**MINUTES RELATING TO THE POLLING PLACE AND POLLING DISTRICT REVIEW FROM KBC FORUMS/COMMITTEES**

| **Body** | **Date** | **Minute** |
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| Research & Development Committee | 2/9/14 | Members were provided with a report which sought to notify the Committee in respect of the Polling Place and Polling District Review and requested comments on the establishment of a process for consideration of the existing structure of polling stations within the Borough/Constituency.  The Committee was advised that the review was being undertaken to comply with the amended Representation of the People Act 1983, which required Returning Officers to review polling districts and polling places within their Council area every five years. It was noted that although this process was a statutory requirement, it was undertaken informally by KBC on an annual basis. Polling station inspector report sheets had enabled KBC to identify issues after each election which were then factored in to planning for future years.,  The Committee was asked to consider the reporting process that would culminate in a final decision being made regarding the structure at Full Council in December 2014. Notice of the review would be published shortly and communicated to Town and Parish Councils, election agents and other stakeholders. Comments received would be collated and published, with further consultation undertaken prior to the final report to Full Council. Following discussion it was  **RESOLVED** that   1. the review timetable and process as outlined in the officer report be recommended to Executive Committee on 10th September 2014; and 2. the process for consideration of the existing structure of polling stations within the Borough as outlined in the officer report be recommended to Executive Committee on 10th September 2014 |
| Executive | 10/9/14 | A report was submitted which notified members of the Executive in respect of the Polling Place and Polling District review and provided details of the Research and Development Committee's recommendations in respect of it.  It was noted that It was a legal requirement that Returning Officers review the polling districts and polling places within their Council area every five years.  **RESOLVED** that the process for the Polling Place and Polling District Review be noted and agreed. |
| Kettering Town Forum | 14/9/14 | Graham Soulsby provided the meeting with a brief update on the Polling Place and Polling District Review being undertaken by Electoral Services.  The meeting noted that this item would be brought back to the forum in November for comment as part of the consultation process for the review, prior to a final report being taken to Full Council in December. |
| A6 Towns Forum | 16/9/14 | Martin Hammond introduced the report, the purpose of which was to inform members of the Polling Place and Polling District Review.  The forum was advised that a review of Polling Districts and Polling Places in the Kettering Borough Council area, and the existing Kettering Parliamentary Constituency, was due to commence shortly. This was a statutory process, which had to be undertaken every five years. Any changes that would be introduced as a result of the review would be in place in time for the local government and parliamentary elections to be held on 7th May 2015.  Members’ attention was drawn to Appendix A to the report which listed all the premises used as polling stations for the elections held in May 2011 and also details of changes made between that date and the European Parliamentary Elections held in May 2014.  As part of the consultation process for the review, members would be asked for their comments on the existing situation with regard to polling districts, polling places and polling stations.  Members were invited to comment on the existing structure of polling stations within their A6 Towns area of the Borough/Constituency area in accordance with the timetable as detailed in the report and it was confirmed that a further report would be brought back to the next meeting. Possible items to address in the A6 Towns were highlighted as follows:-  *Burton Latimer*  Were members happy with the Civic Centre and the Community Centre?  *Desborough*  Were members happy with two or should there be three?  *Rothwell*  Any updates on the situation in Rothwell would be welcome. The Junior School had to use again instead of the proposed Rothwell Methodist Church.  *Barton Seagrave*  Was the new village hall/community centre considered a good location?  Members made the following comments:-   * It was reported that in Newton there were only 35 people most of whom had postal votes and the need for a specific polling station in the village was questioned. Martin Hammond responded that if that was the wish of the Parish Council that would be something to be considered. David Watson agreed to poll everyone in the village. * Schools should be avoided if at all possible. * What was the situation in relation to using licensed premises? In response, it was confirmed that licensed premises had been used in the past but there needed to be a clear barrier between the area of the polling station and the area in which alcohol was being consumed, ideally with a completely separate entrance and egress.   The report was noted. |
| Rural Forum | 17/9/14 | A report had been submitted to notify members of the forum in respect of the Polling Place & Polling District review.  Members of the forum were invited to comment in respect of the existing structure of polling stations within the rural area of the Borough/Constituency, in accordance with the timetable detailed in the report.  Cllr David Watson advised that he had written to all the villagers of Newton asking their opinion of losing Newton as a polling place, and would feed the response back once received.  Cllr Richard Barnwell requested that the ‘c/o’ was removed from the address for Mawsley Community Centre. |
