

Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

Portfolio: Non-executive function

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose

Following a review of Polling Districts and Polling Places, to consider the future arrangements for the Frimley Green Polling District IA, Mytchett and Deepcut Polling District JB, and the Chobham (Valley End) Polling District SB.

Background

1. The Electoral Administration Act 2006 requires the Council to conduct a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations in its area every four years. The Council last conducted a review of its polling districts, polling places and polling stations in 2011. However, the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews, meaning the next review must be completed by 31 January 2015.
2. Members are reminded of the following definitions:
 - (a) Polling district – the geographical area created by the sub division of a constituency, ward or division into smaller parts.
 - (b) Polling place - the building or area in which polling station(s) are located.
 - (c) Polling station - the room or area within the polling place where voting takes places.
3. The consultation contained a number of initial recommendations. The responses received as part of the consultation are attached at Annex A.

Frimley Green – IA

4. Frimley Church of England School, Frimley Green Road is currently the designated polling place for Frimley Green IA polling district. The Returning Officer’s initial recommendation was not to change the location of the polling place in Frimley Green but to review the location of the polling station within the existing polling place.
5. During the consultation the Council received a request that it consider alternative locations within the Ward. In recognition of the disruption caused to the school’s pupils by using the school as a polling place, and that parking provision at the school is not ideal, officers have investigated the proposed alternatives and have considered Frimley Green Football Club as the most suitable alternative option. Officers have visited the venue and have ascertained that the premises are suitable for polling purposes. Frimley Green Football Club has confirmed that it will be available for use as a polling station in the future.
6. The representations and comments received on this proposal are attached at Annex A.

Mytchett and Deepcut – JB

7. St Barbara's Church Hall, Deepcut Bridge Road is currently the designated polling place for Mytchett and Deepcut JB polling district. The building is dilapidated with poor disabled access and is away from the current centre of population. In addition, proposals for the development of Princess Royal Barracks could affect the use of the building in the long term.
8. As part of the review, the Returning Officer has consulted on moving the polling place for this polling district to Deepcut Village Centre in Cyprus Road, Deepcut. The Centre is located within a major centre of population for the polling district. No objections have been received to this proposal.
9. Officers have visited Deepcut Village Centre and have ascertained that the premises are suitable for polling purposes and the Manager of the Centre has confirmed that it will be available for use as a polling station in the future.

Chobham (Valley End) – SB

10. The consultation included an initial proposal to abolish the SB polling district and creating 1 polling district in Chobham Ward, with its polling place as Chobham Village Hall. It was proposed to abolish this polling district as there are only approximately 110 electors registered to vote in the SB polling district, with approximately 20 electors currently receiving a postal vote, which is significantly below the average number of electors per polling district. The 68 properties in this polling district are spread over a wide area and the remote rural location would necessitate the majority of electors to use a car, wherever the polling station is located. The polling station is also located outside the polling district, and therefore the Ward and Parish boundaries. Costs for using this polling station are approximately £600 per election, which is a significant cost for the Parish Council in the event of a by-election.
11. All households within the SB polling district were advised of this proposal and were invited to submit comments as part of the consultation.
12. Representations have been received from residents of the ward in respect of closing this polling station, 3 of which are in support and 3 of which are opposed to closing this polling station. The Council has also received a petition from electors in Valley End requesting that the polling station at Valley End be retained, which contained 66 signatures.
13. During the consultation period investigations were undertaken in relation to moving the polling place for Chobham SA from Chobham Village Hall to Chobham Parish Pavilion as the Village Hall Management Committee had indicated that the main hall would not be made available for all scheduled elections. However, officers were subsequently advised that the Village Hall Management Committee was prepared to make the main hall available for all scheduled elections and these investigations were consequently discontinued.
14. As part of the consultation, the Council received an alternative proposal to extend the SB polling district by allocating additional properties to the polling district. A proposed revised division, attached at Annex C, was drafted for consultation purposes and would result in an additional 194 properties and 367 electors being located within the SB polling district. A number of representations have been made on this proposal, which is attached at Annex B.

15. Chobham Parish Council considered this matter at its meeting on 19 December 2013 and has submitted a representation advising that the Council had resolved to support the recommendation to abolish the SB polling district.
16. The representations received in relation to the future arrangements for the SB polling district are attached at Annex B.
17. In view of the conflicting views relating to the use of the Valley End Institute it is proposed that the status quo be maintained and the Institute continue to be used as a polling place for the time being. It should be noted that the Borough will be the subject of a Further Electoral Review in the nearer future which may affect ward boundaries and could have consequential effects on this polling district. However any changes would not come into effect until the elections in 2019.

Resource Implications

18. There are no additional resource implications as the revised arrangements will be carried out within existing staff resources. There could be a small saving for each authority conducting a poll, if the use of Valley End Institute was discontinued.

Recommendation

19. The Council is asked to RESOLVE that
 - (i) Frimley Green Football Club be designated as the polling place for the electors in Frimley Green IA polling district;
 - (ii) Deepcut Village Centre be designated as the polling place for the electors in Mytchett and Deepcut JB polling district; and
 - (iii) the Valley End Institute continue to be used as a polling place for the SB polling district of Chobham Ward.

Annexes

Annex A – responses to the consultation
Annex B – responses to the consultation relating to Chobham
Annex C – proposed revised division of Chobham Ward

Background papers

None

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