

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2019

Councillor Mrs Macpherson

Leader of the Council and Chairman of the General Purposes Committee

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To approve the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee of 30 September, 2019 in relation to an update of the Schedules of Polling Districts and Polling Places with a view to enabling the Electoral Registers being published on 1 December 2019 to reflect the new arrangements.

2 Recommendations

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| 2.1 | That Members note that no representations were received in relation to the Stoke Mandeville: Stoke Mandeville Village polling place during the public consultation undertaken during the second stage of the review. |
| 2.2 | That Council approve the Schedules of Polling Districts and Polling Places attached as appendices A and B to this report, incorporating the changes in relation to Stoke Mandeville Village. |

3 Supporting information

- 3.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. All local authorities need to conduct their review every five years and need to conduct this review between 1 October 2018 – 31 January 2020.

- 3.2 Polling Districts are the areas created by the division of a constituency, ward, or division into smaller parts, within which a polling place can be determined which is convenient to electors.

A Polling Place is the building or area in which a poll takes place and will be selected by the Returning Officer.

A Polling Station is the actual room or building where the poll takes place.

- 3.3 This review did not cover the boundaries of District Wards, Parishes, County Divisions or Parliamentary Constituencies. These follow separate processes.

- 3.4 During the first stage of the review all Members, Town and Parish Councils, political parties, the County Council, disabled access groups and residents of Aylesbury Vale were given the opportunity to comment on existing polling arrangements and make initial representations which would be taken into consideration when developing the draft proposals.

Additionally, various disabled access groups were notified, invited to comment and encouraged to advise their contacts of the review.

Existing booking agents at polling stations were also contacted and asked to complete a questionnaire regarding polling station accessibility.

- 3.5 On 17 June, 2019, having been advised of the results of the informal consultation, the General Purposes Committee agreed that the following should be subject to formal consultation (the second stage of the review):-

Stoke Mandeville: Stoke Mandeville Village – It had been suggested during the informal (stage one) consultation that the Stoke Mandeville Methodist Church (Eskdale Road) was perhaps a more suitable polling place as the current facility (Stoke Mandeville Village Community Centre) was heavily used by the community. The second stage of Consultation should therefore

be pursued in relation to the use of the Church, with the existing polling place being retained as an alternative option.

- 3.6 By way of background, the Stoke Mandeville Village Community Centre has been used as the Polling Place / Polling Station for this area for a number of years. The Stoke Mandeville Methodist Church is located nearby and is a 2-3 minutes walk from the Community Centre.
- 3.7 Whilst the Community Centre is still fit to be the Polling Station and it would be possible to retain it as a backup option, the Methodist Church is quite central to a good part of the estate which will vote there. It has good vehicular access off Eskdale Road and can be reached on foot by many residents. There is a car park on site.
- 3.8 There were no representations received during the second stage of the formal consultations.
- 3.9 Council Officers have visited and confirmed that the Stoke Mandeville Methodist Church would be a suitable venue for a polling place as it is centrally located in the Stoke Mandeville Village Ward, and the building has good facilities for voters and polling staff (Appendix C). However, there is the possibility that there could be a change in ownership of the church in the future and, as such, it is recommended that the Stoke Mandeville Village Community Centre is retained as a backup option, should the church be unavailable.
- 3.10 Appendix A is the schedule of polling places for the Aylesbury Constituency and Appendix B is the schedule of polling places for the Buckingham Constituency.
- 3.11 Appendix C is a summary of Proposed Changes to Polling Stations. Details the options considered for Stoke Mandeville – Stoke Mandeville Village where it is recommended that there is a change and the Stoke Mandeville Methodist Church be designated as the first choice Polling Place / Polling Station for the area.
- 3.12 The Returning Officer has the power to make variations to the current arrangements after consultation which enables any issues that arise between the statutory reviews to be addressed.

4 Options considered

- 4.1 The draft proposals were considered by the General Purposes Committee on 30 September, 2019 and recommended their approval by Council.

5 Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 The established practice of using the Parish as the building block in rural areas is the most sensible way of defining the polling districts and, in turn, the polling place. In the town, the sub-division of wards into polling districts provides the opportunity for polling places/polling stations to be located more locally for individual communities.

6 Resource implications

- 6.1 None.