

Council Report

Report of Acting Returning Officer

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Polling District & Polling Places Review 2019

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to consider recommendations arising from the recent review of polling districts and polling places undertaken by the Electoral Services Manager. This statutory review, which is based on polling districts and polling places for parliamentary elections, must be carried out during the 16-month period commencing 1 October 2013 and every fifth year after that.

The consultation period commenced on 14 January and ended on 5 April 2019. A screening Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out but a full EIA was not considered to be appropriate.

A list of existing polling districts and current designated polling places is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

There are no changes recommended for polling districts. Recommendations for changes to designated polling places are set out below.

Recommendation to Council:

The Council is asked to approve the following proposed changes to designated polling places:

- (1) That the designated polling place in polling district B1 Christchurch (North) within the Christchurch Ward be changed from Burchatts Farm Barn to the Urban Saints building, Stoke Park, London Road, Guildford (paragraph 3.11 and Appendix 2 refer).
- (2) That the designated polling place in polling districts C3 Friary (West) & C4 Friary (East) within the Friary & St Nicolas Ward be changed from Sandfield Primary School to the Salvation Army Hall, Woodbridge Road, Guildford, (paragraphs 3.12, and Appendix 2 refer).
- (3) That the designated polling place in polling district D3 Holy Trinity (North) within the Holy Trinity Ward, be changed from The Spike to St Joseph's Church Hall,

Eastgate Gardens, Guildford (paragraph 3.13 and Appendix 2 refer).

- (4) That the designated polling place in polling district H2 (Artington) within the Shalford Ward be changed from St Francis' Church to Compton Village Hall, The Street, Compton in polling district H1 (paragraph 3.14 and Appendix 2 refer).
- (5) That the designated polling place in polling district I1 Stoke (South-West) within the Stoke Ward, be changed from The Waterside Centre to The New Hope Church, Larch Avenue, Guildford (paragraph 3.15 and Appendix 2 refer).
- (6) That the designated polling place in polling district M4 East Horsley (Central) within the Clandon & Horsley Ward be changed from Horsley Library to East Horsley Village Hall Kingston Avenue, East Horsley (paragraph 3.16 and Appendix 2 refer).
- (7) That the designated polling place in polling district Q1 St Martha within the Tillingbourne Ward be changed from Chilworth Infant School to Chilworth Village Hall, New Road, Chilworth, (paragraph 3.17 and Appendix 2 refer).
- (8) That, in relation to the following polling places within the Ash Wharf Ward:
 - (a) the designated polling place in polling district T1 Ash (Shawfields) be changed from Shawfield County Primary School to Primrose Hall, Church View, Ash (paragraph 3.18 and Appendix 2 refer);
 - (b) the designated polling place in polling district T2 Ash (Ranges) be changed from The Ash Centre to Victoria Hall, Ash Hill Road, Ash (paragraph 3.19 and Appendix 2 refer).

Reason for Recommendation:

As a result of this statutory review, the new designated polling places will improve elector polling experience and further reduce the necessity for schools to close on polling days.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Council is asked to approve the list of changes to designated polling places in paragraphs 3.11 to 3.20 and the conclusions of the review outlined in paragraph 7 below. Once approved as designated polling places, these will be used whenever an election is held within the Guildford Parliamentary Constituency or the Guildford Borough voting area (as relevant).

2. Strategic Framework

- 2.1 The outcome of the polling district and polling place review and the changes made offer the public better access to polling places. It reflects as far as possible what the community needs given the sometimes still limited choice of public buildings available for voting. The relocation of some of the designated polling places will particularly assist with disabled access and the secrecy of the vote, which is a key consideration in the location of any polling station. This falls within the strategic priority of a safe and vibrant community.

2.2 In addition, where it has been possible to relocate the polling place away from schools, there will clearly be less disruption experienced by parents and children attending those schools which normally close on polling day. This ensures a better quality service to the public and falls within the remit of providing excellence and value for money.

3. Background

3.1 Each local authority is obliged according to section 18C (1) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013) to conduct a review of polling districts and polling places within its area. The review must be carried out during the 16-month period commencing 1 October 2013 and every fifth year after that.

