
Subject: REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING STATIONS

Meeting and Date: Electoral Matters Committee – 22 January 2019

Council – 30 January 2019

Report of: Nadeem Aziz – (Acting) Returning Officer

Decision Type: Non-Executive

Classification: Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: The Council started its statutory review of Polling Districts, Places and Stations on 15 October 2018. This report details the recommendations in relation to the responses received during the consultation and seeks agreement to amend the current scheme to one of the options listed.

Recommendation: Electoral Matters Committee:

(a) To consider the proposed Polling District, Polling Places and Polling Stations Scheme and make recommendations to Council.

Council:

(a) To approve the recommended proposals for the Polling District, Polling Places and Polling Stations Scheme

1. Summary

1.1 Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006, which came into force on 1 January 2007, introduced a number of changes to the Representation of the People Act 1983 in respect of the way in which reviews of polling districts and polling places must be undertaken.

1.2. In compliance with the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006, every Council in England and Wales must have undertaken and completed a review of all of the polling districts and polling places in its area by 31 January 2020.

1.3 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 Electoral Matters Committee has considered the existing scheme and determined 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:
 - (a) seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and
 - (b) 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 A copy of the current Polling Districts Scheme including Parliamentary Electorate figures in force at the start of the consultation is included at **Appendix 1** together with the maps depicting current and proposed Polling Districts Scheme at **Appendices 2 and 3**.

Polling Places

- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 The current Scheme designates the Polling Place as the Polling District. Where no suitable Polling Station is available the (Acting) Returning Officer is authorised to designate an adjoining Polling District for that Polling Place.

Polling Stations

- 2.13 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 (Acting) Returning Officer.

Consultation Process

- 2.14 The review commenced on 15 October 2018. Notice of the review was published on the website and at Area Offices inviting views. Notice was sent to the statutory consultees – the (Acting) Returning Officer for the Dover Parliamentary Constituency, the (Acting) Returning Officer for the South Thanet Parliamentary Constituency and disability groups.
- 2.15 In addition, notice of the review was circulated to District Councillors, Members of Parliament for Dover and South Thanet, Parish Clerks and local political parties for both constituencies.
- 2.16 In accordance with the statutory requirements, the responses from the statutory consultees were published.
- 2.17 All representations submitted as part of the consultation process are attached at **Appendix 4**.

3. Results of Consultation

General

- 3.1 Attached at **Appendix 4** is a schedule of the responses received to the consultation process. A few of the representations received are in connection with matters that cannot be considered as part of this review. Specific comments relating to Polling Stations are a matter for the (Acting) Returning Officer and any suggestions received will be considered.

Statutory Consultee Responses

- 3.2 The (Acting) Returning Officer for the South Thanet Constituency has responded with no comment.
- 3.3. The (Acting) Returning Officer for the Dover Constituency has requested that consideration be given to the following:

The majority of the proposed changes are to keep in line with the recently completed Local Government Boundary Review and the maps for the proposed polling districts can be viewed online at <https://www.dover.gov.uk/Council--Democracy/Elections/Polling-District-Review-2018.aspx>

Buckland District Ward and Whitfield District Ward

Proposed Change:

1. Creation of a new Polling District to cover the Rokesley area of Buckland.
2. Amendment of boundary to Buckland South.
3. To amend the current polling districts for Whitfield to divide North and South rather than East and West..

Rationale behind proposal:

1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has moved the Rokesley area from

Buckland District Ward into Whitfield District Ward. It will remain in Buckland Town Ward for town council elections.

2. The LGBCE review amended the boundary to include part of St Radigund's East Polling District.

3. Currently over 800 electors have to cross the A2 in order to vote. By amending the polling districts to divide North & South instead of East and West we can place a new polling station on the South side of the A2 which could serve both the Rokesley area and Whitfield South. This also allows for expected future growth of the electorate in Whitfield North which would continue to use the current polling station at Whitfield Village Hall.

Proposed Polling Stations: Christchurch Academy, Melbourne Avenue for Rokesley and Whitfield South – room available has its own external sloped entrance so can be used without closing the school. Whitfield Village Hall for Whitfield North

Maxton and Elms Vale District Ward and Town and Castle District Ward

Proposed Change: Priory Polling District has amended boundaries and is now included in Town and Castle District Ward. Maxton & Elms Vale also has its shared boundaries with Tower Hamlets and Priory amended.

Rationale behind proposal: In line with the LGBCE Boundary Review changes.

Proposed Polling Stations: No change to current polling stations used for these areas.

St Radigund's District Ward

Proposed Change: 1. Amendment of boundary to St Radigund's East Polling District.
2. Creation of new polling district to cover part of Tower Hamlet's District Ward which has been moved into St Radigund's District Ward.

Rationale behind proposal: In line with the LGBCE Boundary Review changes.

