

Public Document Pack



Date: **3 September 2011**
Our ref:
Ask For:
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ELECTORAL MATTERS WORKING PARTY

8 SEPTEMBER 2011

A meeting of the Electoral Matters Working Party will be held at **6.00 pm on Thursday, 8 September 2011** in the Austen Room, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Membership:

Councillors: Fenner, Gideon, Hornus, Johnston, King, Poole and Roberts

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

Item
No

4. **REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2011 - SUPPLEMENTARY BRIEFING PAPER** (Pages 1 - 16)

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REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2011

To: **Electoral Matters Working Party**

Main Portfolio Area: **Performance**

By: **Mark Avis, Electoral Services Officer**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **All wards**

Summary: This supplementary briefing paper summarises the representations received during the second phase of the public consultation exercise on the review of polling districts and polling places 2011.

For consultation

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Members have received a briefing paper which summarises the work undertaken by the Democratic Services Department and the Returning Officer on the review of polling districts and polling places 2011, the representations that were received during the public consultation and seeks Members views in respect of further action.
- 1.2 To adhere to the Access to Information Act Members of the Working Party received their agenda packs before the second phase of the public consultation had finished (2 September 2011). Therefore any comments received during the second phase of the public consultation do not appear in the original briefing paper.
- 1.3 This supplementary briefing paper highlights any representations received during the second phase of the public consultation and seeks Members views.

2.0 Representations received

Councillor Ken Gregory

Representation received from Councillor Ken Gregory as to why more than one polling district cannot be allocated to the same polling place (station) to reduce costs.

Officers' response was that we have to be careful that no electors would have to walk past their old polling station to get to their new one and the polling station is easily accessible to all electors. Furthermore, the last polling district and polling places review increased the number of polling stations to help electors who, at the time, had to travel considerable distances to reach their polling stations.

Officers considered this as part of this review as there were a few buildings that could quite comfortably accommodate additional polling districts but with reference to the above drew a blank.

Officers were happy to consider any proposals put forward by Councillor Gregory but none were received.

Councillor Zita Wiltshire (St Peters Ward)

Representation was received from Councillor Zita Wiltshire informing Officers that she was satisfied with the revised polling places for the Bradstowe St Peters Ward.

Scope

Representation was received from Elliott Dunster, Parliamentary Assistant to Scope appreciating the revised polling district and polling places scheme; and that the Council was addressing access issues notably in the Bradstowe and Salmestone Wards (Annex 1).

Councillor Rosalind Binks (Beacon Ward)

Representation was received from Councillor Rosalind Binks informing Officers that the two polling stations allocated for the Beacon Ward were adequate and fairly central for most.

She did raise points that a few roads (located in and around Reading Street Road) were located very near to the neighbouring polling district's polling places (ie. St Andrews Polling Place, Reading Street) which was some distance away (Annex 2).

Officers have considered the representation and would make the following recommendation that the roads listed below be moved from BSB (Beacon Road – Westover) polling district to BSC (Beacon Road – Reading Street) polling district:

Afghan Road	55
Beacon Road (Part)	35
Grafton Road (Part)	18
Link Road	2
Reading Street Road (Part)	19

This amendment to the polling district boundaries will have the following affect to the electorate for each polling district:

BSB Beacon Road (Westover)	2037
BSC Beacon Road (Reading Street)	1216

The enclosed map shows the new polling district boundaries within the Beacon Road Ward (Annex 3).

Canterbury City Council

Representation was received from the Deputy Acting Returning Officer of Canterbury City Council informing Officers that he had no comments to make on the revised scheme although he would appreciate notification of any subsequent changes to the scheme following our consultation (Annex 4).

