
Polling Place Changes Review - Winyates Ward

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Ashley 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 keeps the current arrangements for polling using Tenacres Children’s Centre for WIA and Arrow Valley First School for WIB;

OR

1.2 the Committee holds a review including consultation on the polling place options within the report.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The report sets out alternatives for two polling places, after a temporary change for the May 2022 Local Elections agreed by the Electoral Matters Committee held on 15 February 2022.

2.2 “The Space” Unit was used as the polling place for the WIA polling district and “The Link” Office was used as the polling place for the WIB polling district.

2.3 In agreeing to review the change the Committee asked an exit survey be taken regarding the preference for future voting in the affected polling districts.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are some minor financial implications for the Council which arise from this report and would depend on which recommendation is chosen.
- 3.2 If a portable building is chosen there would be a cost burden of approximately £1,200.

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."
- 4.3 The Elections Act 2022 will place new considerations for Local Authorities in regard to polling places. Secondary legislation is still to be introduced but key considerations are accessibility and checking voter's ID to ensure polling stations have suitable space to allow polling station staff to check documents and provide a privacy screen or separate area for confidential conversations.

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 place location 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 Accessibility for members of minority or disadvantaged groups is a key issue in the selection of suitable Polling Stations. The Returning Officer will have a general responsibility to provide equipment to support people with a range of disabilities in the polling station.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 Both polling places were situated in the Winyates Centre, as mentioned in paragraph 2.2. "The Space" Unit was used as the polling place for the WIA polling district and "The Link" Office was used as the polling place for the WIB polling district.
- 6.3 When collecting their ballot paper at the May elections electors were offered a survey that could be completed in the polling station or returned in the post. A total of 91 surveys for WIA were returned and 49 for WIB.

WIA

From the 91 replies 67 preferred "The Space" as a polling station, which compares to 25 who would like to see a return to Tenacres Children's Centre.

Those that wanted to return to Tenacres Children's Centre were, in the main, from the eastern edge of the polling district.

The Polling Staff that worked in the polling station in May were happy with the premises as a polling station.

A Ward Councillor had suggested using the lounge within Ibstock House, Retirement Housing in Ibstock Close.

Officers have visited Ibstock House and are happy that this could be used as a polling place in future.

The only drawback in using this as a polling place is that Ibstock Close is to the North of the polling district and complaints maybe made from electors in the southern area.

WIB

Electors that responded to the question regarding the future location for polling 30 wanted to continue with the use of 'The Link' office and 16 wished to return to Arrow Valley First School.

The largest number of comments received related to the small size of the polling station this was echoed by polling staff who found that the polling station was far too small to deal with the through put of electors wishing to vote.

This was also noted by the Returning Officer and Polling Station Inspectors visiting the station.

The electorate for WIB is increasing and to follow Electoral Commission guidelines three poll clerks will be required.

Due to lack of space officers do not recommend using the 'The Link' office for future polls. It should be made clear that there would not be adequate space to hold a Parliamentary Election at this office.

As previously, a Ward Councillor suggested alternatives using a portable building on either Edgmond Close or Badger Close within the polling district.

Officers have visited both sites and although Badger Close would be too small to site a portable building one could be placed in Edgmond Close.

The site is owed by Worcestershire County Council so agreement would need to be sourced, in addition officers had concerns about noise from the generator to nearby housing.

- 6.4 An additional option that could be considered is to make “The Space” the polling place for WIB and move WIA electors to Ibstock House. After visiting Ibstock House officers have concluded that both premises would be of sufficient size to use for a Parliamentary Election.
- 6.5 The (Acting) Returning Officer must make a submission regarding current and any proposed polling stations. She has raised her concerns in respect of “The Link” office. She would like to reiterate her previous comments that 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.

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 If a portable building is to be considered for voting it should be noted that the Elections Act is bringing in a duty for polling stations to have a private area for checking voters ID. As mentioned in paragraph 4.3 officers are awaiting secondary legislation and Electoral Commission guidance but it might make the use of portable buildings in certain areas redundant.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Appendix 1 – Polling District WIA and WIB
Appendix 2 – Survey Results

ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE
2022

9 August

Local Government Boundary Commission for England and Electoral
Commission Guidance.

**ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE
2022**

9 August

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder		
Head of Service		
Financial Services	Pater Carpenter	28 July 2022
Legal Services	Clare Flanagan	28 July 2022