

## Crawley Borough Council

### Minutes of Governance Committee

Tuesday, 21 September 2021 at 7.00 pm

#### Councillors Present:

K McCarthy (Chair)

T Lunnon (Vice-Chair)

R D Burrett, D Crow, C R Eade, M Flack, P K Lamb, R A Lanzer and S Malik

#### Officers Present:

Natalie Brahma-Pearl                      Chief Executive

Siraj Choudhury                              Head of Legal, Governance and HR

Mez Matthews                                Democratic Services Officer

Andrew Oakley                               Electoral Services Manager

#### Apology for Absence:

Councillor G S Jhans

#### 1. Disclosures of Interest

No disclosures of interests were made.

#### 2. Minutes

In connection with Minute 4 (Annual Governance Statement) a Committee Member drew attention to the note by the Head of Legal, Governance and HR which advised that the deadline for signing the Statement of Accounts had been moved from 31 July 2021 to 30 September 2021 and that an Audit Committee meeting had been scheduled for 30 September 2021 to ensure the Accounts were signed off within the required timeframe. The 30 September 2021 Audit Committee had recently been cancelled and the Committee Member queried whether the deadline for signing off the Statement of Accounts had been further extended. In response to the query the Committee was advised that the 30 September 2021 Audit Committee had been cancelled at the request of the Head of Corporate Finance and that the Statement of Accounts would now be considered at the 14 December 2021 Audit Committee. The Committee was advised that a fuller explanation would be sought from the Head of Corporate Finance and circulated via email to the Governance Committee.

*NOTE BY THE HEAD OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HR: The deadline for signing the Statement of Accounts for 2020/21 was extended to 30 September 2021 however, The Accounts and Audit Regulations (2015) state that where an audit has not been concluded within the specified timeframe, the Council must approve the Statement of Accounts as soon as reasonably practicable after the receipt of the audit report. The*

*Statement of Accounts will therefore be considered at the 14 December 2021 Audit Committee.*

The minutes of the meeting of the Governance Committee held on 22 June 2021 were then approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **3. Public Question Time**

No questions were asked by the public.

### **4. Review of May 2021 Polling Arrangements**

The Committee considered report [LDS/171](#) of the Head of Legal, Governance and HR which requested that the Committee consider the outcome of the temporary changes to the Scheme of Polling Places made for the elections held on 6 May 2021 and decide whether to make any changes to the existing Scheme (adopted in 2019) either on a permanent or temporary (one year) basis. In making its decision the Committee were requested to consider whether to extend the temporary replacement of schools for a further year.

The Electoral Services Manager presented the report and drew the Committee's attention to the Supplementary Agenda which provided amended 2021 electorate figures for some Polling Districts.

To assist in the Committee's consideration, the Chair advised that they intended to move recommendation d) of paragraph 5.1 of the report as it gave the Committee the opportunity to vote on all possible permutations. In light of this, debate and voting on each Polling District took place in turn. The Polling Districts, as well as the normal Polling Place and the Polling Place used for the May 2021 elections, were set out in Paragraph 4.4 of the report.

#### General Comments:

It was acknowledged that a public poll had indicated that the public experience of the May 2021 election had been good and the Committee thanked the Elections staff for the work they had undertaken.

Following a query from a Committee Member, it was acknowledged that any suggestion to merge Polling Districts would need to be brought before a future Committee meeting to ensure the Committee had sufficient information and time to consider such a proposal.

It was suggested that having several Polling Places within an Electoral Ward reduced the number of people queuing to vote. It was also stated that keeping some consistency in Polling Places encouraged voter turnout.

Several Committee Members expressed the view that the temporary replacement of all schools identified in Paragraph 4.4 of the report should be extended for another year to avoid any further disruption in children's education.

#### Polling District LAB (Bewbush & North Broadfield Ward):

It was suggested that Broadfield Community Centre had worked well as a combined Polling Place for Polling Districts LAB, LBB and LEB during the May 2021 election. However, the view was also expressed that, given the large combined electorate of

those three Polling Districts, having a single Polling Place for all three Polling Districts could cause capacity issues, especially during a general election.

Following a vote by the Committee it was declared that the Polling Place for Polling District LAB should be Broadfield Community Centre on a permanent basis.

Polling District LBB (Broadfield Ward):

It was acknowledged that the comments made with regard to Polling District LAB above were also relevant for Polling District LBB.

Following a query from the Committee, the Electoral Services Manager confirmed that although Community Services had advised that Creasys Drive Adventure Playground might be available to use as a Polling Place for the May 2022 election, its availability could not be guaranteed.

Following a vote by the Committee it was declared that the Polling Place for Polling District LBB should be Broadfield Community Centre on a permanent basis.

