

**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 consultations, 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 3).
- 1.2 The initial consultation ran from 17 July to 28 August all submissions and summaries were recorded and published on the Council website and at the Council offices. Polling Station Inspectors had already reviewed all of the current polling stations within the area at the Local and Euro Parliamentary Elections in May, officers, including the ARO have considered the suitability of these and any other recommendations, including verbal discussions with Elected Members and members of the public. They also assessed any changes that maybe needed to Polling Districts.
- 1.3 The results of the consultation and the recommendations of officers and the ARO were considered by the committee at its meeting held on 11 September. These formed the final recommendations for consultation before the Committee concludes the review and sets the new Polling Districts and Places. These recommendations with an option for more suggestions were opened for consultation on 12 September and closed on 7 October. Members of the Committee are asked to consider any further proposals and finalise the review.
- 1.4 A full review document will be published at the end of November giving all the polling districts and places agreed by the committee. This will also record any further and outstanding work required on polling districts and places. Any changes made will be incorporated into the revised electoral register which will be published on 1 December 2019.
- 1.5 Certain people or organisations may appeal to the Electoral Commission to have changes made if they feel the Local Authority hasn't met reasonable

expectations of the electorate or taken into account the needs for accessible polling stations.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee is asked to **RESOLVE** that

- 2.1 the final proposals in respect of Polling District Boundaries and Polling Places, as contained in Appendix 1 (as amended), be approved; and**
- 2.2 the decisions of the Committee in respect of 2.1 above take effect from the date of poll any election/referendum held or on of publication of the revised Register of Electors on 1st December 2019 whichever is sooner.**

**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**

Key Issues

A. Proposed Polling District Boundaries and Polling Places.

3.6 Appendix 1 to the report details 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 recommendations of the last meeting of this Committee.

3.7 There were no submissions regarding changes to the polling district boundaries.

B Issues arising from consultation on recommendations

3.8 Polling Place for CHB Church Hill North – Officers were asked to source sites for portable buildings within the polling district. If a portable building were to be chosen the current venue would be asked to subsidise having a portable building. This was confirmed in submissions made to the recommendation.

No reply has been received from the current venue regarding covering the costs of having a portable building in this polling district.

Subject to confirmation portable buildings could be sited on parking places; Officers have found three possible locations for a portable place within the polling district (see appendix 2):

Location 1 – Situated in the north of the polling district on Jersey Close, it seemed the best location as it is not overlooked by houses and could fit a 25ft portable building, toilet and generator. There is also an old playground site here which would allow more room to manoeuvre when positioning the building.

Location 2 – Situated on the eastern part of Maisemore Close, this location would have enough room to site a portable building with a grassy area next to it to site a generator and toilet. On the negative side, the parking place where the

building would be situated seems to be well used by residents and is overlooked by a couple of houses.

Location 3 – Situated on the western area of Maisemore Close. In the view from officers this is the least desirable as it would more difficult to site a portable building on this parking area. It is well used and overlooked by a couple of houses. To fit a building here, land next to no. 8 Maisemore Close would need to be used. Confirmation would be required regarding the ownership of this piece of land.

- 3.9 Polling Place for HOA Vaynor – Officers were asked to visit the Scout Hut on Feckenham Road as an alternative polling place for the polling district. At the time of publishing the agenda officers have not been able to make contact with owners/key holder of the Scout Hut.

### **Customer/Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.10 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.

## **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 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 from final consultation
- 2 Map regarding possible sites for portable buildings in CHB
- 3 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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