

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 27 April 2021

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

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

Other Members in Attendance:

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

GP15/20 Apologies were received from Councillors Lewis and Rands.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

GP16/20 There were no disclosable pecuniary or other significant interests declared at the meeting.

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

GP17/20 There were no visiting Members who had registered as wishing to speak.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 25 FEBRUARY 2021

GP18/20 Members reviewed the minutes. No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting dated 25 February 2021 be approved as a correct record.

TEMPORARY CHANGE OF POLLING STATION FOR POLLING DISTRICTS OO AND PP

GP19/20 Jane Clarke, Head of Policy and Governance presented the report that asked the Committee to note a temporary change of polling station from the Rackliff Centre to the St Paul's Church Centre in Rusthall (Districts OO and PP).

Discussion and responses to Members questions included the following:

- In January 2021 surveys were sent out to all polling station sites to ask a number of key questions including, social distancing, accommodations, one way flows and how the site would work under the current Covid restrictions.
- The Rackliff Centre raised a number of concerns. The size of the venue presented issues around social distancing with no separate exit point and an entry point that was quite narrow.
- The only way a one way flow could be accommodated at the Rackliff Centre was to use the kitchen area. This was deemed inappropriate as this was the only area election staff could use during their breaks. If electors were to use this route, election staff would have had to remain in their PPE gear which was not acceptable.
- Alternative stations were investigated and the St Paul's Church Centre was assessed as suitable. The room was large, with separate entry and exit points.

- Because this would be a temporary change, only taking place due to the Covid pandemic, the Chief Executive made an executive decision to move the polling station to the St Paul's Church Centre. The change would be just for this election.
- A suggestion to use the St Paul's Church Centre for future elections had been received. This would be considered as part of the polling district review.
- The number of electorate using the venue was approximately 2,000 for the OO district and approximately 1,500 for the PP district (total electorate, not turn out figures).
- Voters were initially notified of the change in polling station via their poll cards. Following notification of a slight error on the cards, a letter including a map was sent to all electors.
- There was disabled parking available near the St Paul's Church Centre but only limited on street parking. However, it was normal practice to locate polling stations within easy walking distance for residents so parking provision was not an issue.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

URGENT BUSINESS

GP20/20 There was no urgent business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

GP21/20 The date of the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 6 July 2021 at 6:30pm.

NOTE: The meeting concluded at 6.50 pm.