

Minutes of the Licensing and General Purposes Committee

8 February 2024

Members Present:-

Councillor Emma Whysall (Chair)
Councillor Claire Farrier (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Richard Barnes Councillor Andrea Bilbow OBE Councillor Alison Cornelius Councillor Geof Cooke Councillor Eva Greenspan	Councillor Alex Prager Councillor Danny Rich Councillor Caroline Stock Councillor Zakia Zubairi Councillor Ernest Ambe
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1. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

None.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST LICENSING & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE ON 08 NOVEMBER 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 08 November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

3. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS (IF ANY)

None.

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

5. ANNUAL ELECTORAL SERVICES OVERVIEW REPORT

Emily Bowler, Assistant Director Assurance, presented the Electoral Services Overview Report for 2023 which provides details on the current Register of Electors and gives an overview of the activities and performance of the Electoral Registration Service throughout 2023.

It was noted that the Mayor of London and Greater London Authority (GLA) elections will take place on the 2nd of May 2024. As well as implementing changes to comply with the Elections Act, the GLA election will move to a manual count.

A Parliamentary General Election was also expected to be held at some point in 2024 with just twenty-five days' notice. This could be held at the same time as the planned GLA elections.

Members queried whether the Government has given any indication of preference for holding a General Election during school holidays to minimise the impact on children's education and whether there had been an adverse impact on the numbers of voters in relation to Voter ID.

Julie Carter, Electoral Services Manager, said that there was no indication from the Government on timelines for the unplanned General Election. The Electoral Commission's report details the impact on the implementation of Voter ID at the 2023 elections that happened outside of London. Based on the information collated, no huge impact on voter turnout was found and there was no significant number of voters who had been turned away. The Electoral Commission report on the May 2023 Local Elections would be shared with Members of the Committee.

As is normal in Barnet ahead of any election, there will be an extensive communication campaign to promote voter registration as well as the need for voter ID to vote in person, which will also target those hard to reach groups who statistically may not have access to appropriate ID prescribed by the criteria.

Members asked whether the schools with sixth forms are being targeted to promote the need for voter ID to young people. The service confirmed that it had been working with colleges and student unions who planned to issue posters for display and include articles in newsletters. Community groups were also being targeted to reach older adults and those with disabilities as recommended by the Electoral Commission.

Members asked about the change in legislation affecting people living overseas and what was the expected number of overseas electors applying to vote in Barnet at the next General Election. Julie Carter highlighted that since the [Overseas Elector Registration] portal went live on the 16th of October 2023, 204 new applications from Overseas electors had been received. However, ahead of the last General Election in 2019, over 1000 applications were received from Overseas electors and it was expected that this number would double ahead of any General Election this year.

Members questioned section 2.1 of Appendix A and the data on electors provided. Officers confirmed that this was based on elector numbers for December 2023. Further information on the electoral register based on the new four Barnet constituencies would be shared with Members.

In response to Members about encouraging people to register to vote, Julie Carter confirmed that the team have worked on democratic engagement throughout the year as highlighted in the report which includes contacting potential electors through council tax billing flyer inserts, annual canvass and Household Notification Letters and by attending Citizenship Ceremonies held at Hendon Town Hall.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Committee considers and comments on the Electoral Services report attached at Appendix A.**
- 2. That the Committee notes the implications and new burdens, brought in by the Elections Act, 2022 upon the Returning Officer (RO), Electoral Registration Officer (ERO), the core Electoral Services team and the wider council.**

6. REVISED LICENSING POLICY

Ash Shah, Group Manager of Regulatory Services, presented the report in relation to the Licensing Policy that was revised every five years and the recommendation to approve the public consultation based on the summary of changes starting on the 12th of February.

RESOLVED That the draft Licensing Policy be approved for consultation and that the Officers be instructed to report to the Licensing & General Purposes Committee November 2024 meeting on the outcome for recommendation to Council.

7. REVISED STREET TRADING POLICY

Ash Shah, Group Manager of Regulatory Services, presented the report on the Street Trading Policy and the recommendation that proposed changes go to a six week consultation, the findings of which would be reported back to a future Committee meeting.

RESOLVED That the Committee note and comment on the proposed revised Street Trading Policy proposed to take effect from the 1st November 2024 so that the Licensing Team can commence a 6-week consultation on the proposed changes.

8. COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

It was noted that the next Licensing and General Purposes Committee meeting had been moved to the 8th of July, following a change to meeting dates at the last Council meeting on the 30th of January.

In response to Members, Officers would consider whether a review of the May 2024 elections could be reported back to the next Committee which would be dependent on the timings of any unplanned election.

RESOLVED That the Committee noted the forward work programme.

9. ANY ITEM(S) THE CHAIR DECIDES ARE URGENT

None.

The meeting finished at 7.31 pm