
REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2014

To: **Boundary and Electoral Arrangements Working Party – 22 October 2014**

By: **Glenn Back, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **All wards**

Summary: This report summarises the work undertaken by the Democratic Services Department on the review of polling districts and polling places 2014 which incorporates representations received during the public consultation

For decision

1.0 Introduction and Background

1.1 On 9 January 2014, the Boundary and Electoral Arrangements Working Party received a report from the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager outlining the need for a polling district and polling places review, notice of the review and consultation arrangements and timetable of the review.

2.0 Work to date

2.1 The Council gave public notice of the review and consulted the Returning Officer and any such persons it thought would have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability. Such persons were given the opportunity to make representations and to comment on representations made to the Council by the Returning Officer.

2.2 The Council gave public notice of the review in a local newspaper and on the Council's website on 1 July 2014. In addition, the following parties were invited to submit representations including suggestions for the identification of polling districts and alternative polling places and polling stations:

- All district councillors;
- Town and Parish Councils;
- Kent County Council
- Local political party groups; and
- Local organisations with expertise in matters concerning access to premises.

2.3 Following this initial consultation period, the Returning Officer made representations to the Council which included information as to the location of both existing and proposed polling places and polling stations. Interested parties were able to make comments on the Returning Officer's representations.

3.0 The review process

- 3.1 All existing polling stations were evaluated by Officers at the European Parliamentary Election using the evaluation checklist used by the Electoral Commission. Upon completion, Officers analysed each individual polling station checklist to ascertain the suitability of the existing polling stations.
- 3.2 Furthermore, feedback generated from the European Parliamentary Election (electors, staff, candidates, agents, elected representatives, etc) was analysed and incorporated into the review. This was in addition to the public consultation as part of the statutory review.

4.0 Inappropriate polling stations

- 4.1 The Democratic Services Department has identified two polling stations which, at the time of the last review, were the most suitable on offer despite minor drawbacks, but Officers are now recommending alternative polling stations.

Bradstowe (BSD)

- 4.2 The current polling place for the Bradstowe (BSD) polling district is the Youth and Leisure Centre, Retort House, Albion Street, Broadstairs.
- 4.3 Feedback from polling station staff following the European Parliamentary Election was that the polling station itself was relatively small and that there was no natural light within the polling station.
- 4.4 As an alternative, Officers re-visited the Holy Trinity Church Hall in Church Road, Broadstairs. The Holy Trinity Church Hall had been used before as a polling station but due to access restrictions it was decided not to use it again.
- 4.5 Since the last review, the Church Hall has undergone renovation work to make the building more accessible. There were no longer any internal steps or obstructions/hazards. The flooring was now non slip and the disabled access had been improved.
- 4.6 There remained a problem with a slight step to the front of the building but this could be eased with the use of a temporary ramp.
- 4.7 See **Annex 1** for the location of the proposed polling station.

Salmestone (MP2)

- 4.8 The current polling place for the Salmestone (MP2) polling district is the Global Generation Church, Unit 2-4 Westwood Business Park, Margate.
- 4.9 Feedback from both polling station staff and electors following the European Parliamentary Election was that the polling place was too remote and that unless electors drove, it was not easily accessible and some of the elderly population would not be able to walk from the main road.
- 4.10 As an alternative, Officers re-visited the Orb Public House on Margate Road, Margate. The Orb Public House had been used before as a polling station but due to the lack of lighting with the room used it was decided not to use it again.

- 4.11 Since the last review, the Orb has a new owner who has undertaken extensive improvement/renovation works. The room available now has good lighting with doormats level with the floor with a non-slip floor covering.
- 4.12 See **Annex 2** for the location of the proposed polling place.

5.0 Representations received

- 5.1 During the consultation stages a total of three representations were received regarding the proposed polling places/stations

Resident of Linley Road – Beacon Road Ward (BSB) – Westover Free Church Hall, Linley Road

- 5.2 A resident submitted representation on the need for two ramps; one inside near the outer door entrance and the other on the outside over the step. This would prevent people tripping when entering/exiting the building.
- 5.3 Due to an incident at the European Parliamentary Election, Officers tried to seek alternative premises within the polling district but were unsuccessful. Officers highlighted to the owner of the Church Hall the trip hazard created by the metal door frame and it was decided that ramps would be provided by the Council.

Councillor Alan Poole – Sir Moses Montefiore Ward (RC and RD)

- 5.4 Councillor Alan Poole submitted representation stating that he was happy with the two polling district/places with the Sir Moses Montefiore Ward.

Resident of Hockeredge Gardens, Westgate-on-Sea

- 5.5 A resident submitted representation on why their address is Westgate yet they are asked to vote in the Westbrook Ward.
- 5.6 Unfortunately, this review of polling districts and polling places can only look at wards already in existence and cannot change ward boundaries. Ward boundaries will be considered at the next periodic electoral review that will be undertaken after the 2015 elections but prior to the 2019 District wide elections.

6.0 Next Steps

- 6.1 It is now up to the Electoral Matters Working Party to make any comments on the proposed polling places and polling stations and recommend a scheme to Council.
- 6.2 The proposed scheme can be found at **Annex 3**.

7.0 Recommendations

Option 1

- 7.1 The Boundary and Electoral Arrangements Working Party recommend to Council that it adopts the proposed revised polling district and polling places scheme for implementation on 1 December 2014.

Option 2

- 7.2 The Boundary and Electoral Arrangements Working Party recommends an alternative scheme of polling districts and polling places that officers would need to consider.
- 7.3 Officers would then report their findings to an additional meeting of the Boundary and Electoral Arrangements Working Party for further consideration before being resubmitted to an extraordinary meeting of Council prior to 1 December 2014.
- 7.4 Members need to be aware that if there is not a revised scheme in place by 1 December 2014 (when the revised electoral register is published) then any changes Council make to the polling districts will need to be incorporated into a revised electoral register which would then need to be republished at an additional cost (i.e. costs of re-printing, re-distributing and re-advertising the revised register).

8.0 Corporate implications

Financial

- 8.1 There will be some financial implications due to the increase in signage and ramps proposed. These costs will be met by the Ministry of Justice for Parliamentary and European Parliamentary Elections, by Kent County Council for County Elections, by the District Council for District elections and by Town/Parish Councils for Town/Parish Council Elections. No additional budget needs to be set aside for the District election in 2015 because provision for that election has already been made within the budget.

Legal

- 8.2 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.

Corporate

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

Equity and Equalities

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

9.0 Decision Making Process

- 9.1 The Council delegated the review of the polling districts and polling places to the Boundary and Electoral Matters Working Party. Upon completion of the review the Boundary and Electoral Matters Working Party must recommend to Council a revised scheme of polling districts and polling places for its determination. That report is scheduled to be made to an extraordinary meeting of Council on 18 November 2014.

- 9.2 Council is the decision making body.

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| Contact Officer: | Glenn Back, Democratic and Scrutiny Services Manager |
| Reporting to: | Paul Cook, Interim Director of Corporate & Regulatory Services & Deputy 151 Officer |

Annex List

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| Annex 1 | Proposed Polling Place – Bradstow (BSD) |
| Annex 2 | Proposed Polling Places – Salmestone (MP2) |
| Annex 3 | Proposed Polling District and Polling Places Scheme |

Background Papers

| Title | Details of where to access copy |
|---|--|
| Existing Polling District and Polling Places Scheme | <i>Available from Electoral Services</i> |
| Proposed Polling District and Polling Places Scheme | <i>Available from Electoral Services</i> |