



Electoral Matters Committee

Thu 7 Nov
2024
3.00 pm

Oakenshaw Community Centre
Castleditch Lane
Redditch
B98 7YB



If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
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GUIDANCE ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

Please note that this is a public meeting.

If you have any questions regarding the agenda or attached papers, please do not hesitate to contact the officer named above.

GUIDANCE FOR ELECTED MEMBERS ATTENDING MEETINGS IN PERSON

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Notes:

Although this is a public meeting, there are circumstances when Council might have to move into closed session to consider exempt or confidential information. For agenda items that are exempt, the public are excluded.

Electoral Matters

Thursday, 7th November, 2024

3.00 pm

Oakenshaw Community Centre
- Oakenshaw Community
Centre

Agenda

Membership:

Cllrs:	Joe Baker (Chair)	Sachin Mathur
	James Fardoe (Vice-Chair)	Rita Rogers
	Brandon Clayton	

1. Apologies for absence and named substitutes

2. Declarations of Interest

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting (Pages 5 - 8)

4. Review of Polling Place changes post UK Parliamentary General Election (Pages 9 - 14)

5. Polling District changes as a result of the review of Worcestershire County Divisions by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (Pages 15 - 24)

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Electoral Matters Committee

Tuesday, 4th June, 2024

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), Councillor James Fardoe (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Brandon Clayton, Sachin Mathur and Rita Rogers.

Officers: Melissa Bassett and Darren Whitney.

Democratic Services Officers: Jess Bayley-Hill.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that

The minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on 29th February 2024 be approved as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. POLLING PLACE CHANGES FOR PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION ON 4TH JULY 2024

The Committee considered a report recommending polling place changes for the Parliamentary election on 4th July.

Poll cards were being sent out to the majority of electors in the next few days. Due to the short notice for the election, there were two polling station venues which were not available on this occasion. Potential alternative venues had been suggested and details were provided for the Committee.

Polling District WID – the current polling station, Lavender Barn at the Old Rectory House, was not available for the election. It was

Chair

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proposed this should now be at St Peter's Church Hall in Ipsley. Officers reported that this could accommodate a polling station and was a suitable site, although slightly further away for electors to visit than Lavender Barn. A ward member had told the Elections team they were happy for the change subject to accessibility being confirmed, which it had.

Polling District NRA – the current polling station was the Abbey Hotel, which was unavailable. A number of potential alternative venues had been considered but were not suitable for the election because of access issues or size constraints. Officers suggested that the Meadow Farm Hotel would be the most appropriate alternative as a meeting room could be used with a small parking area adjacent to the venue.

Officers reported that the (Acting) Returning Officer supported the use of both venues for polling stations.

The Electoral Services Manager reported that in the short term there was a risk of a polling station no longer being available for the General Election, so officers had suggested a delegation to enable the Acting Returning Officer to alter venues, having consulted with the Portfolio Holder and Ward Members. The delegation would apply to this General Election only. A member suggested that in addition to the Portfolio Holder and Ward Members all members of the Committee should be consulted as they had a view of arrangements across the Borough, and this was agreed.

It was noted that the Committee would be asked to review polling places later in the year, both for local reasons and potentially as a result of the review of county council electoral divisions. Recommendations from this were due to be released by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in early July.

Members spoke in support of the alternative venues proposed for Polling Districts WID and NRA.

Councillor James Fardoe proposed, Councillor Brandon Clayton seconded, and it was

RESOLVED that

For the purposes of the Parliamentary election on 4th July 2024:

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- 1. the polling station for Polling District WID be located at St Peter's Church Hall and for Polling District NRA at the Meadow Farm Hotel;**
- 2. following consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Ward Members and all members of the Electoral Matters Committee, the (Acting) Returning Officer be allowed to alter polling places; and**
- 3. the decision of the Committee take effect immediately.**

The Meeting commenced at 3.00 pm
and closed at 3.16 pm

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ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE
2024

7 November

Review of Polling Place changes post UK Parliamentary General Election

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Baker, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Governance
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton
Report Author	Job Title: Darren Whitney, Electoral Services Manager Contact email: darren.whitney@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881650
Wards Affected	Astwood Bank & Feckenham, Headless Cross & Oakenshaw, North, Winyates
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	Yes
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	N/A
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 **That the Committee notes the contents of the report and makes changes, if any, in respect of polling places as contained in the report (as amended); and**
- 1.2 **if necessary, instructs officers to carry out a consultation exercise on one or more polling places in the report; to be brought back to the Committee at a later date.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The report reviews a number of polling places that were used in the May elections and a review requested, or were changed for the UK Parliamentary General Election (UKPGE) by this Committee at the meeting of 4 June 2024

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 No direct costs from this report.

