

Title of meeting:	Governance and Audit and Standards Committee
Date of meeting:	29 September 2022
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 polling scheme recommended in paragraphs 5.2 to 5.6 are approved and implemented on publication of the 2023 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 each electoral ward into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each polling district. These regulations also require the Council to conduct a review every five years and at such other times as may be necessary to make adjustments to the existing scheme.
- 3.2 This review has been initiated to adjust and clarify the Council's polling arrangements due to some circumstances that have arisen since the last statutory review undertaken in 2019.
- 3.2 Definitions:



- i) A polling district is a sub-division of an electoral ward into a smaller geographical unit comprising a number of streets and properties
- ii) A polling place is a building or location in which polling stations will be designated by the Returning Officer
- iii) A polling station is the actual room or building in which the poll is held

3.4 The duties of the Council in the review process are:

- a) To ensure that all the electors 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 are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a polling place, have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons

3.5 Certain practical limitations such as the availability and suitability of venues must also be considered when designating polling places.

3.6 The next statutory review is due to be undertaken within the period 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.

4. Representations received

4.1 A six-week consultation period was undertaken between 4 July and 15 August. A summary of the representations received is shown in Appendix A.

4.2 The Returning Officer is a statutory respondent to the review and submitted proposals which include the reconfiguration of polling district boundaries in Baffins, Copnor and Milton wards and a number of polling place amendments across the city to reflect the current availability of polling venues.

4.3 Two representations were received proposing different changes in Hilsea ward. A meeting was convened to discuss these proposals and reach a consensus. These joint proposals are detailed in Appendix A.

4.4 Each of the representations received has been carefully considered and reflected in the recommendations made as appropriate.

5. Recommendations

5.1 The following are recommended changes to the current polling scheme:

5.2 The revised polling arrangements for Baffins ward as proposed by the Returning Officer and shown in Appendix B should be adopted. The revised scheme



increases the number of polling districts and polling places from five to six and therefore provides improved convenience for voters. Furthermore, it reduces the potential for overcrowding at Baffins Community Centre and the Stacey Centre where a large number of electors are allocated under the existing polling scheme.

5.3 The revised polling arrangements for Copnor ward as shown in Appendix C should be adopted. These are based on the Returning Officer's proposals but adjusted to incorporate Cllr Swann's proposal to designate Copnor Snooker Club as the polling place for polling district 'JD'. A revised scheme for Copnor ward is required due to changes in the availability of the existing designated polling places. The proposal provides a convenient and accessible scheme as required.

5.4 The revised polling arrangements for Hilsea ward as shown in Appendix D should be adopted. These proposals were developed by Cllr Payter-Harris, Cllr Simpson and Cllr Wemyss.

The polling place at Northern Parade Children's Centre has limited space and is congested at busy times. Relocating the polling places for 'KA' to the Christian Science Centre and 'KB' to St Francis' Church will provide improved voting facilities. A small realignment of the polling district boundary for 'KB' is included.

It should be noted that during the review new information became available regarding the availability of Howard Road Community Centre which is the designated polling place for polling district 'KC' under the current scheme. It is therefore recommended that this is retained as the polling place for polling district 'KC'.

5.5 The revised polling arrangements for Milton ward as proposed by the Returning Officer and shown in Appendix E should be adopted. The proposals improve access for voters in the eastern part of the ward where voters numbers are expected to increase due to housing development underway at the former St James's Hospital site. The congestion at Eastney Methodist Church in recent elections is also addressed in this proposal.

5.6 In addition to the revised polling arrangements for Baffins, Copnor, Hilsea and Milton wards, the following individual polling place amendments should be formalised:

- a) Havelock Community Centre (Fawcett Road) is designated as the polling place for polling districts 'CE' (Central Southsea ward) replacing Trinity Church Hall which has been determined to be too small to accommodate two polling stations.
- b) Court Lane Junior School (is designated as the polling place for polling district 'NF' (Drayton & Farlington ward) replacing Court Lane Infant School which is no longer available.

- c) St Wilfrid's Church (George Street) is designated as the polling place for polling district 'FB' (Fratton ward) replacing Newbridge Junior School which is no longer available.
- d) The Phoenix Public House (Torrington Road) is designated as the permanent polling place for polling district 'KE' (Hilsea ward) replacing the original interim status designated at the last review on 2019.
- e) The Salvation Army (Powerscourt Road) is designated as the polling place for polling district 'IE' (Nelson ward) replacing Isambard Brunel School which is no longer available.
- f) St Simon's Church (Waverley Road) is designated as the polling place for polling district 'BC' (St Jude ward) replacing Wimbledon Park Sports Hall which is no longer available.

5.7 A full schedule of polling places incorporating these recommendations is set out in Appendix F.

6. Integrated impact assessment

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

7. Legal implications

The relevant recommendations are in line with legislation as noted within the body of this report.

8. Director 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 portfolio budget.

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Signed by:

Appendices:

- Appendix A - Summary of representations received
- Appendix B - Map showing the existing and recommended schemes for Baffins
- Appendix C - Map showing the existing and recommended schemes for Copnor
- Appendix D - Map showing the existing and recommended schemes for Hilsea
- Appendix E - Map showing the existing and recommended schemes for Milton
- Appendix F - Proposed schedule of polling places
- Appendix G - Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

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 2022; Returning Officer's comments and proposals	Published on website and hard copy available at the Election Services Office

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

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Signed by: