

# **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the  
**Polling Districts and Polling Places Review Sub-Committee**  
held on Thursday, 15th September, 2011 at Committee Suite 1, Westfields,  
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

## **PRESENT**

Councillors W Livesley, A Moran, D Topping, D Marren (for Cllr Martin) and  
D Newton (for Cllr Cartlidge)

## **In attendance**

Lindsey Parton, Registration Service and Business Manager  
Diane Todd, Electoral Services Team Manager  
Natalie Bown, Policy Officer  
Paul Mountford, Democratic Services Officer  
Rose Hignett, Senior Elections Officer  
Sandra Hobbs, Senior Elections Officer  
Marion Hancock, Elections Officer  
Mathew Ablett, Elections Officer

## **Apologies**

Councillors R Cartlidge and A Martin

## **1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

### **RESOLVED**

That Councillor Andrew Martin be appointed Chairman of the Sub-Committee.

## **2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

### **RESOLVED**

That Councillor Bill Livesley be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Sub-Committee.

Councillor Bill Livesley (Vice-Chairman) in the Chair

## **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

#### 4 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present.

#### 5 REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

At its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2011, the Constitution Committee had authorised the publication of the notice of a Polling Districts and Polling Places Review and had appointed the Sub-Committee with delegated powers to undertake the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places as required by the Electoral Administration Act 2006. The Act had introduced a statutory duty for local authorities to carry out a review of their parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007, and at least every four years thereafter.

Polling Districts were areas created by the division of a constituency, ward or division into smaller parts within which a Polling Place could be determined. Polling Places were buildings or areas in which Polling Stations could be located, Polling Stations being rooms or buildings within which the poll took place.

The Review had three stages:

##### *(1) The Preliminary Stage*

The first stage of the process involved giving notice of the Review. This had been done at the end of June 2011.

##### *(2) The Proposal Stage*

The Council now needed to devise a proposal for new Polling District and Polling Place arrangements. There was no requirement to change any existing arrangements. However, any change, or decision to make no change, had to be supported by a reason. All interested parties, including elected members and disability groups, would be notified of the review and invited to make representations.

In practical terms, suitable polling stations should ideally be identified first so that these can be used to build polling places and then polling districts. The aim should be to identify polling stations within the ward in question.

In making a decision on the proposals, there were two key factors which had to be addressed:

- the reasonable requirements of the electors; and
- accessibility for disabled persons to the probable Polling Stations within the Polling Place.

### *(3) The Consultation Stage*

The consultation stage dealt with representations and comments on the Council's proposals for Polling Districts and Places and involved:

- a compulsory submission from the Returning Officer; and
- submissions from other persons and bodies.

Following the consultation stage, the Authority would need to make its final decisions on the review, taking into account all the representations received.

A timetable for the review had been circulated with the agenda.

Under the Council's Constitution, the final decision on the review rested with the Council. However, the decision had to be taken before 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011 which would require a special Council meeting. As there would be no other business for such a meeting, Council at its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> October would be asked to delegate to the Constitution Committee authority to take the final decision on the review at the Committee's scheduled meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

The Officers reported that the Boundary Commission for England had announced its intention to carry out a review of Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England. The Commission's initial proposals had been published on 13<sup>th</sup> September. This would be followed by a 12 week consultation period, ending on 5<sup>th</sup> December. The Commission had to report to Government by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013. Local authority wards were seen as the basic building blocks for designing constituencies. However, the relevant legislation defined such wards as those which were in force as at 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010. This created an issue for Cheshire East Council since the review would be based on the former Borough Ward boundaries rather than the new ones. It would now be necessary to determine which polling districts fell within each of the proposed Parliamentary constituencies. Legal advice was being sought as to whether the review of Polling Districts and Polling Places could be postponed until after the Parliamentary constituency review had been completed, although initial indications were that the Polling Districts and Places review would have to go ahead regardless. Officers would confirm the position at the next meeting.

In the meantime, Members agreed to proceed with their initial consideration of the draft proposals for Polling Districts and Polling Places in Cheshire East. In doing so, they noted that the north of the Borough was likely to be more significantly affected by the Parliamentary Constituency review than the south and that their efforts at this first meeting should primarily be aimed at reviewing the proposed arrangements for the south, which was largely unaffected.

To assist the Sub-Committee in its task, the following documents had been circulated with the report:

- a list of existing polling arrangements with proposed changes and representations; and
- a set of maps together with a corresponding set of summary issues in respect of each ward.

Members considered the schedule of proposed changes set out in Appendix B to the report and agreed a number of specific amendments. They also made a number of general comments:

1. the proposed changes should be costed so that the financial implications could be taken into account.
2. school buildings should not be used if alternative buildings were available so as not to disrupt education.
3. technical changes to registers should be undertaken by Officers without the need for further consideration by Members, who would focus their attention on those changes where people would be required to move to a different polling station.

Members noted a written representation from Councillor Louise Brown in relation to the proposed arrangements for the Broken Cross and Upton ward and in particular the unsuitability of the Cricket Club as a polling station. Members asked that Councillor Brown's comments be taken on board.

## **RESOLVED**

That

- (1) the proposed approach to the review and timetable as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved;
- (2) parish clerks be included in the consultation on the review;
- (3) the legal position as regards postponing the review be confirmed at the next meeting;
- (4) the schedule of changes be updated to reflect the specific amendments agreed by Members and be resubmitted to the next meeting; and
- (5) the next meeting be held in about two weeks' time on a date to be agreed.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.25 am

Councillor Bill Livesley (Vice-Chairman)