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4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Authority to set polling district boundaries and to designate polling places rests with the Council (Statutory elements of the Council's Constitution under the Local Government Act 2000). Redditch Borough Council has delegated full relevant powers to this Electoral Matters Committee.
- 4.2 Decisions about the situation of polling stations within designated polling places are for the (Acting) Returning Officer. Arrangements must comply with relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Acts and Regulations and the Equality Act 2010.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

- 5.1 This report deals with statutory functions but relates to the strategic purpose of an effective and sustainable council.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 None for this report.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 The first two polling places to be considered, which were used in both the May and July elections, have received a request to be reviewed.

6.3 **The Red Lion Public House, Hunt End**

The venue was used for the first time in May and again in July. It replaced the Portable Building in Banners Lane that was used previously.

The actual polling station is in a marquee at the rear of the public house so electors either enter it via the pub itself or from the car park at the rear.

The electorate for the UKPGE was 1,605 and the Presiding Officer at both elections had several complaints about the uneven car park.

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At the May elections there had been issues regarding signage but these were rectified for July.

The Equalities Inspector and the Polling Station Inspector both raised concerns about the car park. The Equalities Inspector also raised issues regarding lighting and heating especially if this were to be used as a polling station in Winter.

Neither officer recommended using it as polling station in the future.

The problem going forward is lack of suitable buildings in the area.

The only other option seems to be reverting back to the Portable Building in Banners Lane which is also not accessible and has a higher cost.

6.4 Portable Building, Atworth Close

The venue was used for the first time in May and again in July. Previously electors went to vote at Woodrow Community Centre but now the 671 electors of polling district HOD – Wirehill are now in a different borough ward so a portable building on Atworth Close was decided to be the best option for polling.

The portable building was sited near the entrance to Atworth Close on a strip of grassy land. At the May elections there was a problem with siting the building due to parked cars.

Another issue is that due to the grass a complex ramp needs to be erected each time the station is used.

Some residents of Atworth Close raised concerns at the siting of the portable building and wished for this to be reviewed post election.

The Equalities Inspector did note that there is only on street parking but also noted that a portable building was the only option for this area due to the lack of community facilities.

It should be noted that officers and previous members of this Committee spent a considerable amount of time in the past looking for alternatives to this site.

It seems that the only other feasible option would be to move electors to the polling station on Grangers Lane; although this would mean additional travel for those electors in Wirehill. If this option were

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chosen it would make sense to combine polling districts HOC and HOD.

Members of this Committee may wish to consult with the electors of polling district HOD regarding their preference and bring this back to a future meeting of this Committee.

6.5 The next two polling places were used at the UKPGE in July as the previous polling places were not available.

6.6 Farmhouse Meeting Room, Meadow Farm Hotel

This venue was used as the Abbey Hotel was unavailable on 4 July. The Abbey Hotel had only been used as polling place once before; that was in the May 2024 elections.

It serves a small electorate of 308 and no complaints were received regarding using the Farmhouse Meeting Room.

There were no adverse comments from the Equalities Inspector and positive comments received from the Presiding Officer, both would recommend using this venue again.

The Polling Station Inspector made the additional comment that there could be a need for additional signage.

Costs were considerably less for using the Farmhouse meeting room compared to the Abbey Hotel.

Officers would recommend using the Farmhouse Meeting Room in future.

6.7 St Peter's Church Centre, Ipsley

This venue was used as the Lavender Barn at Old Rectory House was unavailable on 4 July. The Lavender Barn had only been used as polling place once before in the May 2024 elections.

The electorate at the UKPGE was 929 and no complaints or adverse comments were received.

The Equalities Inspector and polling station inspector noted small issues with path but that it was still accessible for votes. It was recommended that it be retained as polling station.

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The Church Centre costs more than the Lavendar Barn but officers would recommend it's continued use because of it being more flexible in its availability at short notice.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 Any changes agreed must be likely to be sustainable for a reasonable number of years, as frequent changes of Polling Station are not helpful for electors and undermine their knowledge of, and confidence in, electoral systems.

