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**Subject:** STATUTORY REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS

**Meeting and Date:** Electoral Matters Committee – 4 AUGUST 2014

**Report of:** Head of Democratic Services

**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 2015. This report details the requirements and seeks agreement on whether to carry out the statutory consultation on the existing Polling District Scheme or to propose amendments to the existing scheme for consultation purposes.

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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 a review of Polling Districts by 31 January 2015. 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 A copy of the current Polling Districts Scheme including the current Parliamentary Electorate figures are attached at **Appendix 1** together with the maps depicting the current Polling District Scheme at **Appendix 2**.

#### Polling Place

- 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 follows:-
- 2.13 Each Polling District be designated as the Polling Place. Where no suitable Polling Station is available the Head of Democratic Services 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 To undertake the statutory consultation utilising the existing Polling District Scheme

3.2 To propose changes to the existing 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.

6. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Existing Polling District Schemes and current Parliamentary electorate.

Appendix 2 – Maps of existing Polling District Scheme

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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