3.2 The review relates to polling districts and polling places within the Guildford Parliamentary Constituency; however, each local authority is expected to carry out the review within its own borders with representations from the relevant neighbouring constituency Acting Returning Officers taken into account. The Acting Returning Officers of Surrey Heath, Woking and Mole Valley were contacted as part of the consultation and no concerns with polling districts or polling places have arisen.

3.3 The consultation period commenced on 14 January 2019 with the public (via the website), councillors, MPs, election agents at the 2015, 2016 & 2017 elections, presiding officers at polling stations, parish councils, Guildford Access Group, Acting Returning Officers and lettings managers of polling places. Views were sought on the location of polling districts and in particular polling places within those districts in relation to accessibility by the majority of the electorate and also disabled people. The deadline for comments was Friday 5 April 2019.

3.4 A screening Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed in October 2018. The main concerns were around disability and age. As these aspects have been fully taken into account in the review and the overall adverse impact score was low, it was not considered necessary to conduct a full EIA.

3.5 A list of the existing polling districts and current designated polling places is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. All polling places that are to remain unchanged are deemed satisfactory for use at present, but the situation will, as always, be kept under review. Representations were sought from the Acting Returning Officers of Mole Valley, Surrey Heath and Woking constituencies that fall within the Guildford Borough boundary and no objections have been received regarding the continued use of these polling places at parliamentary elections.

3.6 Several suggestions were received for new changes to polling places and the feasibility of these options have been evaluated by the Electoral Services Manager and recommendations discussed with local ward councillors and parish councils. A summary of the responses to the consultation from councillors and the public is attached as Appendix 3.

3.7 A list of the polling places from Waverley Borough Council which form part of the Guildford constituency is attached at Appendix 4. Waverley are proposing one

change which is the designated polling station for Cranleigh West will change from The Band Room to Snoxhall Fields Youth Centre.

- 3.8 The Returning Officer has the delegated power to use an alternative polling place at any election/referendum should he consider it to be necessary to make a temporary change.
- 3.9 The following permanent changes are therefore recommended as a result of successful use at elections since the previous review in 2014:

Polling District	Previous Designated polling place after 2014 review	Recommended Designated polling place from 2019 review onwards
B1	Burchatts Farm Barn, Stoke Park, London Road, Guildford, GU1 1TU	Urban Saints, Stoke Park, London Road, Guildford, GU1 1TU
C3 & C4	Sandfield Primary School, Stoke Road, Guildford, GU1 4DT	The Salvation Army Hall, Woodbridge Road, Guildford, GU1 4QQ
D3	The Spike, Warren Road, Guildford, GU1 3JH	St Joseph's Church Hall, Eastgate Gardens, Guildford, GU1 4AZ
H2	St. Francis Church, Littleton Lane, Littleton, Guildford, GU3 1HW	Compton Village Hall, The Street, Compton, Guildford, GU3 1EG
I1	The Waterside Centre, Riverside, Bellfields, Guildford, GU1 1LW	New Hope Church, Larch Avenue, Guildford, GU1 1JY
M4	Horsley Library, Parade Court, East Horsley, KT24 6QR	East Horsley Village Hall, Kingston Avenue, East Horsley, KT24 6QT
Q1	Chilworth Infant School, Dorking Road, Guildford, GU4 8NP	Chilworth Village Hall, New Road, Chilworth, Guildford, GU4 8LX
T1	Shawfield County Primary School, Winchester Road, Ash, GU12 6SX	Primrose Hall, Church View, Ash, GU12 6RT
T2	The Ash Centre, Ash Hill Road, Ash, GU12 5DN	Victoria Hall, Ash Hill Road, Ash, GU12 5DN

- 3.10 As a result of the consultation during the 2019 review, the following changes have been considered by the Electoral Services Manager and recommendations made. Please note that, although this statutory review relates to polling places as used at a parliamentary election, the proposed designated polling places shall apply for all local and national elections and referendums:
- 3.11 B1 Christchurch (North) – in view of the uncertainty around the future of Burchatts Farm Barn, make the designated polling place as the Urban Saints building on Stoke Park. This will avoid the need for the possible use of Boxgrove Primary School as a polling station (which is outside of polling district B1 but within the Borough Ward). Boxgrove Primary School will continue to be used as a polling station for polling district B2 Christchurch (South).
- 3.12 C3 Friary (West) and C4 Friary (East) – make the designated polling place The Salvation Army Hall, Woodbridge Road. The Salvation Army Hall have agreed the car park will be available for electors from approximately 9.30am. The change of polling place will avoid the closure of Sandfield Primary School on polling days.

