

REGULATORY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Thursday, 20 January 2022

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	A Hodson (Chair)	
	Councillors	C Jones D Mitchell D Burgess-Joyce M Collins	Kenny KJ Williams A Wright M Booth
<u>Deputies:</u>	Councillors	A Jones (for Cllr I Williams) K Greaney (for Cllr C O'Hagan) J Walsh (for Cllr E Gleaves)	
<u>Apologies:</u>	Councillors	S Williams J Bird	

9 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the webcast.

10 APOLOGIES

The Chair confirmed the apologies of Councillors Jo Bird and Steve Williams, also Councillor Clare O'Hagan, with Councillor Karl Greaney deputising for her, Councillor Emily Gleaves, with Jason Walsh deputising for her and Councillor Irene Williams, with Adrian Jones deputising for her.

11 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Committee were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in connection with any item on the agenda and state the nature of the interest.

No such declarations were made.

12 MINUTES

Resolved – That the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2021 be approved.

13 MINUTES OF THE REGULATORY PANEL

Resolved – That the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings of the Regulatory Panel held on 17 September, 8 October, 13 October, 3 November, 12 November and 24 November 2021 be approved.

14 **POLLING PLACE REVIEW: SCHOOLS**

The Director of Law and Governance submitted a report which set out the findings following a review undertaken in respect of the use of schools which were currently used as polling places within Wirral for the purposes of Local Authority, Parliamentary and other elections.

The Head of Democratic and Member Services informed Members that the report provided guidance on selecting polling places, the number of schools currently used in the Borough as well as outlining alternative polling places which had been identified by the Returning Officer. He reported that local Ward Members had been consulted in respect of options and costs associated with the hire of alternative venues which were detailed within the exempt Appendix 2 to the report. Members were directed to paragraph 5.2 of the report in which it stated that currently 45 of the designated polling places are schools. However, this number was corrected as it should have stated 41 schools (as confirmed within paragraph 3.2 of the report).

Members of the Committee were asked to consider and comment on the report and determine which polling places (if any) should be moved to an alternative venue to enable implementation for the May 2022 Local Authority Elections.

It was reported that Wirral has 103 polling places of which 41 are schools and that 28 utilise an In-Service Training (INSET) day for the allocated election day. The use of an INSET day is agreed well in advance with headteachers. The remaining 13 schools can stay open to pupils.

The Head of Democratic Services referred to the objective criteria that are used when considering the overall suitability of a polling place or polling station and advised Members of the Committee that if all the proposals outlined within the report were implemented, the anticipated additional cost would be £3,299.08 which would result in the overall cost of polling stations being £30,299.08 which could be met within the existing budget. He further reported that the views of Ward Councillors had been sought on the proposals and from the responses received all supported those proposals outlined within the report. The Director for Children and Young People and the Assistant Director for Education had also been consulted.

Councillor Mitchell queried the need for Heygarth Primary School to be used as a polling place as parents had raised concerns in respect of this when the

other schools in this Ward remained open as they were not used as polling stations.

In response, the Head of Democratic Services advised that the overarching ambition was for the polling place to be located within the polling district which imposed some restrictions, however, he advised he would undertake to ensure that all options had been explored.

James, Backhouse, Assistant Director for Education addressed Members of the Committee and reported that all schools have 190 school days with 5 INSET days also allocated within the academic year. Therefore, if the INSET day is not on the election day it would be arranged for another day. As such the education for all schools remained the same, however this year would be slightly different as there will be 189 school days due to the Queen's Jubilee.

Resolved –

- (1) That the report be noted.**
- (2) That the recommendations outlining the proposed polling stations to be moved from schools outlined within Appendix 1 of the report be implemented.**

15 CONFIRMATION OF THE TITLE OF HONORARY ALDERMAN

The Director of Law and Governance submitted a report requesting that Members of the Committee give consideration as to whether to recommend to Council that the title of Honorary Alderwoman be conferred on former Councillor Jean Stapleton.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that former Councillor Jean Stapleton had been a Member of the Council from 4 May 2000 and had represented Birkenhead and Tranmere Ward as a Labour Party Member until 6 May 2021. The Council had previously determined that former Members who had served twenty years on the Council or a predecessor Council were eligible for nomination to this award and therefore former Councillor Jean Stapleton is eligible to have the title of Honorary Alderwoman conferred upon her.

Members were informed that Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that the title of Honorary Alderman or Honorary Alderwoman may be conferred by the Council on persons who are persons of distinction and/or who have, in its opinion, rendered eminent service to the place or area. The title is to be conferred by a resolution passed by not less than two thirds of the Members voting on it at a meeting of the Council specially convened for the purpose.

It was reported that successful nominees for the office of Honorary Aldermen and Alderwoman of this Council had previously been awarded a suitable badge at a special ceremony. Currently, former Councillor Jean Stapleton was the only former Councillor eligible to be appointed as an Honorary Alderwoman based on the Council's criteria.

Members were further informed that the intention would be to present former Councillor Jean Stapleton with a badge of office, the total cost of which would be approximately £682.75 and there would also be the small cost of inscribing her name on the Roll of Honour board which could be met from existing budgets.

Resolved – That the conferment of the title of Honorary Alderwoman on former Councillor Jean Stapleton be recommended to Council in accordance with Section 249(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

16 **WIRRAL AWARD 2021**

The Director of Law and Governance submitted a report requesting agreement from the Committee that the Wirral Award be conferred on the nominees as recommended by the Wirral Award Working Party held on 15 December 2021. The Wirral Award is intended to confer civic recognition upon individuals or organisations resident or located in Wirral for an outstanding achievement within the previous twelve months, or for distinguished service to the Borough over a period of twenty years or more.

It was reported that once nominations were agreed, certificates would be awarded to the successful nominees at a special ceremony to be held at a suitable venue or if this was not possible due to the current pandemic, certificates and a gift would be distributed to the successful nominees.

Members considered the recommendations of the Wirral Award Working Party and the nominations which were attached to the report as an exempt appendix.

Resolved –

- (1) That the Wirral Award 2021 be conferred upon those recipients recommended by the Wirral Award Working Party.**
- (2) That appropriate arrangements be made for the recipients of the Award to be invited to a special ceremony, or, should this not be possible due to the pandemic, that they be presented with a certificate and gift.**

17 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Resolved - That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest Test had been applied and favoured exclusion.

18 **WIRRAL AWARD 2021 - EXEMPT APPENDIX - RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WIRRAL AWARD WORKING PARTY**

Resolved – That the appendix attached to the report containing the nomination forms for the Wirral Award 2021 is exempt under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. Consideration had been given to the Public Interest Test.

19 **POLLING PLACES REVIEW: SCHOOLS - EXEMPT APPENDIX 2**

Resolved – That Appendix 2 attached to the report which contained cost implications is exempt under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. Consideration had been given to the Public Interest Test.