

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

COUNCIL- 23 OCTOBER 2019

REPORT BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

POLLING DISTRICT, PLACES AND STATIONS REVIEW 2019

WARD(S) AFFECTED: Whole district

Purpose/Summary of Report

- The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval for the revisions to the current polling districts, places and stations within East Hertfordshire.
- A formal review is legally required to be carried out every five years under the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL: That:</u>	
(A)	the revised scheme of polling districts, places and stations as set out in Essential Reference Paper B is approved, and
(B)	the ward register number changes as set out in Essential Reference Paper C, are approved.

1.0 Background

1.1 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced the requirement to carry out a review of polling districts and polling places every 5 years. The review has been conducted in accordance with the Electoral Commission's guidelines.

1.2 As the District boundary is not coterminous with the Parliamentary Constituency boundary, the Returning Officer for completeness has included the polling places and districts that come under the responsibility of the Returning Officer for Stevenage and also for North East Herts as these places and district become the Acting Returning Officer's responsibility at a Parliamentary general election.

1.3 By virtue of Section 18E (3) of the 1983 Act (polling districts and places at parliamentary elections) (as amended by Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006), the decision is that for the Council to approve.

2.0 Report

2.1 In carrying out the review the Returning Officer must demonstrate that he has, as far as practicable, met the criteria set out in the Representation of the People Act 1983, notably:

- (a) seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
- (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 (Section 18B).

2.2 A key consideration has been to avoid using any temporary polling buildings as these are very expensive and not ideal in regards the health, safety and welfare of our staff and the public.

2.3 Schools have been allocated wherever possible because these are available to the Returning Officer to use at a nominal charge and are well placed within the local community with

good access. Schools are not generally used however where there is a suitable community centre or village hall nearby as the Returning Officer is mindful of the potential disruption that using schools can cause. Schools are not required to close as this is local choice and where the school does decide to close they are encouraged to use that as one of their statutory teacher training days to lessen the impact on disruption.

- 2.3 The impact of house building over the period before the next review has been factored in to the consultation.
- 2.4 The review has provided an opportunity to re-visit polling provision within Bishop's Stortford north area and in particular to future proof some additional polling provision due to house building where we propose creating a new polling district and re-aligning two existing adjoining polling district boundaries within the Silverleys ward.
- 2.5 The review has also provided a suitable opportunity to change the polling district numbering scheme, to provide some logic and order and enable easy expansion within a new numbering scheme.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

- 3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.
- 3.2 In addition to internal consultation, external consultation with stakeholders has been undertaken with the following:
- MPs that cover all polling provision within the district
 - County Councillors
 - District Councillors/Candidates
 - Candidates at local elections
 - Parish Councils
 - Local political organisations

- Local disability groups

Comments were also sought from the general public via an e-form on the council's website.

Comments received from the electorate, politicians and polling staff from the two major elections in May 2019 have also be included within the consultation.

The consultation period initially ran from 1st March to 17th May 2019 but this was then extended to 31st May to allow for feedback from the European Parliamentary election.

Background Papers

None other than the following that are in the public domain. These documents are on the Council's website

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/elections-voting/polling-places-review>

- Circular EC28/2007 – The Electoral Commission
- Reviews of polling district, polling places and polling station – Electoral Commission
- Polling District and Place Review – draft scheme for consultation
- Polling Scheme Summary – Current provision
- Polling Scheme by wards
- Proposed naming scheme

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