

Polling District and Polling Place Review

Portfolio:	Non-executive function
Ward(s) Affected:	All

Purpose:

To agree revised polling districts and polling places following the statutory review of Polling Districts and Polling Places.

1. Background

- 1.1. This report sets out the proposed changes to the polling districts and polling places following the statutory 5 year review of Polling Districts and Polling Places.
- 1.2. A review of Polling Districts and Polling Places was undertaken in 2018 following the outcome of the changes to ward boundaries. This fell outside the required time period for the statutory review and this second review provides an opportunity to assess the arrangements put in place following the 2018 review.
- 1.3. The proposals are designed to try to ensure there is a balance of electorate within each polling district and that polling places are convenient and easily accessible for electors.
- 1.4. The guiding principles in reviewing the polling districts and polling places were:
 - To seek to ensure that all electors in the district have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
 - Where possible, no more than 2,500 electors should vote at any one polling station (not including postal voters); however, there can be more than one polling station in a polling place.
 - Proposed future developments that will increase the number of houses and the potential number of electors in a ward or polling district over the next four years.
 - To ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places are accessible to those who are disabled.
 - Where possible to reduce the number of schools used as polling places.
- 1.5. A list of the proposed polling districts and polling places is attached as Annex A to this document.

2. Consultation and Engagement

- 2.1. The (Acting) Returning Officer published the proposals for new polling districts on 8 July 2019 seeking the views and comments of electors, interested parties

and any persons with expertise in access to premises for persons with any type of disability. A copy of the consultation documentation can be viewed at the [Polling District and Polling Places Review Consultation Document](#).

- 2.2. The proposals were open for consultation until 12 September 2019. In total 15 submissions were received and considered by the (Acting) Returning Officer. A summary of the submissions received and the comments of the (Acting) Returning Officer can be found at Annex B.

3. Equalities Impact

- 3.1. As far as is reasonable and practicable the polling places are accessible to the disabled. Where new polling places are being used, the accessibility has been assessed as being suitable by electoral officers.
- 3.2. For those less able to vote in person at a polling station the option of voting by post or proxy will be an option.

4. Proposed changes to Polling Places

- 4.1. The following changes are proposed:
- 4.2. Bagshot – KC Windlesham (North) Polling District

It is proposed to change the designated polling place for the Windlesham North polling district from Windlesham Village Infant School to Windlesham Club & Theatre.

The two elections in May 2019 reinforced ongoing concerns about the use of the School and the disruption to the pupils' education. For the unplanned European Parliamentary Elections on 23 May 2019, an agreement was made with the School to use a mobile unit on the site for polling. Although this enabled the School to remain open that day, the costs and practicalities involved mean it is not an ideal long-term solution.

During the review, Windlesham Village Infant School's Head Teacher indicated that the School could cope with being a polling station, provided it was not required to do so each year. The Council is required to designate a premises as the polling place for each polling district. It is also not advisable to cause confusion by altering a polling place unless necessary.

Windlesham Club & Theatre has confirmed that it is happy to be the designated polling place. The Club & Theatre is located outside the polling district, but is within the acknowledged settlement area.

It is therefore proposed to designate Windlesham Club & Theatre as the polling place for the KC Windlesham North polling district.

- 4.3. Frimley

Frimley ward is currently divided into 2 polling districts, with the west and east of the ward being served by polling places at Frimley Parish Hall and Lakeside Primary School respectively.

At the elections in May 2019 the Council received requests from Lakeside School to consider using an alternative classroom on the site in order to allow the school to remain open on polling day. Elections staff have subsequently visited the proposed site and have raised concerns in respect of access for voters with disabilities and potential safeguarding issues for pupils; it is emphasised that, if this option is pursued, the Council will work with the School to ensure the appropriate measures to ensure the security of the pupils are in place.

The following options were put forward during the consultation:

- a) to retain the existing arrangements for Frimley West at St Peters Church Hall, Parsonage Way and Frimley East polling district at Lakeside School;
- b) to retain the existing arrangements for Frimley West at St Peters Church Hall, Parsonage Way and Frimley East polling district at Lakeside School, with the polling at Lakeside Primary School to be carried out in an alternative classroom on the site. This would enable to School to remain open on polling days but could present safeguarding issues and cause access issues for voters with disabilities;
- c) to create a single polling district for the Frimley Ward so that all electors would vote at St Peters Church Hall and use of the school would cease.

Six responses were received during the consultation, all of which supported discontinuing the current arrangements and indicate a support for St Peters being the designated polling station for the entire ward.

