

ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE

11 September 2019

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2019

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillors M Dormer, Leader and D Thain, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton
Ward(s) Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	Part of consultation
Not a Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The report sets out the results of the initial consultation, the comments of the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) and the findings of the Electoral Services team to the formal review of Polling Districts and Polling Places, as required under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, and as based on Electoral Commission Guidance (a copy of the guidance is included in appendix 4).
- 1.2 The initial consultation ran from 17 July to 28 August all submissions and summaries are recorded in the various appendices below. Polling Station Inspectors reviewed all of the current polling stations within the area at the Local and Euro Parliamentary Elections in May. Officers have considered the suitability of these and any other recommendations, including verbal discussions with Elected Members and members of the public. They have also assessed any changes that maybe needed to Polling Districts. The ARO's comments are included within appendix 1.
- 1.3 The proposals below, as detailed in the attached Appendices, set out Officers' proposals arising from the Review and initial consultation. Members of the Committee are asked to consider the proposals and make recommendations for the final consultation running from 12 September to 7 October. The results of these will inform the final results of the review.
- 1.4 Once complete, certain people or organisations may appeal to the Electoral Commission to have changes made if they feel the Local Authority has not met reasonable expectations of the electorate, or taken into account the need for accessible polling stations.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 that the proposals for Polling Districts in the report and appendix 1 and 2 (as amended) be published for final consultation.

2.2 that the proposals for Polling Places in appendix 1 and 3 (as amended) be published for final consultation.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 Subject to the Committee's final decisions, there may be some minor financial implications for the Council which arise directly from this review, but which can be contained within existing budgets.
- 3.2 Depending on the outcome of the review there may be additional costs or savings regarding polling stations that are to be used in future elections. Additional finance would be required if Members choose to use additional temporary portable buildings.

Legal Implications

- 3.3 The Review is undertaken as required under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Electoral Administration Act 2013, and in accordance with relevant Electoral Commission Guidance.
- 3.4 a) Authority to set Polling District boundaries and to designate Polling Places rests with the Council or relevant Committee (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.
- 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.
- 3.5 "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

'Starting Points' for selection of Polling Places/ Stations

- 3.6 Polling Stations located within publicly funded premises (such as schools and local authority meeting rooms) are generally preferred as their availability can be relied upon and costs are low (the ARO has statutory powers to requisition such premises, which are generally well located and accessible). However, the schools themselves and pupils' parents are often understandably reluctant to accept their use as Polling Stations because of the impact of closures on their activities or on childcare.

If schools are designated, First Schools are normally selected because of reduced impact on important examination processes for older pupils.

- 3.7 Second choice for Polling Stations would be private venues. However these have the disadvantage of being more costly, as more commercial fees may be charged. The ARO cannot guarantee their availability, as owners/managers of premises have the right to refuse hire at any time, without explanation.

- 3.8 When there are no other appropriate alternatives, portable buildings may be used for Polling Stations. However, these are significantly more expensive than other premises and may often provide inadequate accommodation and accessibility for voters with disabilities.

- 3.9 As a rough guide, an average Portable Polling Station costs around £1,500 to hire, heat & light (installation of Portable Unit plus portable toilet / provision of power/generator).

The equivalent average cost of private premises would be between £200 - £400. Premises provided via public funding charge only for additional heat, light and caretaking, and therefore cost only around £100 - £200 each time.

- 3.10 There are other logistical considerations relating to the siting of a portable building. The delivery and collection require a team from the Council's depot to be on site to supervise the placing of the building and to maintain the generator connection.

Key Issues

- A. Proposed Polling District Boundaries and Polling Places.

- 3.11 Appendix 1 to the report, together with the maps where relevant, detail Polling Districts and associated electoral areas, and the proposals arising from the consultation, together with consultee comments and responses to those comments arising from the consultation.

3.12 The final column in Appendix 1 details recommendations and comments from the ARO for the Committee's consideration.

B. Polling Places beyond Polling District/Ward boundaries

3.13 In a number of cases, no suitable premises have been identified within relevant Polling Districts/Wards, and therefore proposals include Polling Places situated outside Polling District/Ward boundaries.

3.14 In drawing up such proposals, priority has been given in every case to the best solution for electors.

C. Polling District boundary changes

3.13 Polling District boundaries have not been reviewed for a considerable time and electoral officers with help of GIS officers have reviewed the polling district boundaries and recommend a number of changes. These only affect Polling District boundaries and not Ward, Parish or County Division ones. In effect changing where electors go to vote.

a) Abbey Ward Boundary between ABA and ABC:

This tidies up the boundary between the two polling districts moving the boundary to the centre of the A441 so that the new development is in ABC rather than ABA.

From ABA to ABC Polling District	Properties	Electors	Polling Station
Alfrick Close	14	2	Redditch Baptist Church
Farndon Close	15	13	
Hadzon Street	12	16	
Linthurst Crescent	65	55	
Odell Street	77	14	
Weights Lane	3	7	
Totals:	186	107	

b) Batchley and Brockhill Ward Boundary between BYD and BYB

This tidies a small anomaly along Brockhill Lane.

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BYD to BYB Polling District	Properties	Electors	Polling Station
Brockhill Lane	4	9	Portable Building on Carthorse Lane
Totals:	4	9	

c) Central Ward Boundary between CEA , CEB and CEC

This simplifies an extremely complex and out of date boundary between CEA, CEB and CEC. The new boundary between the three polling districts moves from the junction of Plymouth Road and Salop Road along Salop Road to Mount Pleasant, north along Mount Pleasant to Beaufort Street, following Beaufort Street to the alley joining to Old Crest Avenue.

CEC from CEA and CEB Polling District	Properties	Electors	Polling Station
From CEA			Southcrest Evangelical Church
Bromfield Road	73	134	
David's Close	5	5	
Haresfield Close	36	38	
Stoneleigh House	14	13	
Salop Road	18	25	
From CEB			
Beaufort Street	8	20	
Mount Pleasant	98	90	
Totals:	252	325	

d) Crabbs Cross Boundary between CCB and CCC

Tidies up an anomaly at the North West end of polling district CCB. This is basically the area north of Callow Hill Lane to Moreton Lane including Longborough Close.

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CCB to CCC Polling District	Properties	Electors	Polling Station
Callow Hill Lane Longborough Close	2 5	4 14	Gazebo at Callow Hill
Totals:	7	18	

- e) Headless Cross and Oakenshaw Ward Boundary between HOA, HOB and HOC

This change deals with simplifying a very complex and outdated boundary. The proposed boundary is not perfect, however it smooths out unusual boundary lines and follows roads and defined features. The new boundary travels south down Bredon View then east along Byron Road to Malvern Road where it moves south down to Vaynor Drive. It moves east along Vaynor Drive to the Evesham Road where it moves south until reaching the edge of the wood. It then follows the edge of the wood until reaching Coldfield Drive. It travels north up Coldfield Drive until joining the original boundary line.

From HOA and HOC to HOB Polling District	Properties	Electors	Polling Station
From HOA Byron Road Evesham Road Hanover Court Malvern Road	4 12 58 8	7 16 66 16	Rocklands Social Club
From HOC Evesham Road Four Oaks Close Guinness Close	1 51 71	0 54 80	
Totals:	205	239	

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From HOB to HOA Polling District	Properties	Electors	Polling Station
Bredon View Vaynor Drive	12 6	23 11	Vaynor First School
Totals:	18	34	

f) Lodge Park Ward Boundary between LPB and LPA

This tidies a small anomaly along Holloway Lane.

LPB to LPA Polling District	Properties	Electors	Polling Station
Holloway Lane	2	3	Oakhill First School (see appendix 1)
Totals:	2	3	

g) Winyates Ward Boundary between WIA and WIB

This tidies an anomaly along Winyates Way. No residential properties or electors are affected.

D. Areas where more details are required

3.15 Further, more detailed explanation of proposals may be required in the following instances.

- a) CHB Church Hill Ward currently Abbeywood First School – Abbeywood First School have requested a number of times for the polling station to be moved from the school. The request has been considered and rejected by Council previously. Officers have looked at various different premises in the past and St Andrews Methodist Church has been deemed suitable. It is already a polling station but the premises is big enough to cover the CHB polling district for voting purposes. Use of a portable building has also been suggested to be located in Maisemore or Jersey Close, aside from the suitability of portable buildings officers have been unable to find a location large or level enough to site a portable building.
- b) LPC Lodge Park Ward – LPC has an historic low turnout of electors, at the last local elections 20%. Electors in LPC could easily be combined with LPB saving on polling station staff resource. Walking time is not increased by a

large amount, however, it is recognised that electors walking to the polling station would have to use two subways. Officers would recommend that the polling place be moved for a trial and if successful LPC and LPB polling districts be merged.

Customer/Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.7 The Council's Customer Care / Equalities 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 Places and Stations. In the past SCOPE have criticised the use of portacabins as polling stations especially if there is an alternative within the polling district.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 Choice of Polling Place / Polling Station should not give rise to significant grounds of complaint which might put election results at risk of challenge.
- 4.3 In terms of Environmental risks, it is of course preferable that the choice of Polling Station location can help minimise unnecessary additional journeys by motorised vehicles. It is preferable where possible not to use a portable building where a generator is required.
- 4.4 In terms of Human Resources risks, the ARO must provide adequate levels and standards of staffing to secure proper polling arrangements.

5. APPENDICES

- 1 Proposals for final consultation including AROs comments
- 2 Maps – Polling District Changes
- 3 Maps – Polling Place Changes
- 4 Electoral Commission Guidance

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Previously published Polling Stations Review reports / Minutes.
- Relevant Statutory provisions.

7. KEY

Redditch Returning Officer, Sue Hanley, is designated
(Acting) Returning Officer for Parliamentary Elections.

This is because formally the Returning Officer for a County Constituency such as
Redditch is the High Sheriff for that County, which is a purely honorific title/role.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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