

Title of Report:	Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations
Report to be considered by:	Council
Date of Meeting:	11 December 2014
Forward Plan Ref:	C2674

Purpose of Report: To review Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations in the District.

- Recommended Action:**
- (1) That all polling districts in the District continue be designated as polling places.
 - (2) That the Electoral Registration Officer monitors the electoral imbalance within district council wards and if appropriate submit a further report to Council.
 - (3) A total of 43 properties in polling district AA2 be transferred to polling district AA1.
 - (4) That the Returning Officer be requested to give detailed consideration to the situation of polling stations in Hungerford due to the fact that the current stations at the Town Hall and Croft Hall are in close proximity to each other.
 - (5) That the Returning Officer be requested to seek a new location for a polling station in Aldworth due to the redevelopment of the Village Hall.
 - (6) That the new Village Halls in Boxford and Hermitage be used as polling stations.
 - (7) That the Returning Officer monitor the situation in regard to access arrangements to the new hall located adjacent to Enborne Church.
 - (8) That the Electoral Registration Officer create a new polling district in the north of Newbury by dividing the existing NB6 polling district, and the Returning Officer be requested to use the Royal British Legion Hall in Pelican Lane as a polling station for this new polling district.
 - (9) That a new polling station be located in Greenham to serve the new development on the Racecourse and that the Returning Officer

explore the possibility of a further new polling station in the south of Greenham.

Statutory requirement

Other options considered: N/A

Key background documentation: Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013

The proposals will help achieve the following Council Strategy principle:

CSP5 - Putting people first

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Strategy principle by:

To ensure that the Council adheres to the requirements under the provisions of section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013

Portfolio Member Details

Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Roger Croft - Tel 07765 224249
E-mail Address:	rcroft@westberks.gov.uk
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	20 November 2014

Contact Officer Details

Name:	Nick Carter
Job Title:	Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer
Tel. No.:	01635 519101
E-mail Address:	ncarter@westberks.gov.uk

Implications

Policy: N/A

Financial: The only financial implications relate to the hire of polling stations, budgetary provision for scheduled elections is made by the Council. In addition at National elections and Referendums costs are reimbursed by HM Government.

Personnel: N/A

Legal/Procurement: N/A

Property: N/A

Risk Management: Risk assessments are carried out at polling stations

Is this item relevant to equality?	Please tick relevant boxes		Yes	No
Does the policy affect service users, employees or the wider community and:				
• Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
• Is it a major policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
• Will the policy have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
• Does the policy relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
• Does the policy relate to an area with known inequalities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Outcome (Where one or more 'Yes' boxes are ticked, the item is relevant to equality)				
Relevant to equality - Complete an EIA available at www.westberks.gov.uk/eia				<input type="checkbox"/>
Not relevant to equality				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Is this item subject to call-in?	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council		<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position		<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months		<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>
Report is to note only		<input type="checkbox"/>

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is required under the provisions of section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 to carry out a review of polling districts and polling places, every five years.

2. Proposals

- (1) That all polling districts in the District continue be designated as polling places
- (2) That the Electoral Registration Officer monitors the electoral imbalance within district council wards and if appropriate submit a further report to Council.
- (3) A total of 43 properties in polling district AA2 be transferred to polling district AA1
- (4) That the Returning Officer be requested to give detailed consideration to the situation of polling stations in Hungerford due to the fact that the current stations at the Town Hall and Croft Hall are in close proximity to each other
- (5) That the Returning Officer be requested to seek a new location for a polling station in Aldworth due to the redevelopment of the Village Hall
- (6) That the new Village Halls in Boxford and Hermitage be used as polling stations
- (7) That the Returning Officer monitor the situation in regard to access arrangements to the new hall located adjacent to Enborne Church.
- (8) That the Electoral Registration Officer create a new polling district in the north of Newbury by dividing the existing NB6 polling district and that the Returning Officer be requested to use the Royal British Legion Hall in Pelican Lane as a polling station for this new polling district.
- (9) That a new polling station be located in Greenham to serve the new development on the Racecourse and that the Returning Officer explores the possibility of a further new polling station in the south of Greenham.

3. Equalities Impact Assessment Outcomes

- 3.1 The Returning Officer must provide a sufficient number of polling stations and allocate electors to those polling stations in such a manner as he/she thinks the most convenient. Having regard to the following;
- (1) Ensuring that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
 - (2) Ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, Polling Stations are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled.
- 3.2 A number of new polling stations have been used in recent elections as it was not considered that previously used venues were suitable for those with disabilities, and

no adverse comments have been received in regard to the use of these new locations.

- 3.3 It is accepted that certain locations are not ideal, however alternative locations are not available, and all Polling Station staff are instructed to give any required assistance to ensure that everyone who wants to is able to cast their vote in a confidential manner.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 That having regard to the comments received the above proposals be implemented.