Ward members' views have been sought on the proposal to cease using Lakeside School and for all voters to move to St Peters Church Hall. Both ward councillors have indicated a preference to continue with the current arrangements of Lakeside School being a designated polling place for the ward.

It is considered that using an alternative site within the School is not a feasible option.

During the 2018 review a representative of Frimley Baptist Church, Balmoral Drive, offering its use as a polling place. This church is located just outside the Frimley ward boundary, in the Frimley Green ward. In 2018 it was felt that its use as a polling place for FB - Frimley East could lead to confusion for electors within Frimley Green ward who would pass this polling place to attend their allocated station. However, taking into account the representations received concerning the use of Lakeside School it is suggested that this option is further reviewed; this review could include altering the polling district

boundaries so the electors currently in the FB polling district could vote at if St Peters Church Hall is more convenient than the Baptist Church.

It is therefore proposed to defer the decision on the polling districts and polling places for Frimley ward until the next Council meeting.

4.4. Windlesham and Chobham – NA Windlesham (South) Polling District

The designated polling place for NA – Windlesham polling district is currently Chertsey Road Hall, 41 Chertsey Road. Prior to the review the Council was advised that Chertsey Road Hall had been sold and was expected to close in late 2019. During the review this position was confirmed.

The Council has therefore investigated alternative options in the polling district, namely:

- Windlesham Field of Remembrance Pavilion
- St John the Baptist Church, Church Road

St John the Baptist Church has ideal facilities for polling but is not centrally located and is not therefore the preferred option.

Windlesham Field of Remembrance Pavilion is the most conveniently located option for the majority of the existing polling district and is the Returning Officer's preferred option. The ward councillors have also suggested the Windlesham Club & Theatre, which is also proposed as the polling place for KC – Windlesham (North) polling district, and Valley End Institute, which is also the polling place for the NB – Valley End polling district.

The refurbished Windlesham Field of Remembrance Pavilion is expected to open in November 2019. The Pavilion's staff have indicated that the areas within the new pavilion area are likely to be let at the relevant times and therefore not available for use for polling, but have offered a site visit once the refurbishment is complete.

Windlesham Club & Theatre and Valley End Institute are at opposite ends of the current polling district. If either of these venues are pursued as a preferred option, further consideration will be needed as to whether the polling district should be sub divided or, if not, which location best serves the polling district.

The Council is unlikely to learn whether it can use the Pavilion until November 2019. Chertsey Road Hall remains open until the end of 2019 and could therefore be used in the event of a snap poll. It is therefore proposed to defer this decision until the position on using the Pavilion is known.

It is proposed to defer the decision on the designation of the Polling Place for NA - Windlesham South polling district until the next Council meeting.

4.5. Watchetts – DA Watchetts (West) Polling District

The Orchard Campus, South Camberley Primary School is currently the designated polling place for DA - Watchetts West polling district. In early 2019 the School asked the Council to look at alternative polling places in the ward, following which the new Camberley Guide Headquarters in Crabtree Road was identified.

Due to the non-availability of the Orchard Campus on 23 May 2019, the Guide Headquarters was used as a polling place for the European Parliamentary Elections. The Local Returning Officer received no comments on the arrangements after the European Parliamentary Elections and local representatives have also indicated that no comments were received by them from electors. The venue and facilities were also considered suitable by election staff.

It is therefore proposed to designate Camberley Guide Headquarters as the polling place for the DA Watchetts West polling district.

5. Legal Issues

- 5.1. Section 18C of the Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983, as amended by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, requires the Council to carry out a review of polling districts and polling places in its area within the period of 16 months of 1 October 2013 and then within the period of 16 months from the 1 October of every fifth year after that. The next compulsory review is required to be started and completed within the period 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020.

6. Resource Implications

- 6.1. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

7. Proposal

- 7.1. It is proposed that the Council agrees the revised schedule of polling districts and polling places, as set out at Annex A to this report

8. Recommendation

- 8.1. The Council is advised to RESOLVE that
 - (i) the revised schedule of polling districts and polling places, as set out at Annex A to this report be agreed;
 - (ii) the decision on polling district boundaries and the allocation of polling places for Frimley ward be deferred for further review; and
 - (iii) the decision on the designation of a polling place for NA- Windlesham (South) polling district be deferred to the next meeting.

Background Papers: [Polling District and Polling Places Review Consultation Document](#)

[Responses to the Polling District and Polling Places Review Consultation](#)

Annexes

Annex A – revised schedule of polling districts and polling places

Annex B – summary of consultation responses with the ARO's comments

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