

East Herts Council Report

Council

Date of meeting: Wednesday 11 December 2024

Report by: Councillor Joe Dumont – Executive Member for Corporate Services

Report title: Polling District and Places Review 2024

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Summary – To approve the list of polling stations following the Polling Districts and Polling Places review.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL:

- a) That the proposals for Polling Districts and Polling Places in the District, at Appendix A, be adopted and applied to all future elections until the next review in 2029.**

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 Following the Polling Districts and Polling Place review, 17 polling stations within five polling districts were identified as stations that may need to change following feedback from electors and availability of the stations.
- 1.2 No changes to polling districts have been proposed as part of this review.
- 1.2 Appendix A shows a list of the proposed polling stations. The elections team have visited the suggested sites and have been

in contact with the owners of the buildings and are awaiting agreement to use them as stations. The polling station will revert to the current place if agreement is not reached.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Under the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, the council are required to conduct a review of all Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places in the District every five years.
- 2.2 The council must have undertaken and completed a review of all Parliamentary Polling Districts and Places in its area within 16 months, commencing 1 October 2023 (i.e by 31 January 2025).
- 2.3 The review relates to Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places but it is recommended that the proposals be adopted for use in all elections in the district.
- 2.4 The last full review was carried out in 2019 and an interim review was carried out in 2023 following the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's Review of the District.
- 2.5 There are no proposals to change any polling districts in the review but there are some changes to polling stations proposed.
- 2.6 The review has also taken into account feedback received from electors at previous elections and from surveys carried out by the polling station inspectors into the suitability of stations from the Police and Crime Commissioner election in May 2024

and the Parliamentary election in July 2024.

- 2.7 The review has tried to find alternative locations in polling districts that currently use a school as its polling station. Schools often have to close on polling days due to safeguarding concerns which impacts on student learning. Schools may have to continue to be used where no other suitable location in the polling district can be found.
- 2.8 Outside of a compulsory review, a Polling Place could become unavailable at short notice due to unforeseen circumstances. Should this occur, the potential need to identify an alternative location is delegated to the Chief Executive under paragraph 10.9.2(t) of the council's Constitution.
- 2.9 As part of the review, local authorities must consider the accessibility of potential polling stations when considering designating a polling place so that each polling place, so as far as it reasonable and practicable, is accessible to electors who are disabled.
- 2.10 The Council is required to consult the Acting Returning Officer for every parliamentary constituency that is wholly or partly within its area. East Hertfordshire has four parliamentary constituencies within its boundary, and it is responsible for the Hertford and Stortford constituency. The other constituencies are: Broxbourne (Broxbourne Borough Council), North East Hertfordshire (North Hertfordshire District Council) and Stevenage (Stevenage Borough Council). Any representations received from the Acting Returning Officers must be published within thirty days of their receipt. These representations have

been published on the website [here](#).

2.11 The proposals were available on the council's website and available to be inspected at its offices and the consultation was open from 30 October to 28 November 2024. The following groups were sent a link to the consultation:

- Members of East Hertfordshire District Council
- All town/parish councils
- The Acting Returning Officers for the Broxbourne, North East Hertfordshire and Stevenage constituencies

2.12 The responses received to the consultation are set out at Appendix B within the consultation document.

2.13 Proposals for change

Buntingford

2.14 BUN1 – The polling station is currently at The Countryman Inn (SG9 0PG) but the site that the Inn resides on is due for development. The Inn was used for the Police a Crime Commissioner and the Parliamentary Elections in 2024 but there is uncertainty as to the future use of the venue. During the review, it was highlighted that it could still be used as a polling station and are currently awaiting confirmation on this. Currently no proposed change to this polling station.

2.15 BUN2 – The Seth Ward Community Centre. This Polling Place has three stations within it as the register is split into three due to large elector numbers. The review considered whether the triple station was confusing to electors and whether it would be possible to move one register back to the Manor House which used to be the polling station for this district until electorate numbers were too large. Feedback received during the review

was that moving one station back to the Manor House would be more confusing than three stations in one building. The team visited the Seth Ward Community Centre and met councillors from the Town Council to discuss making the triple station more user friendly with additional signage and more staff on polling day to direct electors. Therefore no change is proposed for this polling district.