Contact Officer:	Glenn Back, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager
Reporting to:	Harvey Patterson, Corporate and Regulatory Services Manager

Annex 1 and 2	Email from Elliott Dunster, Parliamentary Assistant to Scope
Annex 3	Email from Councillor Rosalind Binks
Annex 4	Map showing new polling district boundaries within the Beacon Road Ward
Annex 5	Letter from Deputy Acting Returning Officer, Canterbury City Council

Corporate Consultation Undertaken

Finance	None at this stage
Legal	None at this stage

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Agenda Item 4 Annex 1

From: Elliot Dunster <elliot.dunster@scope.org.uk>
To: "electoral.services@thanet.gov.uk" <electoral.services@thanet.gov.uk>
Date: 18/08/11 11:10
Subject: Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places
Attachments: Polls Apart Checklist.pdf

To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for contacting Scope about Thanet District Council's statutory review of polling places. I greatly appreciate the inclusion of the proposals in Annex 1, and have read them with interest. The comments of the Returning Officer, and the recommendations made, do indicate that access issues are being considered and improvements trying to be made notably in Bradstowe and Salmestone.

As you may be aware, Scope has campaigned for a number of years on issues of polling station accessibility, particularly through our recent Polls Apart campaign. As part of this campaign, we produced a set of guidelines for Local Authorities, to assist in ensuring that polling stations are properly accessible for disabled people with a variety of needs. I have attached a copy of this checklist which you may find of use in carrying out your review.

I hope that this information is useful to you, and please do not hesitate to contact Scope again should you require any further information.

Kind regards,

Elliot

Elliot Dunster | Parliamentary Assistant
Scope | 6 Market Road London N7 9PW
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Tel: 020 7619 7342
www.scope.org.uk <<http://www.scope.org.uk/>>

Are you a disabled person or the parent of a disabled child and want to make your voice heard? Complete Scope's Disabled People's Poll: www.scope.org.uk/attitudes <<http://www.scope.org.uk/attitudes>>

Scope is a registered charity (number 208231) and a company limited by guarantee (number 520866).
Our registered office is at 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW, England.
Our VAT number is 805156939.

Visit our website at <http://www.scope.org.uk>

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Polls Apart access checklist

Improving access is not as difficult as it might seem. In many cases small changes can make a world of difference. This checklist is for officials who want to ensure polling stations are accessible to disabled voters.

Getting there:

Is there designated or reserved parking for disabled and older people close to the polling station?

If the parking is on the road, a dropped kerb close by will allow a wheelchair user access to the pavement. If there is no parking, providing temporary parking just for polling day, for example, opening up a school playground, or suspending the usual parking restrictions for disabled people would improve access.

Is the polling station and parking for disabled people clearly sign-posted from all possible approaches?

Black, lower case lettering in a sans serif font such as Arial or Helvetica on a white background is easiest to read.

Is the approach to the polling station unobstructed and in good condition?

Broken paving slabs, gravel, potholes, parked cars and other obstructions make access considerably more difficult.

Getting in:

If your polling station has steps up to the entrance, is there a suitable ramp?

Steps, even a small single step, can make a polling station inaccessible to many disabled or older people with mobility difficulties. A ramp should be appropriately designed for the job. A badly designed ramp can be dangerous and does not improve access. A good ramp should have a low gradient (about 1:20), be strong and level, with raised sides or railings either side. If the ramp is not permanent it should be securely attached to the steps so it cannot slip or wobble.

If the main entrance to your polling station is inaccessible is there a clearly sign-posted alternative accessible entrance?

If there is an accessible entrance, it would be better to use this as the main entrance. You don't need to use 'accessible entrance' signs if there is one entrance for everyone.

Is the door into the polling station wide enough for a wheelchair user to pass through easily?

If the doors are heavy, awkward to open or have handles that may be out of reach have you propped them open? If you do prop them open make sure you don't obstruct the entrance. Portacabins and other types of temporary hut are usually inaccessible so try to avoid their use until they have been redesigned to take access needs into consideration.

Inside the polling station:

Is there level access from the entrance of the polling station to the voting area?

Internal steps are just as much of a problem as external ones and will need ramps to make them accessible. Ensure doormats are level with the floor. If they are not, remove them.