Proposed Polling Stations: 1. Barton CP School, Barton Road, with Dover Working Man's Club as an alternative during school renovations
2. Baptist Church, Maison Dieu Road

Tower Hamlet's District Ward

Proposed Change: Change of the boundary of Tower Hamlets West to include part of the Tower Hamlets East Polling District. We propose splitting this new larger Polling District in two, with the top part of the polling district voting at The Ark and the bottom part of the polling district voting in Curzon Hall (**See Appendix 5**)

Rationale behind proposal: In line with LGBCE Boundary Review changes and the topography of the area.. The increased electorate

means that two polling stations are required and Curzon Hall is not large enough to accommodate both stations

Proposed Polling Stations: Curzon Hall, Curzon Road and The Ark, Noah's Ark Road

Eastry Rural District Ward

Proposed Change: 1. To split Sholden Parish into 3 new Polling Districts, one of which will vote in Sholden Parish and Eastry Rural District Ward.
2. To split Worth into 2 new Polling Districts, one of which will vote in Worth Parish and Eastry Rural District Ward.

Rationale behind proposal: In line with LGBCE Boundary Review changes

Proposed Polling Stations: Scout HQ, The Street, Sholden and Worth Parish Hall, The Street, Worth

Middle Deal District Ward

Proposed Change: To split Sholden Parish into 3 new Polling Districts, one of which will vote in Sholden Parish and Middle Deal District Ward

Rationale behind proposal: In line with LGBCE Boundary Review changes

Proposed Polling Stations: As there is no potential polling station in this new polling district, a second polling station will be added to the station currently allocated to another Middle Deal Polling District, Warden House Primary School, Birdwood Avenue.

North Deal District Ward

Proposed Change: 1. Amendment of boundaries to the Polling District of Walmer, Gladstone Ward which falls within North Deal District Ward.
2. To split Sholden Parish into 3 new Polling Districts, one of which will vote in Sholden Parish and North Deal District Ward.

Rationale behind proposal: In line with LGBCE Boundary Review changes

Proposed Polling Stations: 1. Walmer Sea Scout's Hall, Marine Road
2. There is no suitable polling station within the polling district and the parliamentary electorate for this polling district is currently less than 100 so it makes sense to join them with an already established polling station. The closest suitable polling station in the North Deal District Ward is the Golf Road Centre, 28 Golf Road. The residents in the newly created Tenants Hill Polling District would have had to pass the Golf Road Centre in order to vote at their previous station of the Scout HQ,

Sholden so it would effectively mean travelling a shorter distance to vote.

Sandwich District Ward

Proposed Change: To split Worth Parish into 2 new Polling Districts, one of which would vote in Worth Parish and Sandwich District Ward elections.

Rationale behind proposal: In line with LGBCE Boundary Review changes

Proposed Polling Stations: As there are no suitable polling stations within the newly created polling district, the best option is a joint polling station with Sandwich North Polling District at the Guildhall, Cattle Market, Sandwich.

Eythorne & Shepherdswell District Ward

Proposed Change: To divide the polling district of Eythorne into 2 polling districts, Eythorne and Elvington, each with their own polling stations. (**See Appendix 5**)

Rationale behind proposal: Representation received requesting the change because there is no easy access for residents in Elvington without cars to get to the current polling station in Eythorne. There is a suitable polling station within Elvington that can be used therefore the ARO has no objection to this request.

Proposed Polling Stations: Resource Centre, Barfrestone Road, Eythorne and Elvington Community Centre, Elvington.

A summary list of the proposed Polling Districts and Polling Stations is attached at **Appendix 6**

4 Identification of Options

4.1 Option 1:

- (a) That the current scheme be amended to incorporate all of the recommendations of the (Acting) Returning Officer for the Dover Parliamentary Constituency (as set out in section 3.3 of this report).
- (b) Each Polling District be designated as the Polling Place. Where no suitable Polling Station is available the (Acting) Returning Officer be authorised to designate an adjoining Polling District for that Polling Place.
- (c) The Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places be designated as the Polling Districts and Polling Places for Local Government Elections.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

4.2 Option 2:

- (a) To amend the current scheme in some way to be determined by the Committee.
- (b) Each Polling District be designated as the Polling Place. Where no suitable Polling Station is available the (Acting) Returning Officer be authorised to designate an adjoining Polling District for that Polling Place.
- (c) The Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places be designated as the Polling Districts and Polling Places for Local Government Elections.

5 Evaluation of Options

5.1 Option 1 is the recommended option as both statutory and non-statutory consultees have had the opportunity to comment on the proposals. It also allows sufficient time for preparations prior to the start of the Nomination period for the forthcoming District and Parish Council elections.

5.2 Option 2 is not recommended as any changes proposed would not have been included in the consultation process and therefore would have prevented the statutory and non-statutory consultees from commenting on the changes.

6 Resource Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications in designating the Polling Districts however the cost of elections will be affected by the number of Polling Stations used.

7 Background Papers

Electoral Administration Act 2006.

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

Notice of Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places.

Local Government Boundary Review (<http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/kent/dover>)

8 Attachments

Appendix 1 – Parliamentary Electorate based on Proposed Wards and Polling Districts

Appendix 2 – Proposed Polling District Maps

Appendix 3 – Unchanged Polling District Maps

Appendix 4 – Responses received as part of the consultation

Appendix 5 – Maps of proposed Polling Districts for Tower Hamlets and Elvington

Appendix 6 – Summary of proposed Polling Districts and Polling Stations.