
Review of Polling Place changes post UK Parliamentary General Election

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Baker, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Governance
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton
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Wards Affected	Astwood Bank & Feckenham, Headless Cross & Oakenshaw, North, Winyates
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 That the Committee notes the contents of the report and makes changes, if any, in respect of polling places as contained in the report (as amended); and**
- 1.2 if necessary, instructs officers to carry out a consultation exercise on one or more polling places in the report; to be brought back to the Committee at a later date.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The report reviews a number of polling places that were used in the May elections and a review requested, or were changed for the UK Parliamentary General Election (UKPGE) by this Committee at the meeting of 4 June 2024

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 No direct costs from this report.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 This report deals with statutory functions but relates to the strategic purpose of an effective and sustainable council.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 None for this report.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 The first two polling places to be considered, which were used in both the May and July elections, have received a request to be reviewed.

6.3 **The Red Lion Public House, Hunt End**

The venue was used for the first time in May and again in July. It replaced the Portable Building in Banners Lane that was used previously.

The actual polling station is in a marquee at the rear of the public house so electors either enter it via the pub itself or from the car park at the rear.

The electorate for the UKPGE was 1,605 and the Presiding Officer at both elections had several complaints about the uneven car park.

At the May elections there had been issues regarding signage but these were rectified for July.

The Equalities Inspector and the Polling Station Inspector both raised concerns about the car park. The Equalities Inspector also raised issues regarding lighting and heating especially if this were to be used as a polling station in Winter.

Neither officer recommended using it as polling station in the future.

The problem going forward is lack of suitable buildings in the area.

The only other option seems to be reverting back to the Portable Building in Banners Lane which is also not accessible and has a higher cost.

6.4 Portable Building, Atworth Close

The venue was used for the first time in May and again in July. Previously electors went to vote at Woodrow Community Centre but now the 671 electors of polling district HOD – Wirehill are now in a different borough ward so a portable building on Atworth Close was decided to be the best option for polling.

The portable building was sited near the entrance to Atworth Close on a strip of grassy land. At the May elections there was a problem with siting the building due to parked cars.

Another issue is that due to the grass a complex ramp needs to be erected each time the station is used.

Some residents of Atworth Close raised concerns at the siting of the portable building and wished for this to be reviewed post election.

The Equalities Inspector did note that there is only on street parking but also noted that a portable building was the only option for this area due to the lack of community facilities.

It should be noted that officers and previous members of this Committee spent a considerable amount of time in the past looking for alternatives to this site.

It seems that the only other feasible option would be to move electors to the polling station on Grangers Lane; although this would mean additional travel for those electors in Wirehill. If this option were

chosen it would make sense to combine polling districts HOC and HOD.

Members of this Committee may wish to consult with the electors of polling district HOD regarding their preference and bring this back to a future meeting of this Committee.

6.5 The next two polling places were used at the UKPGE in July as the previous polling places were not available.

6.6 Farmhouse Meeting Room, Meadow Farm Hotel

This venue was used as the Abbey Hotel was unavailable on 4 July. The Abbey Hotel had only been used as polling place once before; that was in the May 2024 elections.

It serves a small electorate of 308 and no complaints were received regarding using the Farmhouse Meeting Room.

There were no adverse comments from the Equalities Inspector and positive comments received from the Presiding Officer, both would recommend using this venue again.

The Polling Station Inspector made the additional comment that there could be a need for additional signage.

Costs were considerably less for using the Farmhouse meeting room compared to the Abbey Hotel.

Officers would recommend using the Farmhouse Meeting Room in future.

6.7 St Peter's Church Centre, Ipsley

This venue was used as the Lavender Barn at Old Rectory House was unavailable on 4 July. The Lavender Barn had only been used as polling place once before in the May 2024 elections.

The electorate at the UKPGE was 929 and no complaints or adverse comments were received.

The Equalities Inspector and polling station inspector noted small issues with path but that it was still accessible for votes. It was recommended that it be retained as polling station.

The Church Centre costs more than the Lavendar Barn but officers would recommend it's continued use because of it being more flexible in its availability at short notice.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 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.

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.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.