Polling District LEB (Gossops Green & North East Broadfield Ward):

It was acknowledged that the comments made with regard to Polling District LAB above were also relevant for Polling District LEB.

Following a vote by the Committee it was declared that the Polling Place for Polling District LEB should be Broadfield Community Centre on a permanent basis.

Polling District LJA (Pound Hill North & Forge Wood Ward):

It was stressed that the Committee had originally agreed that Milton Mount Community Centre be used as a Polling Place on a temporary basis. Several Committee Members stated that, as Milton Mount Community Centre was situated at the top of a hill, it was less accessible to the elderly and it was noted that notices close to the Community Centre discouraged parking in the area. It was suggested that the Polling Place should revert back to The Grattons Indoors Bowls Club as its location was more central and it had better parking provisions.

The Committee was advised that elector turnout had increased by 5.8% for the May 2021 election across all methods of voting when Milton Mount Community Centre was the Polling Place. Following a related query from a Committee Member it was noted that the 5.8% increase was a 3% increase in in-person voting and an 11% increase in postal voting. It was suggested that those figures implied that the location of Milton Mount Community Centre had not deterred voters from voting in-person.

Following a vote by the Committee it was declared that the Polling Place for Polling District LJA should revert back to The Grattons Indoors Bowls Club.

Polling District LFB (Ifield Ward):

Following a vote by the Committee it was declared that the Polling Place for Polling District LFB should be Ifield Community Centre on a one year temporary basis.

Polling District LFD (Ifield Ward):

Following a vote by the Committee it was declared that the Polling Place for Polling District LFD should be Ifield West Community Centre on a one year temporary basis.

Polling District LHB (Maidenbower Ward):

The opinion was expressed that whilst using Maidenbower Community Centre for both Polling Districts LHA and LHB could cause long queues during peak times, it was likely that those queues would be manageable for local Borough elections, but could cause long queues for General elections.

Following a vote by the Committee it was declared that the Polling Place for Polling District LHB should be Maidenbower Community Centre on a one year temporary basis.

Polling District LJC (Pound Hill North & Forge Wood Ward):

The Committee was reminded that the use of Forge Wood Primary School as a Polling Place had originally been agreed as a temporary measure whilst Forge Wood Community Centre (which would become the permanent Polling Place) was under construction. Disappointment was expressed by the Committee that the timescale set out for completing the Community Centre development had not been met.

Following a vote by the Committee it was declared that the Polling Place for Polling District LJC should be Wakehams Green Community Centre on a one year temporary basis.

With the voting concluded on the Polling Place for each individual Polling District the Committee agreed that the Full Council be recommended to amend the 2019 Polling Scheme to incorporate the changes agreed by the Committee.

**RESOLVED**

That the Full Council be recommended to amend the 2019 Polling Scheme as set out in the Appendix to these minutes.

**5. LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct**

The Committee considered report [LDS/164](#) of the Monitoring Officer (Head of Legal, Governance and HR) which requested that the Committee consider whether to adopt the Local Government Association's (LGA) Model Councillor Code of Conduct ("Model Code") in full or in part, or whether to retain the Council's current Code of Conduct for Councillors ("Code of Conduct").

In presenting the report the Head of Legal, Governance and HR stressed that there was currently no legislation to accompany the Model Code. The Committee was advised that a survey conducted among Monitoring Officers in Local Government showed that 55% of Councils had chosen not to adopt the Model Code (25% not adopting the Model Code at all and 30% not adopting the Model Code but changing their existing Code), 20% of Councils had adopted the Model Code in full, 20% had adopted the Model Code in part, and 5% of Councils remained undecided.

In addition the Head of Legal, Governance and HR advised that the Model Code had not brought "teeth" to the Code which many Councils had hoped for. The Committee's attention was specifically drawn to Paragraph 6.4 of the report which drew comparisons between the Model Code and the Council's current Code of Conduct, and Paragraph 7 which set out the proposed timetable. The Head of Legal, Governance and HR advised that, in addition to reviewing the Council's current Code of Conduct, a review of the Council's Procedure for Dealing with Code Complaints

would be necessary. It was anticipated that any change to the Council's Code of Conduct and related Procedures would come into effect in the new municipal year.

The Committee then considered both the report and the Model Code, and made the following comments:

- The comparisons drawn in Paragraph 6.4 of the report were helpful.
- The Model Code ultimately appeared to change very little.
- Expressed disappointment that the Model Code lacked sanctions, although it was noted that Political Parties had the option to impose sanctions on members of its own party.
- If a Model Code was produced in future which fulfilled the needs and wishes of the Council it could be useful to adopt such a document as it would be consistent across the majority of Councils.
- The first person narrative of the Model Code was not favoured.
- In reviewing the Council's current Code of Conduct and Procedure, it would be beneficial to seek the Council's Independent Persons' views on the current documents and procedures.
- Support expressed of reviewing the Council's current Code of Conduct.