7.2 Choice of Polling Place / Polling Station should not give rise to significant grounds of complaint which might put election results at risk of challenge.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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**ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE
2024**

7 November

Polling District changes as a result of the review of Worcestershire County Divisions by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Baker, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Governance
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton
Report Author	Job Title: Darren Whitney, Electoral Services Manager Contact email: darren.whitney@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881650
Wards Affected	N/A
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	N/A
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RESOLUTIONS**The Electoral Matters Committee is asked to RESOLVE that**

- 1.1 the proposals in respect of polling districts, as contained in the report (as amended), be approved; and**
- 1.2 the decisions of the Committee in respect of 1.1 above take effect from the publication of the revised Register of Electors.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The report highlights where changes are required to polling districts due to the final recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) review for Worcestershire County Council Divisions.
- 2.1 They are brought to the Committee at this time as they need to be reflected in the revised electoral register which will be published on 1st December.

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3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 No direct costs from this report.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The LGBCE is a statutory body accountable to Parliament that conducts reviews of local authority electoral arrangements in England. Its statutory obligations are set out in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.
- 4.2 Authority to set polling district boundaries and to designate polling places rests with the Council (Statutory elements of the Council's Constitution under the Local Government Act 2000). Redditch Borough Council has delegated full relevant powers to this Electoral Matters Committee.
- 4.3 Decisions about the situation of polling stations within designated polling places are for the (Acting) Returning Officer. Arrangements must comply with relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Acts and Regulations and the Equality Act 2010.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

- 5.1 This report deals with statutory functions but relates to the strategic purpose of an effective and sustainable council.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 It is preferable that choice of boundaries can help minimise unnecessary additional journeys by motorised vehicles.
- 5.3 Emissions and carbon footprint should be reduced as far as possible.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 None for this report.

Operational Implications

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- 6.2 The LGBCE published the Final Recommendations for the new electoral county divisions in Worcestershire on 9 July 2024 and a draft order was laid before Parliament on 11 September 2024.
- 6.3 Details of the review can be found on the LGBCE website: [LGBCE Review Details - website link](#)
- 6.4 For the Redditch Borough area the LGBCE recommended four divisions, all of which will have two members.
- 6.5 During the consultation on draft recommendations there were two proposed divisional boundaries where the Committee submitted changes on behalf of the Council (minute 17 of 29 February 2024 meeting of this Committee).
- 6.6 The changes were rejected by the LGBCE which means some polling districts and polling places need to be reviewed.
- 6.7 Redditch West Division

The request from the Committee rejected by LGBCE was that area covered by the current polling district WCD2 (appendix 1) be included in Redditch South Division.

The polling district is currently made up of 27 electors living in Lower Grinsty Lane and vote at the Gazebo at Callow Hill. As these electors will be in Redditch West Division an extra polling station would be required. The Gazebo would not be able to accommodate this and would not make economic sense to have an extra station for 27 electors.

As it is not suitable to use the Gazebo, due to its size, it is recommended that the polling district WCD2 becomes part of polling district WCB and the electors vote at Webheath Village Hall.

It should be noted that there is no change to Borough Warding.

- 6.8 Redditch Central & East Divisions

The request of moving polling districts NRC/NRC2 wholly into the Redditch East Division and polling districts NRB/NRB2 wholly into Redditch Central Division was rejected by the LGBCE.

The map in appendix 2 shows the divisional boundary currently running down Papermill Drive (blue line on map) and that the new divisional boundary will run north to south along Tanhouse Lane before travelling

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east along Church Hill Way until it joins Papermill Drive (red line on map).

This means a number of changes shown in appendix 2 are required to the polling districts within the two divisions and within the North Borough Ward. It should be noted there are no changes to the borough ward and the changes of polling districts are for administrative purposes.

Officers have studied the areas and as polling districts cannot cross boundaries suggest the following:

- The current NRB/NRB2 polling districts become
 - NRB which covers properties north of Church Hill Way and west of Ridings Lane, Bomford Hill Park, Wharrad Close and Upper Field Close. These will be in Redditch Central Division.
 - NRD which covers properties south of Church Hill Way. These will be in Redditch East Division.
- The current NRC/NRC2 polling districts become
 - NRC which covers properties north of Church Hill Way and west of Tanhouse Lane to the new boundary of NRB as described above. These will be in Redditch Central Division
 - NRE which covers properties east of, including, Tanhouse Lane and north of Church Hill Way. This will be in Redditch East Division.
- There are no actual changes to current polling district NRD other than to change the polling district letters to NRF.
- Electors will still go to their existing polling stations so will not notice a change.
- Officers suggest the following names for the polling districts although Members may be better placed to suggest alternatives:
 - NRB – Papermill
 - NRC – Church Hill North
 - NRD – Sevenacres
 - NRE – Abbeywood

