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**Subject:** STATUTORY REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS

**Meeting and Date:** Electoral Matters Committee – 15 October 2018

**Report of:** Electoral Services Team Leader

**Decision Type:** Non-Executive

**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Purpose of the report:** The Council is required to carry out a review of Polling Districts by 31 January 2020. This report details the requirements and seeks agreement to carry out the statutory consultation.

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**Recommendation:** To approve the Polling District Scheme for consultation.

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## 1. Summary

1.1 The legislation requires the Council to undertake and complete a review of Polling Districts between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive). As the local boundary review has just taken place, it is imperative that the review is concluded with a view to allowing enough time for the Electoral Registration Officer to republish the Register of Electors prior to the start of the Nomination Period for the 2019 local elections. The Committee will consider the existing scheme and determine whether any changes should be proposed prior to consulting on the scheme. Following the consultation process the Council will determine the Polling District Scheme to be used for Parliamentary and Local Government Elections and Referendum. The Electoral Registration Officer will make any changes agreed and publish the register reflecting the changes.

## 2. Introduction and Background

### Designating Polling Districts

2.1 A Polling District is the geographical sub-division of an electoral area, eg UK Parliamentary constituency, a European Parliamentary electoral region, a ward or an electoral division.

2.2 The Council is responsible for dividing its area into polling districts for UK Parliamentary elections and for keeping the polling districts under review.

2.3 Although there is no requirement to sub-divide local government electoral wards into polling districts, it is recognised good practice to do so. When doing so, every effort must be made to ensure that the polling district scheme for Local Government elections mirrors as closely as possible that agreed for Parliamentary elections.

2.4 When designating polling districts, the Council must seek to ensure that all the electors in the Constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.

2.5 In addition, and unless there are special circumstances that lead the Council to determine otherwise, each parish must be in a separate polling district.

- 2.6 The Council must designate a polling place for every polling district in the District, unless the size or other circumstances of the polling district are such that the situation of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electorate.
- 2.7 The Council must keep the polling places under review.
- 2.8 The Council must:
- seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and
  - 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.
- 2.9 In addition, the polling place for a polling district must be within the area of the district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area either wholly or partly outside of the polling district.
- 2.10 The proposed Polling Districts Scheme follows the already established polling district boundaries with the exception of the polling districts in Whitfield and those areas created or amended by the Local Government Boundary Commission during its recent review. The new parish wards created by the LGBCE have been designated individual polling districts and other boundaries have been amended to reflect the changes made. The polling districts in Whitfield have been split North and South instead of East and West to prevent electors from having to cross the A2 in order to vote and to factor in the potential electorate growth in the area north of the A2.
- 2.11 A copy of the proposed Polling Districts Scheme including the estimated Parliamentary Electorate figures are attached at **Appendix 1** together with the maps depicting the proposed polling district amendments at **Appendix 2** and the maps of the unchanged polling districts at **Appendix 3**.

#### Polling Place

- 2.12 A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district.
- 2.13 The current Scheme designates the Polling Place as follows:-

Each Polling District be designated as the Polling Place. Where no suitable Polling Station is available the Returning Officer be authorised to designate an adjoining Polling District for that Polling Place.

#### Polling Stations

- 2.14 A Polling Station is the actual area where the process of voting takes place, and must be located within the polling place designated for the particular polling district. This function is the responsibility of the Returning Officer.

## Consultation

- 2.15 Representations will be invited on the Polling District Scheme. The Consultation will be included on the Council website in addition to consulting elected representatives. The Acting Returning Officer for the Dover Constituency and for the South Thanet Constituency and local disability groups will also be consulted.

### **3. Identification of Options**

- 3.1 Option 1: To undertake the statutory consultation utilising the proposed Polling District Scheme
- 3.2 Option 2: To recommend changes to the proposed Polling District Scheme and to undertake the statutory consultation on the proposed revised Polling District Scheme.

### **4. Evaluation of Options**

- 4.1 Were any changes to be proposed and not included in the consultation process this would prevent the statutory and non-statutory consultees from commenting on the changes.

### **5. Resource Implications**

There are no additional financial implications associated with this report. The consultation process and review will be conducted within existing budgets. However, additional polling stations will be required to reflect the amended boundaries and the Electoral Commission requirement that there should be no more than 2500 electors per polling station. It should be noted that there will be costs as a result of hiring additional venues and employing additional polling station staff.

### **6. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – The Proposed Polling District Scheme and the estimated Parliamentary electorate.

Appendix 2 – Maps of the proposed amended polling districts.

Appendix 3 – Maps of the unchanged polling districts.

### **7. Background Papers**

Electoral Administration Act 2006.

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006.

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013

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