- 3.13 D3 Holy Trinity (North) – change the designated polling place from The Spike to St Joseph’s Church Hall, Eastgate Gardens, Guildford. This will move the polling place back into polling district D3.
- 3.14 H2 Artington – change the designated polling place from St Francis’ Church, Littleton Lane, Littleton to Compton Village Hall. The lack of suitability of St Francis’ Church as a polling place has become increasingly evident in recent years for the following reasons:
- very uneven path leading up to the church
 - poor lighting
 - inadequate heating
 - inadequate car parking for polling station staff and voters
 - lack of basic facilities for polling station staff.

We have previously used Compton Village Hall as a polling place for the electorate of polling district H2 - for the first Police and Crime Commissioner elections in November 2012. The decision was taken to move the polling place as it was accepted that a polling place in such a dark lane was not feasible for a winter election.

- 3.15 I1 Stoke (South-West) – change the designated polling place from the Waterside Centre to New Hope Church Hall, Larch Avenue. This will avoid the electors having to share the polling place with the physiotherapy patients, thus helping to maintain the secrecy of the vote.
- 3.16 M4 East Horsley (Central) – make the designated polling place East Horsley Village Hall, Kingston Avenue. East Horsley Village Hall has a larger car park and the change of polling place will avoid the closure of Horsley Library on polling days.
- 3.17 Q1 St Martha – make the designated polling place Chilworth Village Hall, New Road moving the electorate to join with H5 Shalford (Chilworth). The difficulty with the sharing of this polling place is that the two stations within it are in different parliamentary constituencies. However, we have successfully kept the ballot papers completely separate during the 2015 and 2017 UK Parliamentary elections. Electoral Services at Mole Valley have been consulted and are happy with this arrangement.
- 3.18 T1 Ash (Shawfields) – make the designated polling place Primrose Hall, which has actually been used at every election/referendum since 2014. Making this the designated polling place avoids the closure of Shawfield County Primary School, which was the previous designated polling place, on polling days.
- 3.19 T2 Ash (Ranges) – make the designated polling place Victoria Hall, Ash Hill Road, Ash. This will avoid the need to cancel the various events/classes that are held at the Ash Centre on polling days, and the need to have someone on duty during polling hours to allow electors into the polling place to vote.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The net cost of moving to the recommended designated polling places is £398 per election. This is because we are creating a new polling place within polling district D3.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 We are legally obliged to have a polling place in each polling district if a suitable place is available. No other legal implications apply to the relocation of the recommended polling places.

6. Human Resource Implications

- 6.1 There are no human resource implications arising from the proposals in this report. Polling station staff (presiding officers and poll clerks) are appointed for each election. In considering suitable premises for designation as a polling place, the Returning Officer takes into account a number of factors, which include ensuring that the working conditions for the polling station staff are adequate with appropriate rest facilities, as well as ensuring that a building is accessible for voters.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The Council is asked to approve the new designated polling places as listed in paragraphs 3.11 to 3.19 above as they improve the polling experience for electors and save the disruption of closing local schools and other community facilities on polling day.
- 7.2 The Returning Officer together with the Electoral Services Manager will continue to review the use of individual polling places and make temporary changes under delegated powers as the need arises at each election.

8 Background Papers

Screening Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) (October 2018)

9 Appendices

Appendix 1: List of existing polling districts and current designated polling places
Appendix 2: Maps of each of the new designated polling places
Appendix 3: Summary of response to the review from councillors and the public
Appendix 4: A list of the polling places from Waverley Borough Council which form part of the Guildford constituency