Is the flooring non-slip, even and level?

Highly polished surfaces can be slippery while thick carpeting and loose rugs or mats can cause people to trip or get stuck.

Is the polling station well lit?

Even on a sunny day some visually impaired people may need the lights switched on to vote independently.

Are there seats available for people to rest if they need to?

Is there enough space inside the polling station and the corridors for a wheelchair user to move about easily?

Obstructions such as stacked furniture or piles of boxes can cause difficulties for visually impaired people as well as people with mobility difficulties.

Voting:

Is there a polling booth that is low and wide enough so a wheelchair user can vote unaided and in secret?

- Is there a low-level ballot box that a wheelchair user can reach unaided?

Putting the ballot box on a chair achieves this.

- Is there large print ballot papers, notices and a support to help visually impaired people post their vote?

Having a white stripe around the slot of the ballot box helps visually impaired people post their vote. Display large print notices of the ballot paper close to the polling booth and where it is easily visible for someone who needs to use it. Putting it in the polling booths is one good option — it needs to be low down on the wall and not obscured by other notices or signs. Ballot papers in large print should have party symbols on them.

- Is there a tactile template to help visually impaired people vote unaided?

Staff at the polling stations need to know how to use it and explain it to someone.

General access issues:

- Have the polling station staff received Disability Equality Training to ensure that they can support disabled people if required in an appropriate manner?

Some disabled people may need assistance but everyone is an individual so ask before you assume someone wants help.

- Have you put access details on the polling card and made sure someone in the Electoral Services Department knows about the issues and can advise people?

Many disabled people expect to encounter problems when going to vote. If you have thought about all the issues, make sure you let people know.

- Are you unsure about any other issues to do with access?

If you are unsure about any issue, your local disability group should be more than happy to advise you about how to ensure your polling station is accessible to disabled voters.

For further information visit www.pollsapart.org.uk
email info@pollsapart.org.uk or call the Scope campaigns team on 020 7619 7245

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Agenda Item 4 Annex 3

From: Cllr-Rosalind Binks
To: electoral.services@thanet.gov.uk
Date: 25/08/11 16:36
Subject: Polling Districts - Beacon Ward Broadstairs

Hello

I agree that the 2 polling stations for this ward are totally adequate and fairly central to most.

However, during the last election, I noticed that a few roads (eg Reading Street Road) are located very near to the St Andrews polling station in Reading Street and yet are allocated to the Westover station which is some distance away.