## **RESOLVED**

1. That the new LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct not be adopted.
2. That the Council's current Code of Conduct and Procedure for Dealing with Code Complaints be reviewed by the Head of Legal, Governance and HR, and that a revised Code be presented to the Governance Committee on 25 January 2022. This may incorporate specific elements of the LGA Model Code.
3. That the timetable set out in Section 7 of report LDS/164 be approved.

## **Closure of Meeting**

With the business of the Governance Committee concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.07 pm

**K McCarthy (Chair)**

### Appendix: Polling Scheme 2021/22 with Temporary Amendments

Polling District	Borough Ward	County Division	Polling Station	Electorate (Sept 2021)	Postal Voters	Polling Station Voters
LAA	Bewbush and North Broadfield	Bewbush and Ifield West	Bewbush Centre	6206	1077	5129
LAB	Bewbush and North Broadfield	Broadfield	Broadfield Community Centre	970	232	738
LAC	Bewbush and North Broadfield	Southgate and Gossops Green	Bewbush Centre	42	8	34
LBA	Broadfield	Broadfield	Broadfield Community Centre	4645	884	3761
LBB	Broadfield	Broadfield	Broadfield Community Centre	2651	696	1955
LD	Furnace Green	Tilgate and Furnace Green	Furnace Green Community Centre	4481	1072	3409
LEA	Gossops Green and North-East Broadfield	Southgate and Gossops Green	Gossops Green Community Centre	3929	890	3039
LEB	Gossops Green and North-East Broadfield	Broadfield	Broadfield Community Centre	828	299	529
LFA	Ifield	Langley Green and Ifield East	Ifield Community Centre	3579	819	2760
LFB	Ifield	Langley Green and Ifield East	Ifield Community Centre *	782	249	533
LFC	Ifield	Bewbush and Ifield West	Ifield West Community Centre	2242	402	1840
LFD	Ifield	Bewbush and Ifield West	Ifield West Community Centre *	590	188	402
LGA	Langley Green and Tushmore	Langley Green and Ifield East	Langley Green Centre	5562	1014	4548
LGB	Langley Green and Tushmore	Northgate and West Green	Northgate Community Centre	485	115	370
LHA	Maidenbower	Maidenbower and Worth	Maidenbower Community Centre	2849	628	2221
LHB	Maidenbower	Maidenbower and Worth	Maidenbower Community Centre *	3903	1106	2797
LIA	Northgate and West Green	Northgate and West Green	Northgate Community Centre	3479	645	2834
LIB	Northgate and West Green	Northgate and West Green	The Charis Centre	4127	875	3252
LJA	Pound Hill North and Forge Wood	Pound Hill	The Grattons Indoors Bowls Club	2872	649	2223
LJB	Pound Hill North and Forge Wood	Pound Hill	Wakehams Green Community Centre	1677	277	1400
LJC	Pound Hill North and Forge Wood	Pound Hill	Wakehams Green Community Centre *	2076	497	1579
LKA	Pound Hill South and Worth	Three Bridges	Pound Hill Community Centre	2767	577	2190

Polling District	Borough Ward	County Division	Polling Station	Electorate (Sept 2021)	Postal Voters	Polling Station Voters
LKB	Pound Hill South and Worth	Pound Hill	St Edward the Confessor Church Hall	1138	270	868
LKC	Pound Hill South and Worth	Maidenbower and Worth	St Edward the Confessor Church Hall	2310	643	1667
LLA	Southgate	Southgate and Gossops Green	St Mary's Church Hall	2991	731	2260
LLB	Southgate	Southgate and Gossops Green	Southgate West Community Centre	2901	832	2069
LLC	Southgate	Northgate and West Green	Southgate West Community Centre	632	194	438
LMA	Three Bridges	Three Bridges	Montefiore Institute	2787	656	2131
LMB	Three Bridges	Three Bridges	Three Bridges Community Centre	1849	489	1360
LMC	Three Bridges	Three Bridges	Holiday Inn Express	1273	246	1027
LMD	Three Bridges	Northgate and West Green	The Town Hall	391	78	313
LNA	Tilgate	Tilgate and Furnace Green	Tilgate Community Centre	2376	495	1881
LNB	Tilgate	Tilgate and Furnace Green	Holy Trinity Church Hall	2083	394	1689
				81473	18227	63246

\* = temporary polling place to remain in force up to and including elections to be held on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022