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It should be noted polling district names are like the polling district themselves and are for administrative purposes only.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Polling district changes need to be agreed so that the revised register can produced on 1 December. Any delay will mean that the register will need to be republished causing extra cost and administrative time.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Map of boundaries relating to changes in Redditch West Division

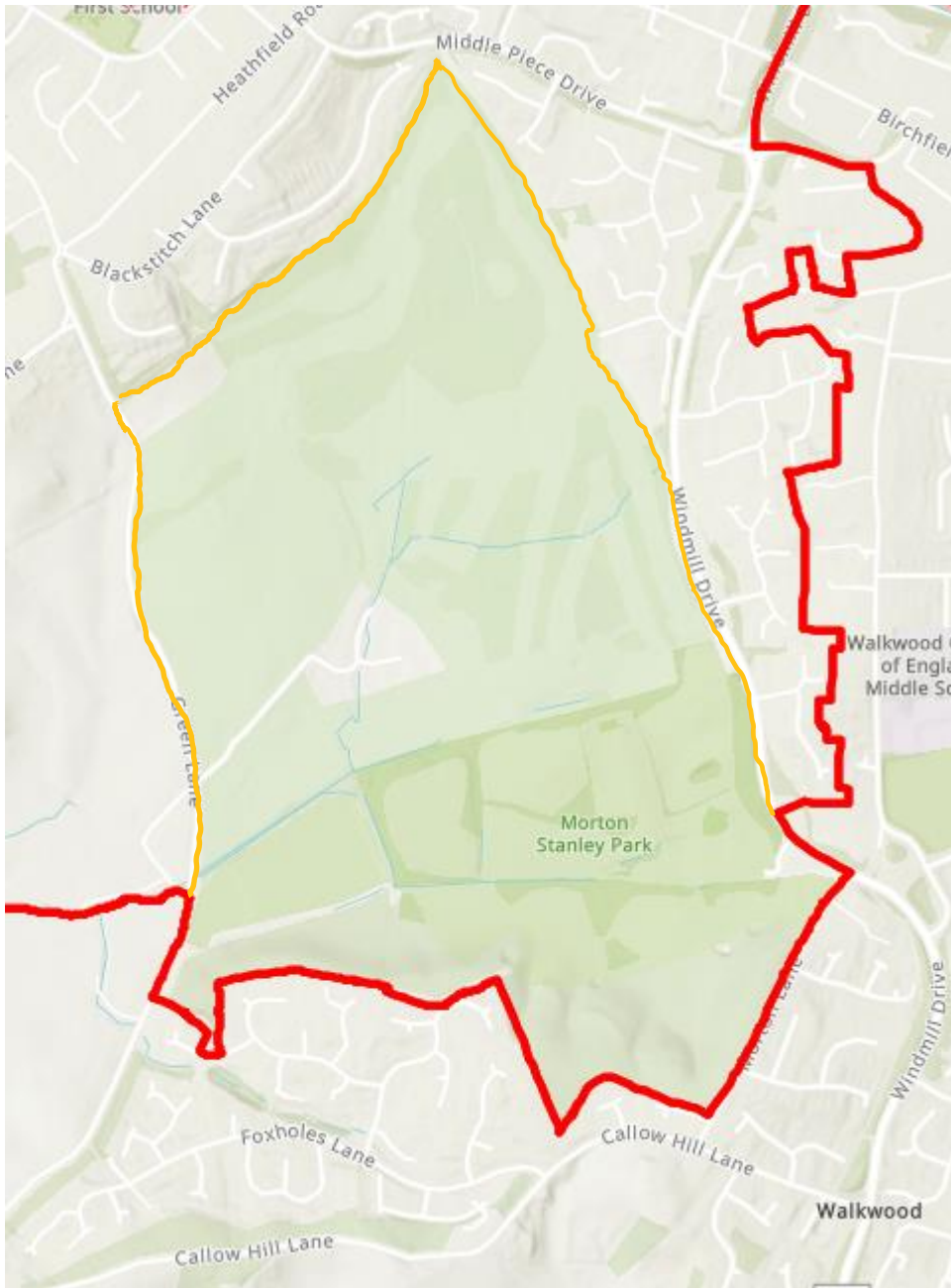
Appendix 2 – Map of Revised Polling Districts taking account of new Central and East County Divisions

