

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## LICENSING, HEALTH AND SAFETY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE (SPECIAL MEETING)

8 MARCH 2012

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>POLLING STATIONS: FURTHER UPDATE</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b><i>LISCARD WARD</i></b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR &amp; ASSET MANAGEMENT</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>NO</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to determine the polling station for polling district WE from two options: -
- (i) Between2Worlds, Guilford Street
  - (ii) Wallasey Masonic Hall, Manor Road
- 1.2 Details of the two options are set out in Appendix 1.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a duty on authorities to review polling districts and stations on a four yearly basis.
- 3.2 The results of the review, the second review undertaken in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 following the first review of polling districts and stations in 2007, was reported to this Committee on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2011.
- 3.3 A few days before the Committee meeting (10 November 2011) a Council officer suggested that the 'Between2Worlds' premises (formerly the Mission) located on the corner of Guildford Street (off Union Street) could be a suitable polling place/station for Polling District WE. The premises were within the WE Polling District boundary, whereas the one proposed following the review, namely the Liscard Primary School, fell outside the boundary. The Council's Electoral Services evaluated the premises and concluded that the premises were a suitable venue for electoral purposes (subject to the Committee's approval).
- 3.4 Details of this potential option (Between2Worlds premises) were communicated to all three Liscard Ward Councillors prior to the Committee meeting on 10 November. Councillor Keeley subsequently raised some concerns over the suitability of the premises and accordingly the option was not formally considered by the Committee; however, the Head of Legal & Member Services advised that a possible option was being explored but some issues had been raised that had yet to be investigated/considered.

- 3.5 The Committee acknowledged that it was preferable for all polling stations to fall within their respective Polling Districts and accordingly instructed that Electoral Services should review the WE Polling District area again and present all potentially suitable premises to the Committee.
- 3.6 Enquiries were duly made into the 'Between2Worlds' premises and consideration was given to the representations made by Councillor Keeley. Officers concluded that these premises were suitable to be used as a Polling Station. Accordingly, the Agenda for the Committee meeting to be held on 23 January 2012 included an item relating to "Polling Districts and Polling Places Updates" which reported the only alternative venue found for Polling District WE (namely, the 'Between2Worlds' premises) and the representations that had been received in relation to it.
- 3.7 In the afternoon of 23 January (the day of the previous Committee meeting), Councillor Keeley suggested to an officer within the Electoral Services that the Masonic Hall on Manor Road may also be a suitable polling place/station for the WE Polling District. The Electoral Services team undertook an assessment that afternoon and concluded that the Masonic Hall was a suitable venue. With agreement of the Chairperson of the Committee, the Masonic Hall was introduced when this item was considered by the Committee.
- 3.8 The Committee considered both the Between2Worlds and the Masonic Hall premises at its meeting on 23 January.
- 3.9 Councillor J Keeley addressed the Committee expressing support for the use of the Masonic Hall.
- 3.10 It was moved by Councillor S Niblock and seconded by Councillor C Jones that:- "Between2Worlds, Guilford Street be used as Polling Place/Station for District WE."
- 3.11 It was moved as an amendment by Councillor S Taylor and seconded by Councillor K Wood that:- "The Masonic Hall, Manor Road be used as Polling Place/Station for Polling District WE.
- 3.12 The amendment was carried (5:4).
- 3.13 The Chair requested that in the event of a problem arising with the use of the Masonic Hall as the Polling Place/Station, Between2Worlds be used as the alternative. He requested that Party Spokespersons be consulted if this were to occur.
- 3.14 Unfortunately, it was only after the Committee meeting that it became aware that Councillors Dodd and Mooney had not (as the Ward Councillors) been informed or consulted about the Masonic Hall being proposed as a possible alternative Polling Place/Station. This was an unintended oversight – which is of course regretted. In the past, where changes have been proposed to any Polling Place/Station, all relevant Ward Councillors have always been consulted and their views canvassed.

- 3.15 In order to for this issue to be addressed, the Head of Legal & Member Services suggested (to the Committee Chairperson) that this particular matter be brought back to the Committee for consideration again and all three Ward Councillors be afforded the opportunity to make representations to the Committee (whether in writing or orally) on the possible premises available for use as a Polling Station for the WE Polling District. This would enable the Committee to make an informed decision after considering all relevant representations.
- 3.16 This matter needed to be considered and addressed as soon as possible so that key information could be provided to the Council's external printers to progress requisite elections work. An extraordinary meeting was necessary given that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee is 19 March and the aforementioned information needing to be provided prior to that date.
- 3.17 Appendix 1 details the two suitable premises within the Polling District WE that the Committee needs to consider. The Ward Councillors, with agreement of the Chairperson, will also be afforded the opportunity to address the Committee at the meeting.
- 3.18 Written representations received from Councillors Dodd and Mooney are attached at Appendix 2. Councillor Dodd has indicated that he will make oral representations at the meeting.

