
Polling Place Changes for May 2022

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor M Rouse Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton
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Wards Affected	Winyates Ward
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 the Committee makes either “The Space” Unit or the old Winyates locality Office the polling place for WIA for May 2022;

1.2 the Committee makes “The Link” Office the polling place for WIB for May 2022;

1.3 voters attending the station on 5 May be asked their preference for future polling.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The report sets out alternatives for two polling places, both Schools, that have requested that a different polling place is used for future elections commencing in May 2022.

2.2 A review should follow the stages produced in the Electoral Commission guidance however due to time scales there is not time to complete all of the stages.

3. 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.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 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). 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.

4.2 "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."

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

5.1 None as this report deals with statutory functions.

Climate Change Implications

5.2 It is preferable that choice of Polling Station location can help minimise unnecessary additional journeys by motorised vehicles.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.1 Accessibility for members of minority or disadvantaged groups is a key issue in the selection of suitable Polling Stations.

Operational Implications

6.2 Several sites were suggested to review by officers and staff from the current polling places. These sites being “The Link” Office, “The Space” Unit and the old Winyates Locality Office all of which are situated at the Winyates Centre; in addition the Arrow Valley Visitor Centre had also been suggested.

6.3 Officers visited the above sites on 18 January and made the following observations:

“The Link” Office could be used for a polling place with a single polling station.

“The Space” Unit would make a good polling place which could comfortably accommodate two polling stations. There is a very specific risk, see 7.4 below, associated with “The Space” Unit which could affect a decision regarding it’s use as a polling place.

The old Winyates Locality Office access is inferior to the “The Space” Unit and the entrance is quite small but would still be able to accommodate two polling stations. It was noted that there is also a first floor room that could be used as a polling station, however there would be access issues in using this as a polling station.

The Arrow Valley Visitor Centre as a suggested venue was dismissed as a potential polling place as it is a long way from the residential areas of the polling district (see Appendix 2) and would be difficult to get to without a vehicle. On foot after dark would be especially challenging.

6.4 For Polling District WIA (Appendix 1) it is suggested “The Space” Unit be used providing the risk in 7.4 could be overcome. Otherwise the old Winyates Locality Office could be used for the polling place incorporating the two polling stations.

6.5 For Polling District WIB (Appendix 2) a change from Arrow Valley School to “The Link” Office would work as a polling place. It is just outside of the polling district but is near the residential area and well used by residents of WIB.

6.6 For both polling districts if a change is made it is suggested electors voting in person on 5 May be asked for their future preference of polling place by the Presiding Officer in the polling station.

- 6.7 If a snap Westminster Parliamentary Election were to be called the polling places, due to increased turnout, would need to be reinstated at the two schools.
- 6.8 The (Acting) Returning Officer must make a submission regarding current and any proposed polling stations. She has raised her concerns in respect of the risk detailed in 7.4 and this must be resolved and remediated in advance of notification as a polling place. Whilst noting that the schools are exceptionally keen for an alternative location, change cannot be at the detriment of electors if the alternatives are not completely adequate and would strongly suggest that voter preference is the basis for polling places in these polling districts in future years.
- 6.9 The following comments were received from a Ward Member: "I don't have any issues with the proposed units at Winyates centre. I see more positives than negatives, especially if it helps schools to remain open. I hope we can find the source of the leak at the space centre and resolve it quickly. My only concern will be people going to the old polling stations as a matter of habit, so good comms and perhaps a bold notice on the polling cards to inform people before they set off from home."

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Normally 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. However as Redditch Borough Council is going through a ward boundary review a full polling places review will need to be held before the implementation of the results of the ward boundary review.
- 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.
- 7.3 The (Acting) Returning Officer must provide adequate levels and standards of staffing to secure proper polling arrangements.
- 7.4 There is a specific risk at "The Space" Unit where a leak in the roof has caused some ceiling damage. Damage could be repaired in time for May 2022 elections although it is not certain if the source of the leak will be discovered by then.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Polling District WIA

Appendix 2 – Polling District WIB

Local Government Boundary Commission for England and Electoral
Commission Guidance.

**ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE
2022**

15 February

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder		
Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal Democratic & Property Services	02.02.2022
Financial Services		
Legal Services	Clare Flanagan, Principal Solicitor	02.02.2022