LGBCE Website: [LGBCE website](#)

Relevant Statutory provisions

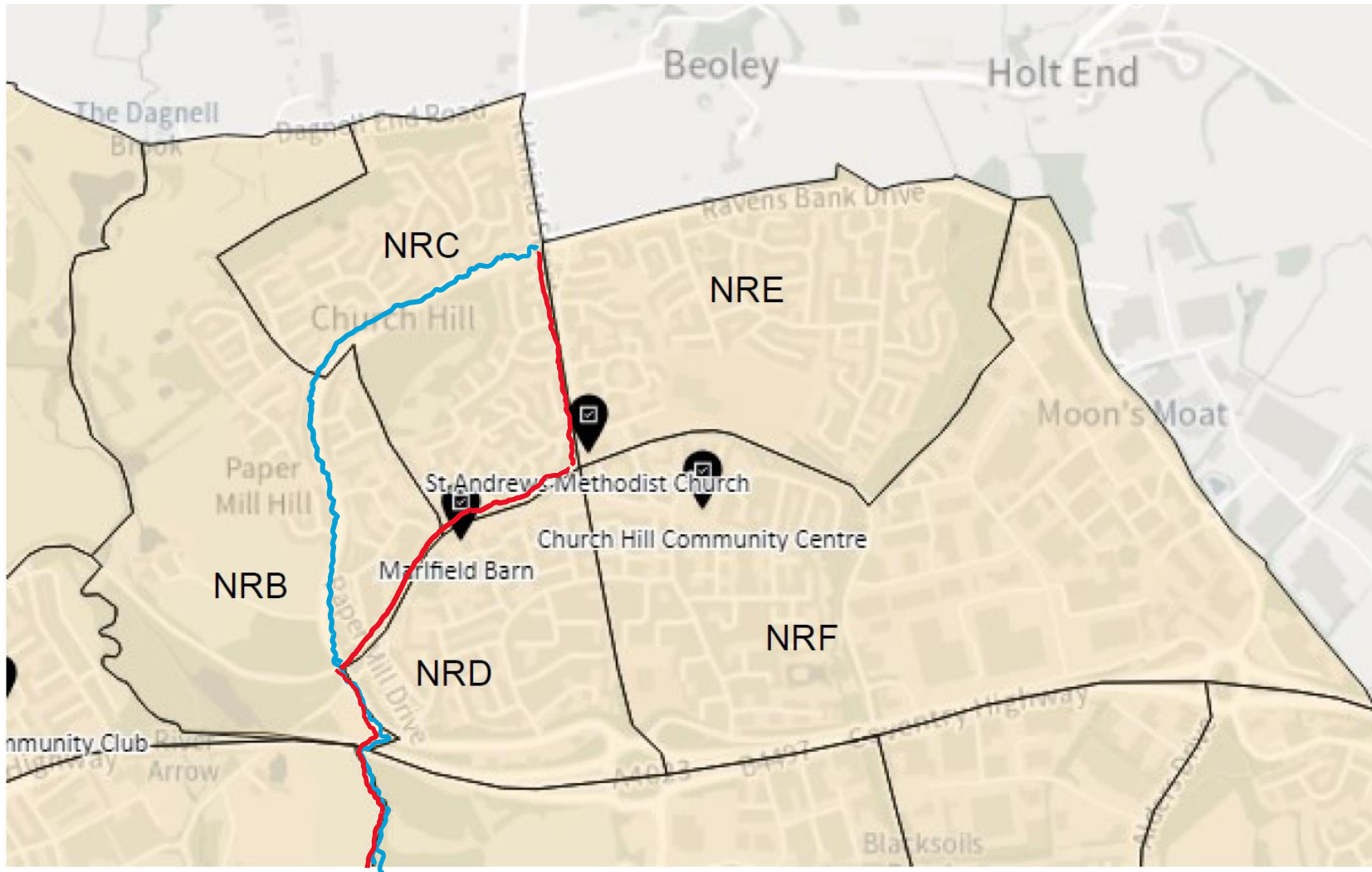
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Appendix 1 – Map of boundaries relating to changes in Redditch West Division



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Appendix 2 – Revised Polling Districts taking account of new Central and East County Divisions



The blue line represents the old Division boundary and the red line represents the new one.

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