

Attendance

Members of the Governance and Ethics Committee

Cllr John Reynolds (Chair)
Cllr Jonathan Crofts (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Celia Hibbert
Cllr Louise Miles
Cllr Phil Page
Cllr Milkinderpal Jaspal
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Wendy Thompson
Cllr Ellis Turrell

Employees

David Pattison	Chief Operating Officer
Laura Gittos	Head of Governance
Laura Noonan	Electoral Services Manager
Jas Kaur	Democratic Services Manager
Donna Cope	Democratic Services Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bennett and Birch.

Councillor Turrell attended as a substitute for Councillor Bennett.
- 2 Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest.
- 3 Minutes of the previous meeting**
That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 September 2022 be approved as a correct record.
- 4 Matters arising**
There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.
- 5 Preparations for Elections Act Introduction**
David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, introduced the report: Preparations for Elections Act Introduction. The report provided an overview of the Elections Act and

outlined the initial preparations for implementing Voter ID and Accessibility arrangements in May 2023.

Laura Noonan, Electoral Services Manager, outlined the report, highlighting the significant changes that the Elections Act would have on the running of elections and the timeline of when these changes would be implemented.

Councillor John Reynolds moved the recommendation in the report. Councillor Jonathan Crofts seconded the recommendation.

The report was debated by Committee, and a number of key issues were raised. The Electoral Services Manager responded to questions asked and it was noted that:

- A comprehensive communications plan was paramount to ensuring that voters were fully aware of the changes that were taking place, particularly in relation to the requirement of Voter ID.
- The communications plan would be presented to Committee in January for their consideration.
- Following the release of secondary legislation in November, members would be given a full list of acceptable photo ID.
- Expired identification documents would be accepted provided they remained a true likeness to the individual.
- Every consideration was being made to ensure voters were fully aware of the new voting requirements, including face to face support facilities across the city, and the provision of information in different languages.
- The 3,700 electors estimated to not have suitable ID would be looked at and targeted where possible.

Resolved:

1. That the timeline and key areas of the Elections Act be noted.

6 **Appointing an Independent Member**

Resolved:

That the item be deferred to the next meeting.

7 **Final Polling District and Polling Place Proposals**

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, introduced the report: Final Polling District and Polling Place Proposals. The report detailed the final proposals for the polling district and polling place scheme for 2023 for approval by the Council.

Laura Noonan, Electoral Services Manager, outlined the report and summarised the final proposals. It was noted that Lower Bradley Community Centre was no longer available and therefore it was proposed that the Rocket Pool Strengthening Families Hub be used as an alternative location in Bilston South.

The report was debated by Committee, and the Electoral Services Manager responded to questions asked.

It was noted that a polling station for Tettenhall Wightwick, located outside of the ward boundary, was missing from paragraph 7.2 of the report, and the Electoral Services Manager agreed to rectify this.

Resolved:

That Council be recommended to:

1. Approve the polling district and polling place scheme contained in Appendix 1 to be adopted in relation to all elections.
2. Approve the necessary amendments to polling districts for the publication of the 1 December 2022 electoral register.
3. Approve the delegation of authority to the Returning Officer and Chief Operating Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Governance, Leader and Leader of the Opposition to make minor alterations to the polling station scheme prior to the next compulsory review (October 2023 to January 2025).

That Governance & Ethics Committee noted:

2. That the submissions made to the Council as part of the consultation on the review of polling districts and polling place, along with the Acting Returning Officer Response, were set out in Appendix 5.
3. That a double polling station in Bilston South was yet to be confirmed. A site visit had been carried out and it was proposed that the Rocket Pool Strengthening Families Hub be used in place of Lower Bradley Community Centre. Assets confirmed that the Council were currently in the process of disposing this asset, and that all ward Councillors had been consulted on this project.

8 **Protocol for Questions by Members of the Public**

David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer, introduced the report: Protocol for Questions by Members of the Public. The report outlined the proposed protocol and detailed the practicalities of how questions by members of the public would be dealt with.

The report was debated by Committee, and the following amendments to the proposed protocol were agreed:

1. That the questions should be asked by members of the public, not an officer, and there should be the opportunity for them to ask a supplementary question if required.
2. That the deadline for submitting a question be changed from '*no later than noon seven clear working days before the meeting*' to '*no later than seven clear working days before the meeting*'.

Resolved:

That Council be recommended to:

4. Approve the Protocol for Questions by Members of the Public, subject to the above amendments, and implement from December 2022.
5. Authorise the Chief Operating Officer to publicise the Protocol for Questions by Members of the Public on the Council's website.