- 2.16 BUN4 – The Restaurant at the Fox Public House - the pub has recently changed ownership and the new owner no longer wishes for it to be used as a polling station. Two alternative venues have been proposed: St Mary's Church within the village or the Seth Ward Community Centre which sits just outside the polling district. It would be preferable to use St Mary's Church as it sits in the polling district and the Seth Ward Community Centre is already a triple station. Concerns have been raised that the Church is up a hill but if it is agreed as a polling station, letters will be sent to electors informing them of the change and encourage them to apply for a postal vote if they would be unable to access the station due to its location.

Bishop's Stortford South

- 2.17 BSS1 – The Bishop's Stortford High School. This site is no longer available and there have been previous suggestions to use Richard Whittington Primary School or Thorley Hill Primary School as suitable alternatives, however both schools have asked not to be used if possible. Following the review, a suggestion proposed is using the Bishop's Stortford Baptist Church Centre, Twyford Road.
- 2.18 BSS2, BSS3, BSS4 – St Barnabus Centre. There have been issues raised in the past from residents about the parking and location of this polling station. The review was unable to

identify a suitable alternative location so propose no change to this station. However, comments were received in the consultation that a community centre was planned for St James' Park which, when constructed, could be considered as a future alternative location.

Hertford Castle

- 2.19 HCA3 – Morgans Primary School. Morgans Primary School has asked to not be used as a polling station. County Hall was used for the recent Hertford Town Council By-Election and the venue and site received positive feedback from the electorate so the proposal is to use Hertfordshire County Hall as a replacement venue for HCA3.

Hertford Sele

- 2.20 HSE1, HSE5 – Sele School (The Hub). School venue ideally would prefer not to be used and feedback from electors is that there is poor parking, lighting and access. Following the review, there has been a suggestion to use Sele Community Hub, Fleming Crescent SG14 which is owned by Network Homes. The venue has been approached to seek agreement to use venue as a polling station. If no agreement, then the polling station will remain at Sele School.

- 2.21 HSE2 - St Joseph's RC School. The school would prefer not to be used as a polling station. However, the review found no alternative location in the polling district and it is understood that the school does not close on polling day as they relocate some students for the day.

Ware Trinity

2.22 WTR2, WTR3, WTR4 – Larkspur Academy. The school would prefer not to be used as a polling station. Following the consultation, an alternative location has been suggested at Ware Football Club. The venue has been approached to seek agreement to use venue as a polling station. If no agreement, then the polling station will remain at Larkspur Academy School.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 Under the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, the council are required to conduct a review of all Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places in the District every five years.

4.0 Options

4.1 APPROVE – recommended to ensure that the polling places across the district are suitable and accessible for every elector.

4.2 NOT APPROVE – not recommended as the council are required in legislation to review its polling districts and polling places every five years.

5.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

This report seeks to ensure that the council and Returning Officer comply with both the Elections Act provisions to assist voters with a disability in addition to the duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

The review has been carried out within existing resources and there are no financial implications arising from this report.

Health and Safety

Yes – polling stations should be accessible to all electors and this has been assessed in the list of polling stations.

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

Section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires that a Polling District and Polling Places review is undertaken within 16 months commencing on 1 October 2023. Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 sets out the legal framework of the review.

Specific Wards

All wards

6.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

6.1 [The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013](#)

6.2 [Published notice of the review and associated documents](#)

6.3 [Polling District and Places Review 2019](#)

Contact Member

Councillor Joe Dumont, Executive Member for
Corporate Services

joseph.dumont@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer

James Ellis, Head of Legal and Democratic
Services,

james.ellis@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author

Erica Gant, Roz Hamilton, Katie Mogan,
Electoral Services Officer, , Democratic and
Electoral Services Manager

erica.gant@eastherts.gov.uk,

roz.hamilton@eastherts.gov.uk,

katie.mogan@eastherts.gov.uk