Executive Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is required under the provisions of section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 to carry out a review of polling districts and polling places, every five years.
- 1.2 The next scheduled elections in West Berkshire will be the elections for the UK Parliament on 7 May 2015 which will be combined with local council elections.
- 1.3 The differences between polling districts, polling places and polling stations are as follows;
- (1) A polling district is a geographical sub-division of an electoral area i.e. a UK Parliamentary constituency, a District ward or a Parish Council;
 - (2) A polling place is a geographical area in which a polling station is located. There is however no legal definition of what a polling place is, the geographical area could be defined as tightly as a particular building or as widely as the entire polling district.
 - (3) 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, unless there are no suitable facilities within the polling district.
- 1.4 The review does not cover electoral areas only the polling districts that are used as the building blocks for the electoral area(s). An electoral area is the smallest area for which an election is held i.e. a Parish or a Parish Ward.
- 1.5 Reviews of electoral areas are carried out by the Local Boundary Commission for England the last review of District ward boundaries in West Berkshire was completed in 2002, and implemented at the elections held in May 2003.
- 1.6 As far as is possible each District Councillor should represent approximately the same number of electors, since 2002 there has obviously been development in certain areas which has lead to an imbalance in certain areas. With further developments proposed in certain other areas.
- 1.7 The Local Boundary Commissions criteria for instigating a review is as follows;
- (1) Where more than 30% of a council's wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for that authority; and/or
 - (2) One or more wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 30%; and
 - (3) The imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period.
- 1.8 Currently no wards have an imbalance of more than 30% however seven wards have an imbalance of more than 10%, with the largest variance being 19.1%

1.9 These figures will change as new developments take place. It is therefore recommended that the Electoral Registration Officer continue to monitor the situation and if considered appropriate submits a further report to Council, recommending that the Local Boundary Commission undertake a review of West Berkshire.

2. Polling Districts

2.1 When designating polling districts relevant authorities must seek to ensure that all the electors in the area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practical in the circumstances. In addition each parish in England must be in a separate polling district

2.2 Where a relevant authority makes any alterations to the polling districts within its area the Electoral Registration Officer must amend the register of electors accordingly.

3. Polling Places

3.1 Each relevant authority must designate a polling place for every polling district. In undertaking this task authorities must:

- (1) Seek to ensure that all the electors in the area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
- (2) 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.

3.2 In addition, the polling place for a polling district must be within the area of the district unless there are special circumstances.

3.3 In West Berkshire polling places are designated as the whole of the polling district and it is recommended that this continues to be the case.

4. Polling Stations

4.1 The Returning Officer is responsible for the designation of polling stations. A sufficient number of polling stations must be provided and electors allocated to the polling stations in such a manner as the Returning Officer considers most convenient.

4.2 The Returning Officer attempts wherever possible to avoid using schools as polling stations and as a result of changes made at recent elections the only school now being used as a polling station is Enborne.

4.3 An alternative venue has been identified in Enborne which is suitable for use as a polling station, however at present access arrangements are not considered to be suitable. The Returning Officer will however monitor the situation and when the access issues are resolved will commence use of the new venue.

- 4.4 The locations of polling stations are discussed with local political agents prior to all major elections.
- 4.5 Aldworth Village Hall is currently being rebuilt and it will be necessary for the Returning Officer to identify a new location for use at next years elections.

5. Conduct of the review

- 5.1 Notice of the review was given on 1 July 2014 and interested parties were invited to submit comments by no later than 30t September 2014.
- 5.2 At every election staff employed in polling stations and staff employed by the Returning Officer are asked to complete check lists on the suitability of polling stations. These comments are then taken into account when reviewing polling stations.
- 5.3 Comments and observations have been received from the following individuals/organisations;
- (1) Inkpen Parish Council
 - (2) Boxford Parish council
 - (3) Hungerford Town Council
 - (4) Greenham Parish Council
 - (5) Aldermaston Parish Council
 - (6) Burghfield Parish Council
 - (7) Christopher Brooks, Acting Returning Officer, Reading West Constituency
- 5.4 All of the comments with the exception of Aldermaston Parish Council relate to polling stations not polling districts/places.
- 5.5 Aldermaston Parish Council have requested that a small number of properties in Baughurst Road and Pinelands be transferred from polling district AA2 to AA1, as a consequence they would vote at the Parish Hall, The Street, Aldermaston rather than Barlow's Park, Silchester Road, which is considered to be more convenient.
- 5.6 A total of 43 properties are affected by this proposal, in order to ascertain the views of the electors on the proposal a survey was undertaken, of the 24 responses 16 were in favour of the proposal. It is therefore recommended that this small change be carried out.
- 5.7 In regard to the comments on polling stations Inkpen Parish Council are happy with the existing arrangements. Boxford Parish Council has requested that the new village hall be used. It may also be appropriate depending on its completion date to use the new Village Hall in Hermitage.
- 5.8 Hungerford Town Council have suggested that if possible a new polling station be located in the south of the Town; and that due to it's proximity to the Town Hall, Croft Hall no longer be used as a polling station. It is recommended that the Returning Officer explore the possibility of a new polling station being located in the south of Hungerford.

- 5.9 The existing arrangements for polling stations in polling district NB8 are also considered to be unsatisfactory it is therefore recommended that this polling district be divided along the line of the A4 Western Avenue; and that the Royal British Legion Hall in Pelican Lane be used as an additional polling station for the area to the south of Western Avenue.
- 5.10 Greenham Parish Council have requested that a polling station be provided in the Racecourse to serve the new development. This is already being explored by the Returning Officer. In addition due to the large developments in the south of Greenham the Returning Officer is exploring the possibility of a new polling station being provided in this area; as the existing arrangements at St Marys Church Hall are not considered appropriate for the number of electors.
- 5.11 Burghfield Parish Council has requested that consideration be given to an alternative to Burghfield Community Sports Association, James Lane, which is considered unsuitable. The Returning Officer is examining alternatives however it is unlikely that an alternative will be identified other than to use St Mary's School, which is not considered appropriate.

Appendices

There are no Appendices to this report.

Consultees

Local Stakeholders: Local Political Parties, Parish/Town Councils, Councillors

Officers Consulted: Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer and Corporate Board

Trade Union: N/A