
REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2011

To: **Electoral Matters Working Party – 27 September 2011**

Main Portfolio Area: **Performance**

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

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **All wards**

Summary: **This briefing paper summarises the work to date on the review of polling districts and polling places 2011.**

For consultation

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 At the first meeting of the Electoral Matters Working Party Members agreed to the revised polling district and polling places scheme (attached at Annex 1) apart from the designation of polling places within the Salmestone Ward.
- 1.2 This report considers the designation of polling places within the Salmestone Ward together with updates on various items which were raised at the meeting that were outside the terms of reference of the Working Party.

2.0 Salmestone Ward

- 2.1 Officers had recommended to the Working Party that Salmestone Primary School be the designated polling place for the MP1 and MP2 polling district within the Salmestone Ward.
- 2.2 However, Members had concerns regarding the use of Salmestone Primary School as the polling station for both MP1 (Yoakley) and MP2 (Westwood) polling districts.
- 2.3 It was considered by Members that the ingress/egress onto Tivoli Road was not safe and therefore the use of St Gregory's RC School was recommended as an alternative for the MP1 (Yoakley) district. Views were sought on an alternative polling station for MP2 (Westwood).
- 2.4 It was suggested that the Chairman and Officers visit the Westwood area to locate a polling station for the MP2 (Westwood) polling district. Members suggested the use of Global Generation Centre within the Westwood Industrial Estate as a suitable polling station.

- 2.5 Officers felt it unnecessary for the Chairman of the Working Party to inspect the Global Generation Centre together with officers and assess suitability, as no Members were involved with the inspection and inspection of any other polling places.
- 2.6 Officers are due to carry out an inspection and assessment of the Global Generation Centre within the next few days.
- 2.7 Officers will give a verbal update at the meeting on their inspection/assessment.
- 2.8 Members' views are sought on the designation of polling places within the Salmestone Ward.

3.0 Terms of Reference of the Electoral Matters Working Party

- 3.1 At the previous meeting some Members sought clarification of the terms of reference of the Electoral Matters Working Party.
- 3.2 The brief of the Working Party as agreed by Council in May 2011 is attached at Annex 2.
- 3.3 Since the last meeting some Members have sought advice from officers on whether it would be possible to expand the terms of reference of the Working Party, and if so how.
- 3.4 The Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager is preparing a report on options for expanding the terms of reference of the Electoral Matters Working Party, for consideration at a future meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Party. Any recommendations that emerge would need to be considered by the Standards Committee before submission to Council.

4.0 Protocols on advising stakeholders on replacement polling station

- 4.1 Members were keen on protocols being drawn up to govern how the Council advises stakeholders on alterations that may need to be made to designated polling stations at short notice (e.g. when one suddenly becomes unavailable in the run-up to an election).
- 4.2 The Returning Officer must designate a replacement polling station if a designated polling station becomes unavailable. Normally, such changes are reported to Council for information, even though the decision rests with the Returning Officer and not Council.
- 4.2 Unfortunately, due to time constraints, such reporting to Council was not possible in the run-up to the May 2011 elections.

4.3 After listening to Members concerns it is suggested that the protocol on advising stakeholders about replacement polling stations be as follows :

- A report will be presented to full Council for information purposes only (where a scheduled meeting is available within the time limit before an election);
- All agents and sub-agents are advised of any changes;
- The changes are published on the Council's website;
- All affected poll cards are endorsed with "Please note! Change in polling station"; (where time permits) and
- Notices are displayed at old polling station highlighting location of new polling station.

4.4 The views of the Working Party are sought on the above proposals.

5.0 Corporate implications

5.1 Financial

5.1.1 Any increase in the number of polling stations (above any requirement based upon electorate imposed by the Electoral Commission) will increase the costs of running an election.

5.2 Legal

5.2.1 It is a legal requirement to undertake the review before the end of the year. Failure to carry out the review could result in representations being made to the Electoral Commission because the Council failed to carry out the review, which could result in the Electoral Commission directing the Council to amend its current polling districts and polling places.

5.3 Corporate

5.3.1 Through the polling district and polling places review Thanet people have been consulted.

5.4 Equity and Equalities

5.4.1 The subject of equalities has been considered during the review and detailed findings were included in the briefing note previously circulated and the reports presented to the Working Party and circulated to others.

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

Annex 1	Revised Polling District and Polling Places Scheme 2011
Annex 2	Annex 1 of report to Council in May 2011 on the constitution of committees, political balance, appointments to committees, panels and boards, and appointment of chairmen and vice-chairmen of committees, panels and boards - 2011/12

Corporate Consultation Undertaken

Finance	None at this stage
Legal	None at this stage