

Title of meeting: Governance and Audit and Standards Committee

Date of meeting: 20 September 2019

Subject: Review of polling districts and polling places

Report by: Electoral Services Manager

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: Yes

1. Purpose of report

To detail the outcomes of the review of polling districts and polling places recently undertaken and to invite members to consider the recommendations made.

2. Recommendations

- 1) That the changes to the current scheme recommended in paragraphs 5.2 to 5.10 are approved and implemented on publication of the 2020 Register of Electors**
- 2) That it be reconfirmed that the Returning Officer has delegated authority to make such variations to polling places as may be necessary arising from the availability of premises for use at a particular election**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council is required under section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended) to divide the area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each polling district. These regulations also require the Council to conduct periodic reviews of polling districts and polling places.
- 3.2 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a revised schedule for conducting periodic reviews and required a review to be completed within the period 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020.
- 3.3 The previous review of polling districts and polling places was completed in 2014.

- 3.4 A polling district is a sub-division of an electoral area (ward) into a smaller geographical unit comprising a number of streets/houses.
- 3.5 A polling place is a building or area in which polling stations will be designated by the Returning Officer.
- 3.6 A polling station is defined as the actual room or building where the poll is held.
- 3.7 The local authority is responsible for dividing each electoral area into polling districts and for designating polling places. The Returning Officer is responsible for defining the location of polling stations within a polling place, such as the room or part of the building.
- 3.8 The duties of the council in the review process are two-fold:
- a) To ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
 - b) To 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
- 3.9 When designating polling places there are practical limitations such as the availability and suitability of venues that must be considered.
- 3.10 The consideration of changes to constituency boundaries or city council ward boundaries was not in the scope of the review.

4. Representations received

- 4.1 The Returning Officer is a statutory respondent to the review and submitted proposals at the start of the consultation period. These proposals included the reconfiguration of polling district boundaries in Eastney & Craneswater, Hilsea and Paulsgrove wards and a number of polling place amendments across the city to reflect current circumstances.
- 4.2 A summary of proposed changes submitted by the Returning Officer as part of the review are shown in Appendix A.
- 4.3 Two further representations (see Appendix B) were received which can be summarised as follows:
- a) Councillor Tom Wood suggested that it would be sensible for Chatham Drive to be included in the same polling district as the other parts of the Pembroke Park neighbourhood (polling district AA).
 - b) Councillor Scott Payter-Harris made two suggested amendments to the Returning Officer's representations relating to Hilsea Ward;

- i. That the polling place for polling districts KA and KB revert back to Northern Parade School (Children's Centre) as a single central location for the two polling districts and where parking is more readily available
- ii. That the Phoenix public house is adopted as the polling place for polling district KE for the duration of the building works at the usual polling place (St Nicholas' Church Hall) on the basis that it is more centrally located within that polling district than the proposed alternative (College Park Pavilion)

5. Outline of recommendations

- 5.1 Each of the representations received has been carefully considered and the following recommendations are made:
- 5.2 That the boundary for polling district AA is extended to include Chatham Drive which is currently located with polling district AB (St Thomas Ward). In line with the representation received from Councillor Tom Wood it is considered that Chatham Drive is more closely associated with Woodville Drive and the neighbouring parts of polling district AA.
- 5.3 That Canoe Lake Pavilion is designated as the polling place for polling district DC (Eastney & Craneswater Ward) replacing the Cricket Pavilion. This new facility is spacious, fully accessible and will provide better facilities for voters.
- 5.4 That the polling district boundaries for polling districts DA, DB and DC (Eastney & Craneswater Ward) are amended as shown in Appendix C.
- 5.5 That College Park Bowling Club is designated as the interim polling place for polling district JA (Copnor Ward) until completion of the building works at St Nicholas' Church.
- 5.6 That the Phoenix public house is designated as the interim polling place for polling district KE (Hilsea Ward) until completion of the building works at St Nicholas' Church.
- 5.7 That following the completion of the building works at Northern Parade Children's Centre this is re-confirmed as the polling place for polling districts KA and KB (Hilsea Ward). This proposal is being recommended in preference to the original Returning Officer proposals for Hilsea Ward following representations from Councillor Payter-Harris.
- 5.8 That the polling district boundaries for polling districts LB and LG (Paulsgrove Ward) are amended as shown in Appendix E.
- 5.9 That the following polling place amendments are formalised:

- a) The Salvation Army (Albert Road) is designated as the polling place for polling district BE (replacing Southsea Infant School which is no longer available).
- b) Devonshire Avenue Baptist Church Hall is designated as the polling place for polling districts CC and ED (replacing Wimborne Junior School which is no longer available).
- c) Trinity Methodist Church Hall (Francis Avenue) is designated as the polling place for polling district DA (replacing Craneswater Junior School which is no longer available).
- d) The Frank Sorrell Centre is designated as the polling place for polling district EE (replacing Cumberland Infant School which is no longer available).
- e) Charles Dickens Activity Centre is designated as the polling place for polling districts GA and GF (replacing Charles Dickens Junior School which is no longer available).
- f) Oasis Church & Conference Centre is designated as the polling place for polling district GC (replacing St John's RC Primary School which is no longer available) subject to final confirmation from the venue and that St Faith's Church be designated as the alternative polling place should the need arise.
- g) The Stacey Centre is designated as the polling place for polling district HD (replacing Langstone Junior School which is no longer available).
- h) Castle View Academy is designated as the polling place for polling district LB (replacing Victory Primary School which is no longer available).
- i) Hillside & Wymering Centre is designated as the permanent polling place for polling district LF.
- j) The Port House (Port Solent) is designated as the polling place for polling district LG (replacing Watersedge Social Club which is no longer available).
- k) Cosham Baptist Church is designated as the polling place for polling district NA (replacing St Colman's Church which is no longer available).

5.10 A full schedule of polling places incorporating these recommendations is set out under Appendix F.

6. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

6.1 The review of polling districts and polling places takes into consideration matters regarding accessibility as detailed in paragraph 3.8 and the recommendations made in this report are in line with this requirement.

6.2 A number of interested groups were consulted as part of the review including the Portsmouth Disability Forum, Age Concern and Portsmouth City Council's Shared Lives Team, Independence and Wellbeing Team and Integrated Learning Disability Services.

6.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached at Appendix G.

7. Head of legal services' comments

All legal issues are dealt with in the body of the report.

8. Head of finance's comments

The above changes are not considered to have any material financial affect to the service. Any additional costs arising from these changes can be met from the existing budget.

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Signed by:

Appendices:

Appendix A	Summary of Returning Officer's proposals for changes to polling districts and polling places
Appendix B	Copies of representations received
Appendix C	Map showing the existing and proposed arrangements for Eastney & Craneswater Ward
Appendix D	Map showing the existing and Returning Officer proposals for Hilsea Ward
Appendix E	Map showing the existing and proposed arrangements for Paulsgrove Ward
Appendix F	Proposed schedule of polling districts and polling places
Appendix G	Equalities Impact Assessment

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Review of polling districts and polling places 2019; Returning Officer's comments and proposals	Election Services Office

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by: