

# ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Monday, 21 October 2019

## REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2019

### Report of the Acting Returning Officer (ARO)

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#### Recommendation(s)

##### It is recommended that

1. The findings of the polling review are noted, and the committee's thanks to respondents be recorded;
  2. In Chandler's Ford the polling station for CH3, which is currently at Toynbee School be moved to Chandler's Ford Parish Offices, Fryern Hill Pavilion, Greenways, Chandler's Ford.
  3. Eastleigh North polling districts EN2 and EN3 be combined and electors for both polling districts vote at Crestwood College.
  4. In Eastleigh South, polling station ES1 be moved to the front of the building in Emmanuel church.
  5. West End South polling station for WS4, which currently votes at Hildene Community Centre, be moved to St James Church Hall, Church Hill, West End.
  6. All other polling districts and places remain unchanged.
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#### Summary

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The compulsory review must be started and completed between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 inclusive.

The comprehensive review of its polling districts and polling places has been undertaken to achieve greater efficiencies and voting arrangements. Whilst the aim is to ensure the service is providing value for money, it is important to maintain voter convenience and accessibility.

The review must not be confused with changes to any district ward boundaries; this review focuses on the polling stations which are assigned to each polling district.

A consultation was carried out between 12 July and 6 September 2019. This involved a consultation notice and background information being placed on the Council's website and

Borough News along with placing alerts through different social media platforms (Enews, Twitter, Facebook) as well as directly contacting elected persons (MPs and Borough Councillors), local political parties, parish and town councils and persons and organisations with particular expertise in relation to access to premises for people with different forms of disability and local community groups.

Whilst the consultation was open, in that views were sought in respect of all current arrangement and venues, it was also highlighted that the ARO had provisionally earmarked some polling stations that could potentially be combined with others as part of the required savings.

The ARO's final report will seek approval from the Council's Administration Committee, which has delegated powers to designate polling districts. The new polling districts and polling places will take effect upon publication of the revised Register of Electors on 1 December 2019.

### **Statutory Powers**

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.

Representation of the People Act 1983, Schedule A1 (RPA 1983)

### **Proposed Changes**

1. Chandler's Ford Borough Ward:

<b>Polling District</b>	<b>Polling Station</b>	<b>Proposals</b>
CH3	Toynbee School Bodycoats Road	Move to Chandler's Ford Parish Offices, Fryern Hill Pavilion, Greenways, Chandler's Ford

2. The proposed venue is close to the existing venue so this will make very little difference in terms of distance travelled and will not cause any issues regarding awareness of location. The new venue was visited and assessed in July 2019 and is entirely suitable for a polling station, has level access throughout and all the necessary facilities.

3. Eastleigh North Borough Ward:

<b>Polling District</b>	<b>Polling Station</b>	<b>Proposals</b>
EN2	St Peter's Church Shakespeare Road, Eastleigh	Combine polling district with EN3 and electors vote at Crestwood College, Shakespeare Road

EN3	Crestwood College Shakespeare Road, Eastleigh	Increasing the number of electors by merging EN2 and EN3 but to remain unchanged as a split station within the venue
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4. There will be cost savings in relation to combining polling stations and it will stop voter confusion with two venues in close proximity. In terms of distance, confusion is minimised due to the venues being in the same road.

5. Eastleigh South Borough Ward:

Polling District	Polling Station	Proposals
ES1	Emmanuel Church Desborough Road, Eastleigh	To move the polling station to another room at the front of the building

6. The proposed change will mean that the nursery occupying the current room at the rear of the building will not be affected when there is an election. It also has better access for voters and facilities for staff.

Polling District	Polling Station	Proposals
WS4	Hilldene Community Centre, 68 High Street, West End	To move the polling station to St James Church Hall, Church Hill, West End where the venue is already used as a polling place for polling districts WS1 & WS3

7. The proposed change will mean a saving of hiring the Hilldene venue and the polling station electorate is unlikely to increase.

### Representations Received

8. A total of **12** representations were received to the consultation, which can be summarised as follows:
9. Feedback received from Botley Parish Council: The Council commented that later this year the Parish Council will be taking over two new community buildings on the Boorley Park development at Boorley Green and the Parish Council would be pleased to make the rooms available.
10. Boorley Park currently has 400 new houses occupied and if the building rate continues as planned, this is likely to increase by 100-150 and will be in addition to new housing at Boorley Gardens on the western side of Winchester road which is just starting to get underway.

11. *ARO response: The existing polling station at Botley Centre is suitable for current purposes but as the new housing development increases and occupiers move into the area is likely to come under pressure. The ARO proposes that this should be reviewed again along with the new community buildings when they are constructed to ensure they are suitable and available. The Returning Officer has determined this to be kept under review annually until the next full review is undertaken.*
12. A resident from Chandler's Ford commented: That the disruption to Scantabout Primary School when there is an election affects her children attending the school as the site closes to pupils unless they can coincide it with an INSET day. Otherwise it is an additional day that working parents have to arrange alternative childcare for. She suggested consideration that a portable building be sited in the car park or to make use of St Edwards Church on Winchester Road or combine the polling area which is adjacent to the edge of the Scantabout area.
13. *ARO response: Noting the practical impact of using the school on parents/voters, the suggested alternatives are unsuitable because polling stations must be allocated within the polling district unless there are no suitable buildings available. Temporary cabins are not fully accessible or conducive to a suitable work environment for staff i.e. no washroom or kitchen facilities.*
14. A Fair Oak and Horton Heath councillor had an observation on the polling stations in Fair Oak and Horton Heath recommending: parts of FA2 that are north of Sandy Lane move into FA1 and transfer both sides of Winchester Road that lie to the north of the junction with Sandy Lane and all roads off it.  
  
He also commented that he saw no reason to move the polling station from the Village Hall but suggested that the Woodland Community Centre on Savernake Way would be just as good.
15. *ARO response: The current arrangements are suitable and available but the area is currently under development and will be kept under review annually until the next full review.*
16. A Bishopstoke resident commented: he was happy with his polling station venue at St Paul's Church, Fair Oak Road.
17. *ARO response: Thanked the respondent for their positive response.*
18. A Borough Councillor made the following observations on the grounds of efficiency:
  - (a) Chandler's Ford has 6 small polling places that ought to be capable of being restructured down to 3 or 4 as it is a compact ward
  - (b) Eastleigh North – loses St Peter's Church and use Crestwood for EN2
  - (c) West End South – loses Hilldene and use St James' for WS4

Suggesting that none of these changes would create greater journey lengths than already in place elsewhere and numbers are not rising due to an increase in postal voting.

19. *ARO response: Consideration has been given around the reduction of polling stations in Chandler's Ford and that in the event of a combined and/or Parliamentary Election, the more complex arrangements and higher voter turnout could cause delays and queues to occur at polling stations. The ARO has determined that the polling stations remain unchanged.*

*The ARO has determined that the polling district EN2 will merge with polling district EN3 and the polling place will be at Crestwood College and continue in a split polling station arrangement.*

*The ARO agrees with the recommendation of combining the polling place for WS4 with WS1 and WS3 and all polling stations will be held in St James Church Hall which is both a suitable and available venue for use as a polling place.*

20. A resident of Hedge End South commented: That they felt well served by the current polling station at the Hub: wheelchair accessible and convenient for distance-limited voters.
21. *ARO thanks respondent for the comments and is pleased they find the venue accessible.*
22. A resident from Eastleigh North stated: That he is very satisfied with the polling station at the Scout Hut in Boyatt Lane. Although there is no off-road parking, it is never an issue for the short time required.
23. *ARO thanks respondent for their comment.*
24. A resident of Boyatt Wood commented: The polling station at Crestwood School is convenient and easily accessible.
25. *ARO thanks the respondent for their comment.*
26. A Parish Councillor for Bishopstoke noted that: In spite of changes to the Bishopstoke Parish wards in May 2020 these would not adversely impact the current venues due to the electorate being spread more evenly between the polling stations.
27. *ARO agrees with this representation given the changes taking effect to the parish wards in May 2020. The polling stations will remain unchanged as they continue to be suitable and available venues which are located within close proximity for electors.*
28. An elector of Bishopstoke commented that: Voters seemed unaware of an entry to the polling station at the Memorial Hall from Portal Road or from Riverside through the park. He suggested that signage could be positioned to give easier access to the Memorial Hall for those with restricted mobility.

29. *ARO response: the polling station signs will be assessed for suitability and where appropriate additional signs will be displayed to assist electors' accessibility to the polling place.*
30. The Council's Elections team concurred with the recommendations made by the ARO and support the approach for Chandler's Ford in respect of the polling stations falling within the Winchester Parliamentary Constituency and the relatively higher turnout when there are national elections and combined polls.
31. *ARO thanks the team for their comments.*
32. The Acting Returning Officer for the Winchester constituency responded: Stating that she is satisfied with the locations and premises used for purpose of the Parliamentary election in 2017, for which she is responsible, and is pleased to see that there would be no reduction in the number of stations. It is clear that the turnout at these polling places warrants their use and staffing of these locations remain with the guidance from the Electoral Commission for future parliamentary elections.
33. *ARO for Eastleigh Constituency supports the comments of the ARO for Winchester Constituency and concurs that the number of polling stations should continue with the current provision.*

#### **34. Financial Implications**

The review has been conducted within existing staff resources and there are no additional financial implications as a result of the recommendations in this report however, there will be a degree of savings made in relation to hire fees as a result of a reduction in venues.

#### **35. Risk Assessment**

As highlighted at the start of this report, the law places a duty on the council to conduct reviews and, specifically within this, to ensure safe and appropriated access arrangements for both voters and staff.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

The Equality Act is relevant to the decision in this report as the decision relates to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, or fostering good relations between different people in the following ways:

The aforementioned duty to conduct the review includes a responsibility to ensure that everyone who is entitled to vote can do so with equality of access – from actual arrangements at the polling station (such as provision of ramps and voting booths for the wheelchair users to cast their vote along with enlarged version of the ballot paper and a Braille voting device provided for the partially-sighted and blind) to the polling station being within a reasonable proximity to their home address.

For the purposes of the review an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been carried out, attached as an appendix to the report.

## **Conclusion**

The review considers the arrangement for voting in Chandler's Ford, Eastleigh North, Eastleigh South and West End South. Following a period of consultation, the ARO has considered the views submitted on the current and proposed arrangements, and recommends the changes to polling stations made at the beginning of this report.

Councillors are asked to consider the proposed changes and to make decisions that take account of the views received, the financial implications and the location of the polling stations in relation to the demographics of the area.

ALLAN RICHARD WARD  
ACTING RETURNING OFFICER

Date: 18 September 2019  
Contact Officer: Sam Jones  
Tel No: 023 8068 8201  
e-mail: sam.jones@eastleigh.gov.uk  
Appendices Attached: 2

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - SECTION 100D**

The following is a list of documents which disclose facts or matters on which this report or an important part of it is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. This list does not include any published works or documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information.

List Background Papers: Equality Impact Assessment;  
Summary of responses to consultation received.