| Kettering Town Forum | 24/11/14 | The forum was advised that there was a legal requirement to undertake a review every five years, although this figure had recently changed from every four years to fall in-line with fixed term parliaments.  The review consultation would end on 30th November and representations were still being received from across the constituency. A report detailing existing provisions was available on the KBC website, and the review had been publicised by letter, media release and at council committee meetings.  The meeting was advised that only a small number of potential alternative polling places had been identified to date, although KBC was happy to visit and assess any site that had yet to be considered. All existing polling places had been provided with a detailed questionnaire to complete and return, with only one outstanding at the current time. These responses had enabled the creation of a comprehensive database regarding each building used as part of the elections process, with any issues or exceptions recorded on the elections management system. Polling place inspections were currently underway to ensure sites were fit for purpose and to identify any alterations that may require further action.  It was noted that a letter had been issued to all local disabled organisations regarding the provision of disabled facilities at polling places, although no response had yet been received.  In addition to examining existing facilities, consideration had been taken in regard to future development projections within the Borough, as KBC had a duty to make sure polling districts and polling places were fit for purpose during the period to 2019. Planned development in three areas of Kettering (Ise Lodge, St Peters and William Knibb) had been identified for monitoring as a result of this work to ensure the correct provision of polling places. Such situations showed the value of using interim reviews, with trigger figures factored in by Council to allow for the year on year examination of provisions.  At the conclusion of the consultation, response would be collated and an interim report taken first to Research and Development Committee, followed by Executive Committee, prior to a final report being submitted to Council on 17th December. This report would request Council to approve the making of a Polling Place Order that would need to be completed by 31st January 2015 and then be in force in time for the May 2015 elections.  Members of the forum raised the following questions/comments:-   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Question/comment** | **Answer** | | Have all town and parish councils been notified of the review? | Yes | | The Parish Church rooms on the market square have entirely pedestrian access, with a number of elderly electors, has this been noted? | The Elections Team are aware of the restraints of the Parish Church rooms, especially with development in the town centre. At some point in the near future the size of the building may require reassessment of the site as a polling station for subsequent elections. | | The William Knibb Centre rear access requires both adequate signage and lighting | The Elections Team are aware of the issues at that site and have in the past put extra lighting in. | | The William Knibb Centre may, in future, have no rear access due to the installation of a children’s area at the rear of the building | This information will be taken on board and details checked. | | Do electors have to pay to park when attending the Cornmarket Hall to vote? | There is currently no facility for free-parking for electors | | Do polling stations have to be public buildings? | KBC actively tries to avoid commercial premises for use as polling stations, as businesses tend to charge for loss of earnings which are hard to quantify and are not reimbursed by central government. | | Are there contingency plans if buildings are undergoing building works at the time of the election? | Polling stations have been provisionally booked for May 2015, particularly in terms of schools. Advance notice helps them to manage their schedules. Schools would be written to closer to the election to confirm dates and ask whether any building works were due. | | Does internet and postal voting reduce the need for polling stations? | Currently there is no method of voting by internet. To date there are approximately 16k registered postal voters, although this figure is expected to rise prior to the election and certainly helps keep polling station queues down. | |
| A6 Towns Forum | 26/11/14 | The forum was informed that at the previous forum meeting on 17th September 2014, members had been informed that a further report would be submitted seeking the Forum’s comments on the Polling Place and Polling District Review as part of the consultation process for the review, prior to a final report being taken to Council in December 2014. Members were informed that this would be the last hearing in respect of the review with the consultation due to finish at the end of November. It was a legal requirement that Councils reviewed the polling districts and polling places within their area every five years to match fixed term parliaments. Progress so far had included a review of disabled provision within polling places and there had been some national debate on this area which would be included in the final report.  Following a presentation of the review, Members made the following comments:-  Burton Latimer:-   * In view of previous confusion over polling stations in Burton Latimer, it was suggested that having someone to meet and greet voters might be useful. It was confirmed that this was something being considered but would be subject to resources.   Desborough:-   * The two public houses were suggested due to their accessibility and large car parks. In response, it was confirmed that although nothing would be ruled out, the use of licensed premises, in particular public houses would be avoided if possible due to, amongst other reasons, loss of earnings for the businesses concerned. * Marlow House upstairs was suggested. It was confirmed that this venue had been looked at and whilst it may be suitable for a smaller election, it was envisaged that there would be too many people having to queue for the lift etc in respect of the 2015 elections and therefore was not considered to be an appropriate venue for this time.   Rothwell:-   * Montsaye Academy Sports Hall was suggested. In response, it was reported that the school had not been considered to be geographically ideal. However, it was noted that the development of any future housing on that side of Roth well might make the location more appropriate for the future.   General   * The question was asked as to the impact of postal voting on the review. It was confirmed that there was a high pro-rata of postal voters – 25% - which equated to 17,000 out of 72,000 of those eligible to vote. |
| Rural Forum | 27/11/14 | The forum were advised that Cllr Watson had retrieved views of Newton parish  with regard to the polling station being removed.  No further comments were  received on this point from the floor.  Cllr Barnwell advised that the disabled access ramp at Cransley was now repaired  and the area improved.  Loddington and Braybrooke questioned if the inadequate lighting issue was  external rather than internal. |