#### **4.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 4.1 In order to ensure that the forthcoming local elections can be run, the Council must ensure all polling districts have suitable polling stations available on the day of poll.

#### **5.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1 All options considered in relation to possible alternative polling stations for polling district We are detailed within Appendix 1 to this report.

#### **6.0 CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 Liscard Ward Councillors have been consulted in relation to the suitable polling stations available for use for polling district WE.

#### **7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

- 7.1 There are no such implications arising.

#### **8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

- 8.1 There are no such implications arising.

#### **9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Such implications are set out in this report.

#### **10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

Yes and can be viewed by clicking the following link:

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010/law-hr-asset-management>

## **10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no such implications arising.

## **11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no such implications arising.

## **12.0 RECOMMENDATION/S**

12.1 That the Committee determines which premises (from those detailed in Appendix 1 to this report) are to be designated and used as the polling station for polling district WE.

## **13.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

13.1 The Council must designate and have available for use at the forthcoming local elections (and future elections) a suitable polling station for polling district WE.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Polling Station Options for Polling District WE

## **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Licensing, Health and Safety and General Purposes Committee</b>	<b>10th November 2011</b>
<b>Licensing, Health and Safety and General Purposes Committee</b>	<b>23rd January 2012</b>

### POLLING STATION OPTIONS FOR POLLING DISTRICT WE

#### 1. **Liscard Ward**

##### *Polling District WE*

##### i. Between2Worlds, Guildford Street – (former mission building)

This building is a former mission and is situated within polling district WE. It is currently let by a local businessman to a group of individuals who run an independent spiritual and holistic centre called "Between 2 Worlds". They have been in occupation since early September 2011.

The premises were inspected on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2011 and found to be renovated to a high standard, having formerly been a Sure Start venue.

The premises will be suitable for use as a polling station and will provide cover for the tellers in the vestibule and more than adequate accommodation for four staff in the lounge/coffee bar area that leads from the vestibule. There was no overtly 'religious' iconography displayed at the time of the electoral inspection. There is adequate off street parking with a dropped kerb so wheelchair access will be improved.

The premises are leased to Mr and Mrs Boyd early September this year. The tenants are keen for the premises to be used as a polling place/station as it will boost their income. The cost of hire will be in the region of £500 (although this may be negotiable).

Further enquiries have been made with regard to the tenants reliability following concerns raised by a Ward member with regards to whether the premises provided a sufficiently reliable alternative given that the building has been closed for considerable periods of time and the nature of the business has also changed a number of times.

The tenants have confirmed that they have only used the premises as a church since September onwards. They are open for business 6 days a week but do not keep the hours 9 till 5. They open on a flexible basis when their clients/congregation are able to attend i.e. weekends and evenings as well as some daytime sessions.

They are interested in securing a source of income and fully understand the requirements for the opening of the building for polling purposes and are willing to honour those obligations. They are no different to any other private hall owner who agrees that we can use premises.

At the time of inspection, there was no sign of any political activity or indeed any political sign or emblem on display. The tenants fully understood that no activity could take place that would prejudice or otherwise undermine polling.

ii. Wallasey Masonic Hall, Manor Road

Councillor Keeley, suggested that the Wallasey Masonic Hall be considered as a polling station. The premises were inspected with a view to establishing its suitability for use as a polling station.

The building is situated on Manor Road and is approximately 200 yards from the YMCA if you were heading towards Liscard.

There is a large room at the rear of the premises that provides suitable accommodation, however, access would be down the left-hand side of the building rather than the front as this entrance is accessed via some very steep steps and the angle of any ramp supplied to allow disabled access would be too severe and potentially dangerous.

Entrance into the large room is gained directly from the path and provides level access for disabled users whilst avoiding electors having to pass through the main body of the building considerably reducing security issues. Unfortunately, there is no provision for tellers.

The room is well lit, warm and spacious and there are adequate catering and toilet facilities for the staff.

To the front and side of the building there is extensive car parking.

Whilst the price has not been agreed, the booking secretary has given an indicative price of £500.00.