1 (Hellesdon NW) – use the Community Centre, Wood View Road for higher turnout elections and the Parish Council Chamber for lower turnout elections (RO making the decision for each election).
 - e) HL1 (Thorpe St Andrew SE) – make a small change to the southern boundary of the polling district so that it includes the small row of houses before the railway line.
 - f) HK1 (Thorpe St Andrew NW) – use the St Andrews Football Clubhouse premises.
- (2) Monitor the following polling places, in case more suitable alternative polling places become available:
 - a) HE3 (Sprowston West) – continue to investigate whether there are any alternative polling places within the polling district, including the possibility of using a mobile unit.
 - b) HF1 (Sprowston Central) – if it is available and suitable, to consider the use of Sprowston Methodist Church, instead of the Senior Citizens Club.

The meeting closed at 6.40pm

Monitoring Officer Report

Report Author(s): Linda Mockford
Governance Manager
01603 430424
linda.mockford@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk

Portfolio: Leader

Ward(s) Affected: Coltishall and Spixworth with St Faiths

Purpose of the Report:

An issue with a previous parish boundary change has been identified in that it inadvertently resulted in changes to ward and county boundaries being made incorrectly. This report seeks to try to rectify this issue in time for the 2023 elections.

Recommendations:

That the Electoral Arrangements Committee recommends that because of the changes made following the community governance review in 2013, Council agrees to submit a request to the Boundary Commission making consequential recommendations for related alterations to the boundaries for the Coltishall and Spixworth with St Faiths district wards and the current Hevingham & Spixworth and Wroxham county divisions.

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report informs members of an issue with the Coltishall and Spixworth with St Faiths district ward and Hevingham & Spixworth and Wroxham County boundaries.
- 1.2 It seeks to try to rectify this issue in time for the 2023 May elections.

2. Background

- 2.1 In 2012, following a request from Spixworth Parish council and Crostwick Parish Meeting, the Council carried out a community governance review for Spixworth parish. The terms of reference for the review were as follows:
 - To consider the request from Spixworth Parish Council and Crostwick Parish Meeting to realign part of the boundary between the 2 parishes to take into account the immediate and future development needs in the vicinity of North Walsham Road, Spixworth
 - To give due regard to the wishes of the occupiers of the 3 residential properties and the owners/occupiers of the residential care home that are just to the East of the boundary and so within Crostwick parish, but on the western side of North Walsham Road as to their views on the suggestion to move their address into Spixworth
 - To receive representations from all interested parties including the parish council, parish meeting, all affected residents, the local ward councillors, and the Norfolk County Council Divisional Members.
- 2.2 The regulatory committee considered representations received arising from the review and on 21 February 2013, Council approved the changes to the Spixworth/ Crostwick parish boundary. The official order was made on 7 March 2013, for the parish boundary changes and this came into effect on 1 June 2013. The changes to the boundary resulted in an area being transferred from Crostwick parish into Spixworth parish
- 2.3 District Councils cannot alter principal boundaries but as part of the community governance review, the Council could have considered requesting the Boundary Commission to make consequential changes to the boundaries of the district wards and county divisions, to reflect the changes made at parish level. This would have transferred the affected area from Coltishall ward to Spixworth with St Faiths district ward and from Wroxham division to Hevingham and Spixworth county division, ensuring that all three electoral boundaries were coterminous. However, the reports that were considered by Regulatory committee and Council never mentioned the knock-on effect to district and county boundaries, so Members never considered the impact to these electoral boundaries.
- 2.4 Therefore, the official order that came into effect on 1 June 2013 resulted in changes to the parish boundaries only and the Order obliged the Electoral Registration Officer to make any necessary amendments to the electoral register to

reflect the new electoral arrangements. It appears that officers did not appreciate the complexity of the different boundaries and rather than making amendments to the parish boundary only, all three boundaries were changed – ie, parish, district and county. This means that since 2013, there have been a number of electors in Spixworth parish voting in the Spixworth ward and Wroxham division, rather than the Coltishall ward and Hevingham & Spixworth division.

3. Current position/findings

- 3.1 In 2013, the parish boundary changes only affected 4 properties – 2 properties stayed in Crostwick and 2 moved to Spixworth (which resulted in a rather odd boundary line). Since the boundary changes, the number of houses and electorate for the area affected has been as follows:

Year as at 1 Dec	Prop moved to Spixworth incorrectly district & county	Electors moved to Spixworth incorrectly district & county
2013	2	39 (inc care home)
2014	2	37 (inc care home)
2015	12	44
2016	54	125
2017	54	115
2018	54	102
2019	62	111
2020	77	128
2021	80	128
2022(current)	80	125

- 3.2 Since the boundary changes, there have been district elections in 2015 and 2019. The results for these wards were as follows:

District elections – 2015					
Coltishall ward			Spixworth with St Faiths ward		
Candidate	Description	Votes	Candidate	Description	Votes
Aquarone	Lib Dem	175	Allen	Cons	948
Mallett	Cons	829 E	Cutts	UKIP	853
Marshall	UKIP	197	Kular	Lib Dem	1080 E
McNair	Labour	328	Mackenzie	Cons	690
			Roper	Lib Dem	1223 E