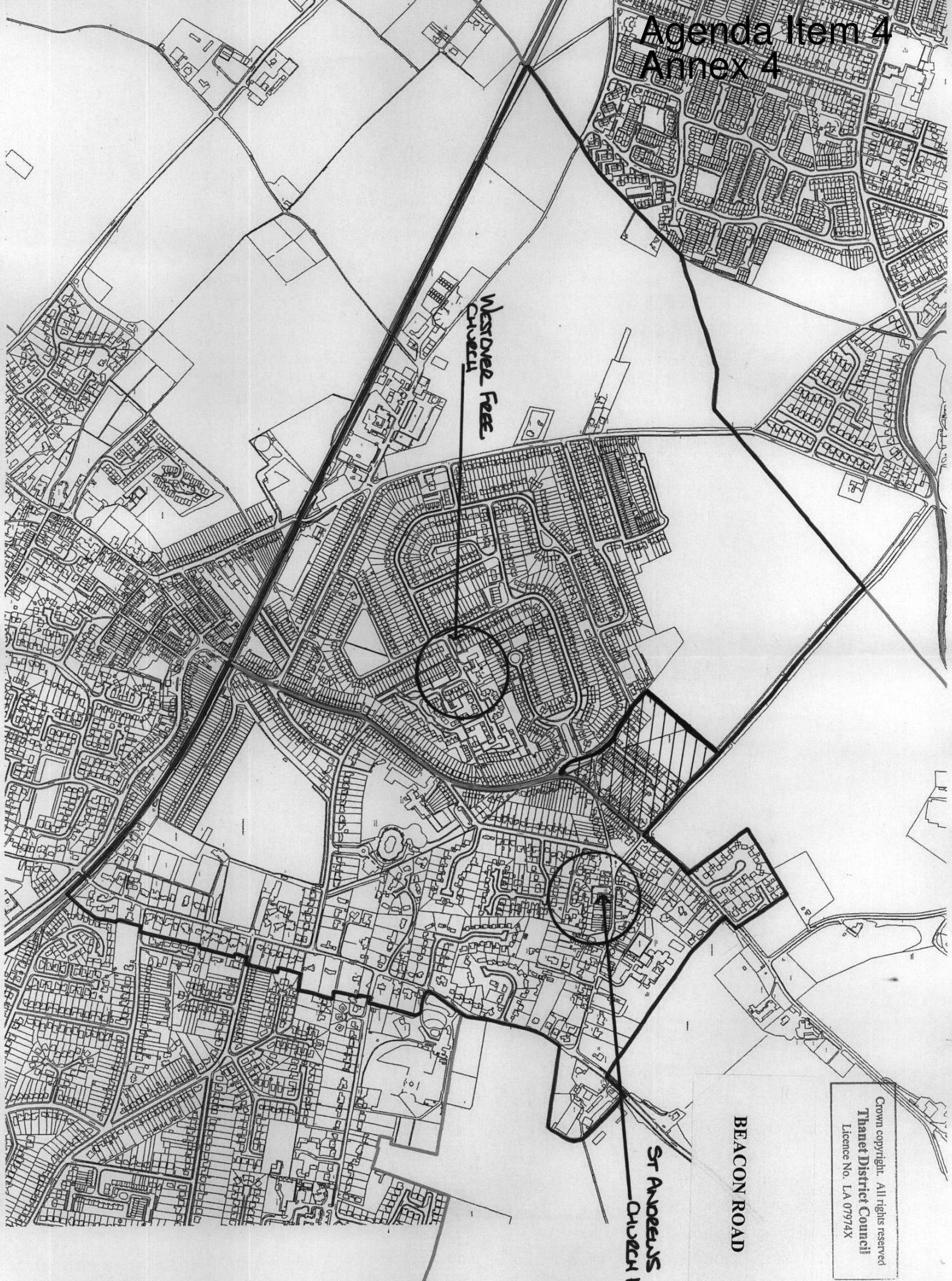
Could I suggest that prior to the next election, the split of roads between the two stations is reviewed.

Best wishes

Rosalind Binks

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Agenda Item 4
Annex 4



WESTON FREE
CHURCH

ST ANDREW'S
CHURCH HALL

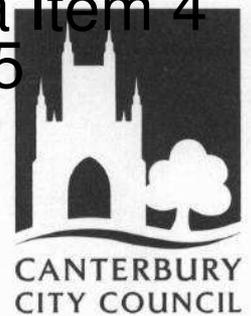
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Date: 30 August 2011
Your Ref:
Our Ref: RB
Ask for: **Bob Bennett**
Direct dial: 01227 862003
Direct fax: 01227 862020
E-mail: bob.bennett@canterbury.gov.uk

Agenda Item 4 Annex 5



Glenn Back
Democratic and Scrutiny Services Manager
Thanet District Council
PO Box 9
Cecil Street
Margate CT9 1XW

Dear Mr Back

THE REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES (PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS) REGULATIONS 2006

Thank you for your letter of the 2 August 2011 enclosing a copy of the proposed polling district and polling places scheme for your authority.

Having considered the scheme, I do not wish to make any comments on it although I would appreciate notification of any subsequent changes to the scheme following your consultation.

Yours sincerely

for Colin Carmichael
Deputy Acting Returning Officer
North Thanet Parliamentary Constituency



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