

REDDITCH POLLING PLACE AMENDMENTS

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor John Fisher, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Ward(s) Affected	Batchley & Brockhill, Lodge Park
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	Yes
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The report sets out where changes may need to be made to Polling Places in advance of the May Elections and the June European Union Referendum. These are changes to the agreed Polling Districts and Polling Places review made in 2014.
- 1.2 The recommendations set out below are arising from investigations and Members' comments.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is asked to RESOLVE

whether having considered the contents of this report to

- 2.1 change the polling place for the electors in Polling District BYA from Batchley One Stop Shop to Batchley Community Centre;**
- 2.2 change the polling place for the electors in Polling District LPA from Oak Hill First School to Lodge Park Social Club; and**
- 2.3 that if 2.1 is accepted to take effect for May 2016 elections and if 2.2 is accepted to take effect for the EU Referendum in June 2016.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are some minor financial implications for the Council which arise from this report but will be contained within existing budgets.

Legal Implications

3.2 a) 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).

b) 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.

3.3 "Relevant authorities" (such as Redditch Borough Council) must:

"a) seek to ensure that all the electors in the Constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances"; and

"b) seek to ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled and, when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons. If it is necessary to use a place where the access is not ideal, then every reasonable adjustment must be undertaken to provide access for all electors."

Service/Operational Implications

3.4 A review of Polling Places and Stations for Redditch was carried out in 2014.

This report considers two areas, one where there is a problem with the polling place and one where a request has been made to move the polling place:

a) Batchley One Stop Shop – Polling District BYA – Batchley & Brockhill

b) Oak Hill First School – Polling District LPA – Lodge Park

A) Batchley One Stop Shop

3.5 Due to a change of use for part of the building Officers were asked to consider the viability of the Polling Station.

3.6 It was decided there would not be space to hold a poll within the room. Alternatives were considered and it was thought that Batchley Community Centre would be reasonable to send electors to. The Community Centre is already a polling place but could accommodate the 1,509 electors of Polling District BYA.

3.7 Relevant Members and Group Leaders have been consulted and no adverse comments were received.

B) Oak Hill First School

3.8 Officers received a request from Oak Hill First School to review use of the school as a polling station; Lodge Park Social Club was suggested as an alternative.

3.9 The school is still suitable as a polling place but a visit was made to Lodge Park Social Club and Officers noted that the room offered would be suitable for a polling station.

3.10 Members have been consulted and the following comments were made:

- “I would like to object to the moving of the polling station in Lodge Park to the lodge park club.

I feel that parents bringing their children to school and picking them up in the evening will cause a real problem for potential voters. Oak Hill has a severe problem with parking at these times and many use the car park at the Lodge Park Club. This may cause potential issues with voters being unable to park and maybe not voting.

A separate concern is the siting of a Polling Station on licensed premises. I understand that the club is normally open all day with beer, wines and spirits being consumed throughout this time. This may cause a problem.”

- “...Not agree with the lodge park change, keep Oak Hill First School as the polling station”
- “I am happy with the current Polling Station and therefore I oppose any change in venue”

3.11 When considering this Polling Place members should note that:

- Schools can be used as polling places free of charge (although heating, lighting and caretaking duties must be covered).
- There are other licensed premises within Redditch Borough that are used as Polling Places.

Customer/Equalities and Diversity Implications

3.12 The Council's policies directly cross-relate, particularly in relation to access issues. Accessibility for members of minority or disadvantaged groups is a key issue in the selection of suitable Polling Stations.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

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

4.2 Due to timescales involved and the One Stop Shop not being viable Poll Cards will have been distributed to Polling District BYA with the Batchley Community Centre printed on them. If Council decides not to go forward with this new poll cards must be issued.

5. APPENDICES

None.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Local Government Boundary Commission for England and Electoral Commission Guidance.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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