

**REPORT TO THE COUNCIL MEETING OF 16<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2012**

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**Status:** For Decision  
**Title:** Review of Polling Places and Polling Districts 2011  
**Originator:** Richard Ellis, Returning Officer  
**Where from:** Returning Officer  
**Where to next:** Implementation

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1 Purpose Report

1.1 To recommend changes to a number of existing polling place arrangements to ensure that the facilities for voting are reasonable for all electors and are accessible to all voters including those with disabilities. The Electoral Administration Act 2006 places a duty on the Council to carry out a review of polling districts and polling places at least every four years. The last review was conducted in 2007 therefore this review must be completed by the end of 2011.

2 Recommendations:

2.1 **That Council adopts the proposals arising from the review of polling districts and polling places 2011 as detailed in appendix A.**

3 Summary of Reasons for the Recommendations

3.1 As part of the review of polling districts and polling places a consultation exercise was carried out during July and August 2011 regarding the existing arrangements. Information regarding the polling station review and the existing polling places was placed on the Council's website for public consultation and circulated to ward members and parish councils. Consideration was given to the comments and proposals received as a result of the consultation exercise, and information gained from polling station staff at recent elections in order that the Returning Officer could ensure that the polling places within the district were both practical and accessible to as many voters as possible.

3.2 To confirm and ratify temporary arrangements put in place during recent national elections for the convenience of voters within the area, as part of the Council's duty to keep arrangements under review.

4 Impact on Communities

4.1 Having convenient, practical and accessible polling places will assist in ensuring voters are not disenfranchised and assist in increasing participation in the democratic process. The review also takes into consideration the impact on schools used as polling stations and their pupils if they are unable to remain open during the day of polls.

## 5 Key Facts

5.1 The comments, proposals and suggestions received during the consultation period are set out in appendix B. Many were confirmation of the suitability of the existing arrangements, however some raised valid criticisms and suggestions. All relevant correspondence was taken into consideration when deciding on the suitability of existing arrangements.

5.2 The Returning Officer's proposals for the designation of polling places were published on the Council's website and a further period of consultation was carried out, no further relevant correspondence has been received.

## 6 Legal Issues

6.1 To ensure that the Council fulfils its duty under section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 that all polling districts and polling places are reviewed on a four yearly basis from 2007 onwards.

## 7 Resource Issues

7.1 The review of polling districts and polling places has been carried out within existing resources.

## 8 Equality Implications

8.1 In carrying out the review a full assessment of access at each polling station was carried out. A copy of the Equality Impact Assessment prepared as part of the process is attached at Appendix C.

## 9 Impact on the Organisation

9.1 None identified

## 10 Community Safety Implications

10.1 Meeting the Council's responsibility to provide accessible facilities

## 11. Carbon Management Implications

11.1 None identified

## 12. Risk Management Implications

12.1 Agreeing suitable locations of polling places in advance ensures that elections can be run in an efficient and accessible manner.

### 13 Consultation

13.1 A consultation exercise was carried out during July and August 2011 with regard to the review. A summary of all correspondence can be found in appendix B.

### 14 Options Considered

14.1 The authority has a legal obligation under section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 therefore no alternative option can be considered.

### 15 Background Papers

15.1 *Electoral Administrators Act 2006 section 16*, Electoral Administration Act 2006, The Electoral Commission: Circular EC28/2007: Review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations.

**Previous report(s):**

**Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: N**

**Ward Members Notified: Y**

**Appendices:** *list any appendices here including title and filename in brackets (e.g. Performance Data 2010 (perfdata.doc)).*

**A. Full details of the polling station review**

**B. Summary of correspondence**

**C. Equality Impact Assessment**