

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Thursday, 25 February 2021

Present: Councillor James Scholes (Chairman)
Councillors Dr Hall, Rands, Williams and Pope

Officers in Attendance: Jane Clarke (Head of Policy and Governance) and Caroline Britt (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Pound

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

GP8/20 Apologies were received from Councillors Funnell and Lewis.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

GP9/20 Councillor Pound (visiting Member registered to speak on Agenda Item 5) declared that he was a liveryman of the Skinners Company, a Governor and Director of the Skinners Academy Trust of which Skinners Primary School was a member.

NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS WISHING TO SPEAK (IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 18):

GP10/20 Councillor Pound had registered to speak on Agenda Item 5 – New Polling Station in Sherwood Ward (Knights' Wood).

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 19 JANUARY 2021

GP11/20 Members reviewed the minutes. No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting dated 19 January 2021 be approved as a correct record.

NEW POLLING STATION IN SHERWOOD WARD (KNIGHTS' WOOD)

GP12/20 Councillor Pound had registered to speak and included the following:

- A new polling station in Sherwood was very welcome.
- As most of the residents who would use the polling station would be able to walk there, parking was not considered to be an issue.
- Would there be an recompense for the disruption, the cancellation of a hot lunch and the cancellation of the after school club.
- Confirmation was requested that marshalling would be increased at drop off and collection times to ensure safeguarding issues particularly for the early years students would be using the same door as those entering the polling station.
- A warden on the road was requested, particularly at drop off and pick up times so that voters who arrived by car were directed to the back of the building.
- A request for large parking notices on the road that would direct voters to the back of the school.

Jane Clarke head of Policy and Governance presented the report that provided details of the response to the consultation and recommended that a new polling place and polling station at The Skinners' Kent Primary School be approved.

Discussion and responses to Members questions included the following:

- The consultation period ran from 20 January to 16 February 2021 with a total of 24 responses received.
- The main issues raised by those who responded included:
 - o Disruption to the education at the school.
 - o Parking levels (both on site and in the surrounding areas).
 - o Increased traffic.
- Previous experience showed that most voters walked to the polling station so traffic issues were not seen as a major concern.
- Parking issues had been discussed with the school and it had been agreed the school would send TWBC a map that gave details of the parking available. This would be sent to all voters who would be using the new polling station.
- The provision of providing Marshalls was not seen as a problem and TWBC would work with the school to ensure there was adequate cover to manage queues.
- The school had confirmed that the polling station could be run at the school without the school having to close.
- No other sites were suggested as part of the consultation process.
- TWBC assumed the booking fee given to the school would cover any disruption including the loss of a hot lunch.
- TWBC had large signs that were used at polling stations and would be able to accommodate anything that was needed at this polling station.
- The cost to run the new polling station would be in the region of £200 for the booking fee and about £500 in staffing costs for the day.
- The issues raised were not unique to this particular polling station. TWBC were accustomed to working with schools, halls etc. to ensure that all the necessary mechanisms were in place that would enable the polling station to work in a safe environment.
- Reviews of polling stations were undertaken on a regular basis. It would be important to review the new polling station once the elections had taken place and to take account of any measures that could be improved.

RESOLVED –

1. That the results of the public consultation be noted.
2. That agreement to set up a new polling district in the Sherwood Ward called CC be approved.
3. That a new polling place and polling station at The Skinners' Kent Primary School, The Avenue, Knights Wood, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN2 3GS be approved.
4. That the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) make amendments to the Register of Electors as necessary be approved.

URGENT BUSINESS

GP13/20 There was no urgent business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

GP14/20 The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 13 April 2021 at 6:30pm.

NOTE: The meeting concluded at 7.00 pm.