| Research & Development Committee | 2/12/14 | A report was submitted which sought the Committee’s comments in relation to the polling place and polling district review prior to submission to the Executive Committee.  The Committee was advised that the consultation process for the review had concluded on 30th November with a document containing all the received responses being circulated to members along with a set of draft recommendations.  Members noted that review update reports had been taken to all the geographic forums during November, with a further report due to be presented to Executive Committee on 10th December, prior to a final report being submitted to Council on 17th December.  The meeting heard that main issue identified as facing KBC as part of the review was the unprecedented level of development to be delivered in the Borough during the five year review period. In order to address this and ensure that there was not over-provision of facilities; Members were requested to agree a trigger point for interim reviews in identified polling districts where necessary. It was suggested that the trigger point should be a 25% increase in the electorate when compared to the December 2014 figures. A review might find that existing provision was adequate but Members noted the importance of having a method in place to assess the best way forward.  The following ward specific recommendations were outlined to the Committee:-  **All Saints, Avondale Grange, Brambleside, Northfield, Pipers Hill, St Michaels & Wicksteed**  No change to existing provision unless unforeseen circumstances occur to the existing provision for polling places which will be treated as individual cases  **Barton Ward**   * Examine the need for an additional polling district being created subject to a trigger point of 25% increase in electorate from the 2014 figure being reached * Determine the date of the likely availability and the suitability of the new Community Facility off Polwell Lane for use as a polling place * Determine the likely availability and suitability for use as polling places of the new community facilities in the part of the East Kettering SUE within this ward when they are built and operational   **Ise Lodge Ward**   * Consider the introduction of additional polling districts to this Ward, subject to a trigger point of 25% increase in electorate from the 2014 figure being reached * Determine the availability and suitability of the new community facilities in the part of the East Kettering SUE within this ward for use as polling places when they are built and operational * In the case of facilities not being available at the appropriate time, consider the feasibility for a short time of (a) mobile building/s being used for polling purposes in this area.   **St Peters Ward**   * Consider the introduction of additional polling districts to this Ward, subject to a trigger point of 25% increase in electorate from the 2014 figure being reached * It is considered that both of the existing polling places should be able to cope with additional voters. However, it may be practical to review this prior to each election and re-allocate some voters to an existing polling district if necessary to ensure as far as possible that there is a reasonable balance of voters allocated to each of the existing locations (Hall Meadow Primary School and St Thomas More RC School)ensuring that that the allocation of voters to polling stations is the best geographic fit possible.   **William Knibb Ward**   * Consider the introduction of additional polling districts or changes to existing ones in this Ward, subject to a trigger point of 25% increase in electorate from the 2014 figure being reached * Review the provision for future years to ensure that changes to the overall allocation for the Ward are carried out effectively. * Attempt to identify another community facility in the existing No.4 polling district (MM) that could be used as a polling place if the existing polling place (Parish Church Room) becomes unsuitable in terms of its size and the number of electors allocated to it,   **Burton Latimer**   * Re-assessment of the existing polling districts to try and achieve a more logical allocation geographically * Consider if it is appropriate to increase the existing number of polling districts and identify an additional location for a polling station that is closer to the largest area for development should it be required at some stage in the future.   **Desborough Loatland**   * Re-assessment of the existing polling districts in the Loatland Ward * Increase the existing number of polling districts in the Loatland Ward and Identify an additional location for a polling place in the Ward around the Harrington Road area   **Desborough St Giles**   * No change to existing provision unless unforeseen circumstances occur to the existing provision which will be treated as an individual case and be subject to an interim review   **Rothwell**   * Use the Hall at Rothwell Victoria Infants School as a polling station for elections in May 2015 along with the existing facilities at Rothwell Community Centre * Notify the Town Council of the decision taken as a result of concerns relating to the suitability of the Methodist Church premises concerning its size in view of the anticipated turnout at the May 2015 elections * In the future, and on completion of building and access work, review the feasibility of using the planned stand-alone sports hall at Rothwell Gladstone Junior School (subject to satisfactory inspection) in place of the Victoria Infants School   **Queen Eleanor and Buccleuch**   * In respect of Cranford, there is a link with the recommendation of the ongoing Community Governance Review (CGR). This would see a figure of either 100 occupied houses or 200 electors in residence triggering a further CGR of that area at that time. Any outcome that established a new Parish would require (a) polling place/s, polling district/s and polling station/s to be identified at that time. * The polling station for Newton is closed and voters are re-assigned to Geddington Village Hall   **Slade**   * In view of the development being carried out at Broughton, ensure that the existing provision at Broughton Baptist Chapel can cope with the increased number of electors when the trigger point of a 25% increase in electorate from the 2014 figure being reached     **Welland**   * No change to existing provision unless unforeseen circumstances occur to the existing provision which will be treated as an individual case     **RESOLVED** that having considered the draft recommendations, the comments outlined above be submitted to the Executive at its meeting to be held on 10th December. |
| Executive | 10/12/14 | To be provided prior to the Council meeting on 17th December 2014. |