District elections – 2019					
Coltishall ward			Spixworth with St Faiths ward		
Candidate	Description	Votes	Candidate	Description	Votes
Copplestone	Cons	374 E	Couzens	Labour	126
Crane	Lib Dem	128	Dunn	Cons	333
Jones	Labour	163	Hill	Cons	335
			Holland	Lib Dem	679 E
			Jones	Labour	109
			Roper	Lib Dem	849 E

3.3 There have also been county elections in 2017, 2019 and 2021. The results for these divisions were as follows:

County elections – 2017					
Hevingham & Spixworth division			Wroxham division		
Candidate	Description	Votes	Candidate	Description	Votes
Gardiner	UKIP	164	Ball	Green	162
Roper	Lib Dems	1297 E	Garrod	Cons	1744 E
Vincent	Cons	1068	Heard	Lib Dem	588
Williams	Labour	221	Hemmingway	Labour	315
			Wymer	UKIP	148

Wroxham division by-election - 2019		
Candidate	Description	Votes
Davis	Green	174
Heard	Lib Dem	395
Wheeler	Labour	163
Whymark	Cons	922 E

County elections – 2021					
Hevingham & Spixworth division			Wroxham division		
Candidate	Description	Votes	Candidate	Description	Votes
Corson	Cons	872	Ball	Green	345
Hemmingway	Labour	199	Moore	Lib Dem	288
Roper	Lib Dem	1545 E	Wheeler	Labour	439
			Whymark	Cons	1802 E

3.4 The results show that even in the unlikely event that every elector in the affected area voted and that they voted for the second or third placed candidates, it would not have made a difference to the results.

3.5 There has also been a neighbourhood plan referendum for Spixworth in 2021, but this was held on parish boundaries so is not an issue.

4. Proposed action

4.1 It is recommended that because of the changes made following the community governance review in 2013, Council agrees to submit a request to the Boundary Commission applying for consequential changes for related alterations to the boundaries for the Coltishall and Spixworth with St Faiths district wards and the current Hevingham & Spixworth and Wroxham county divisions.

- 4.2 Such a request must include evidence as to why the changes should be implemented and must also consider any change in the number or distribution of electors which is likely to occur in five years. Planning assumptions and likely growth within the area, based on planning permissions granted or local plans should be used to project a five year forecast.
- 4.3 Officers consider that this change is required as the residents in the area in question believe that they are already in the Spixworth with Faiths ward and Hevingham & Spixworth division, so it would be confusing for them if this situation is not rectified. The ward councillors have been consulted on this issue and they agree and fully support this proposed action.
- 4.4 Planning officers have been consulted on future growth in the area and the five year predictions for development is as follows:

Ward	Properties Aug 2022	Electors Aug 2022	ratio per property	Future development expected to complete over next 5 years	additional electorate expected based on previous ratio	New total electors expected	Per seat
Coltishall 1 seat	1246	2078	1.67	35	58	2136	2136
Spixworth 2 seats	2592	4418	1.7	199	338	4756	2378

- 4.5 Therefore, officers are happy that future planned development would not impact the proposed boundary change.
- 4.6 The Council's proposal must be submitted by the end of October. Whilst there is no guarantee that the Boundary Commission will agree to this request, especially as the impact to the ward and county boundaries were not considered as part of the parish review, officers would still prefer to try to rectify this before next year's elections.
- 4.7 Members may wish to note that Broadland District Council will soon require a district boundary review due to electoral imbalances and because it has been so long since the last review. The district boundary can be rectified at this time. However, the district boundary review will not be held before the 2023 elections.
- 4.8 The new Norfolk County Council boundaries have created a Coltishall and Spixworth county division so this issue will be rectified for this county division. However, these boundaries take effect for the 2025 elections, so would not be in place for any potential by-election.

5. Other options

- 5.1 The Electoral Registration Officer could implement the correct district (and county) boundaries for the May 2023 elections. This would involve setting up a 'ghost' polling district to ensure that the affected electors were separated from Spixworth to ensure they were given the correct district ballot paper. This could be quite confusing at the polling station, especially for voters who may be used to voting for the Spixworth ward.
- 5.2 This option will have to be implemented, if the Boundary Commission doesn't agree to the request outlined in 4.1 above. Doing nothing is not an option.

6. Issues and risks

- 6.1 **Resource Implications** – no implications
- 6.2 **Legal Implications** – legal implications on conducting a review have been included in the report. Legal advice has also been sought on the implications of the elections since 2013.
- 6.3 **Equality Implications** – no implications
- 6.4 **Environmental Impact** – no implications
- 6.5 **Crime and Disorder** – no implications
- 6.6 **Risks** – no other risks

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 Action needs to be taken to rectify the existing boundary issue of the affected wards and divisions.

8. Recommendations

The Electoral Arrangements Committee recommends that because of the changes made following the community governance review in 2013, Council agrees to submit a request to the Boundary Commission making consequential recommendations for related alterations to the boundaries for the Coltishall and Spixworth with St Faiths district wards and the current Hevingham & Spixworth and Wroxham county divisions.