

STANDARDS COMMITTEE**Monday 19 November 2001**

PRESENT:-

Councillor TUNWELL (Chairman); Councillor DESCHAMPS (Deputy Chairman),
Councillors BOWKER, HARRIS and PARSONS.

6. **MINUTES.** The minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2001 were submitted and approved and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as a correct record subject to the addition of a comment in respect of Minute 5 (Standards Committees - Appointments and Procedures) that it is the view of this Committee that the Council should be minded to appoint the independent member as the Chairman of the re-constituted Standards Committee.
- *7. **NEW WARDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE BOROUGH OF EASTBOURNE - POLLING DISTRICT AND POLLING PLACE PROPOSALS.** The Committee considered the report of the Head of Democratic Services concerning the need to draw up new polling district boundaries and designate polling places once the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions had approved the new warding arrangements for the Borough. Proposals had been submitted to Eastbourne Councillors including County Councillors and local Party Agents for comment and details of comments received including those at a liaison meeting with Party Agents were set out in appendix 2 to the report.

Reference was made to the Briefing Note issued earlier in October and the Consultation Document dated 26 October 2001. Proposals for publicity were also set out in the report.

The Council had the duty to define polling district boundaries and designate polling places. Councils must exercise their powers with a view to giving all electors reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. The Council was required, so far as is reasonable and practicable, to designate as polling places only places which were accessible to electors who were disabled. Accordingly, a Council should not designate as a polling place a building if the only means of access was by means of steps, when another more suitable building was available in the polling district. However, a building would not be a more suitable polling place, if it were so far removed from most of the electors in the polling district as to be inconvenient for them to reach it. In special circumstances the designated polling place may be outside the polling district.

The optimum arrangement for each of the new wards would be to have 3 polling districts of equal electorates each with a suitable venue centrally located as the polling station. However, certain factors would inhibit such an arrangement. These included the need to retain all the existing county division boundaries for the time being; the absence of a suitable polling station venue (or in some instances any venue) in some parts of the town; a wish to avoid voters having to cross busy main roads unless there are adequate crossings; and any other relevant geographical/location/access factors.

The Committee considered each of the new wards in turn and their comments and proposals are set out below:-

Devonshire - proposals accepted subject to reservation.

Concern was expressed regarding the creation of the relatively large polling district for voters in the existing districts of AB and AD. On balance, the Committee accepted this proposal, subject to suitable measures being taken at the election to manage traffic and parking in the vicinity of the station (e.g. temporary no waiting restrictions being placed in Langney Road outside the Salvation Army Citadel to ensure that it was possible to drop off and pick up voters). The Committee noted that if the Citadel was unavailable the current arrangements would be reinstated (i.e. use of All Saints, Wellesley Road and EODS, Seaside).

The Committee also noted and supported the revised proposal put forward at the Agent Liaison Meeting to seek the use of the Oval, Channel View Road as an alternative to the Archery Youth Centre, Seaside.

Hampden Park – proposals accepted.

Langney – proposals accepted.

Meads – proposals accepted.

Old Town – proposals accepted.

The Committee noted and supported the revised proposal put forward at the Agent Liaison Meeting to create an additional polling district for voters in polling district BA south of the A259 and part JB to vote at Edmond Evangelical Church Activity Centre, Church Street and as a consequence existing polling district BB would be left unchanged and vote at Greenfield Methodist Church Hall, Green Street.

Ratton – outline proposals accepted in principle.

The Committee noted the intention to explore alternatives including the use of Ratton School or a venue on the Park College/Sussex Downs College site. The proposals set out in the appendix should be regarded as a fall back should a better solution not be possible.

St. Anthony's – two options put forward.

At the Agent Liaison Meeting use of St. Andrew's Church Hall, Seaside had been proposed and the proposals revised to make use of this venue. The Committee was now advised that there was some doubt as to the availability of this venue in the future. An alternative option was put forward whereby the existing polling district HC was divided on an east/west split with the western part voting at the new St. Agnes Hall, Whitley Road and the eastern part voting at the Archery Youth Centre. This option was dependent on the Archery not being required for the Devonshire Ward (the proposal now in Devonshire was that use of the Oval be sought instead) and also had the advantage that it would not use Roselands County Infants School. It would mean that the St Agnes Hall would comprise 2 stations for Devonshire and St Anthony's wards. The Committee was minded therefore to put forward the original proposal as option one and their preferred proposal as option two.

Sovereign – proposals accepted.

Upperton – new proposals agreed.

The Head of Democratic Services submitted proposals whereby the three satisfactory venues of the Town Hall, the Upperton United Reformed Memorial Hall, Watts Lane, and the Foyer, Eversfield Road were used as the basis of a three polling district solution. The concern was that to continue the use of Elim Church Hall, given its expected re-development, would be unwise. Members expressed concern that a large number of voters in the central part of Upperton on the eastern side of Upperton Road would have to cross this busy main road and otherwise travel some distance to reach the Town Hall. Further information was given suggesting that the plans for the Elim site did retain a community hall facility within the new development. In the circumstances, therefore, it was considered appropriate to retain a polling district in the centre of Upperton continuing to vote at the Elim Church Hall so long as it was available. Further information would need to be sought. At such time as the re-development took place, alternative arrangements would need to be made, and a fallback of the Town Hall used as a last resort on a temporary basis if no alternative venue was available in a more central location.

It was noted that in Appendix 1, where currently more than one polling district was shown as being served by a single polling place, the polling districts would be merged so far as possible when the new arrangements were implemented (e.g. where districts 1a and 1b were shown these would be merged). The greater number of districts shown at this stage helped give flexibility. Some districts would not however be merged if they were in different county divisions.

RESOLVED: That the Council be recommended to agree:-

- (1) That the polling districts and provisional polling places shown in appendix 1 (with the amendments as detailed above) be approved.
- (2) That the Electoral Registration Officer be given delegated authority to make minor adjustments to the polling district boundaries necessary following the Secretary of State's final decision and otherwise as may be necessary to implement the new warding arrangements.
- (3) That the Electoral Registration Officer be given delegated authority to determine the final arrangements for polling places in respect of any future election or referendum based upon the provisional arrangements approved above and subject to prior liaison with Party Agents.

The meeting closed at 7.25 pm.

M E Tunwell
Chairman

(der\P:standards\01.11.19 mins)