



# Report to Standards and General Purposes Committee

**Date:** 10 December 2020

**Reference number:** TBC

**Title:** DELEGATION TO RETURNING OFFICER

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**Ward(s) affected:** none specific

**Recommendations:** The committee is asked to:-

- 1. Give authority to the Service Director Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with political group leaders, to make any change to a polling place that may be required.**

**Reason for decision:** To ensure changes to a polling place can take place at short notice in the event that a polling place is no longer available.

## Content of report

### Background

- 1.1 Local authorities are responsible for designating polling districts for elections. Within polling districts the local authority is also responsible for designating a polling place. A polling place can be a single building or a wider area.
- 1.2 Polling stations are within polling places. The Returning Officer is able to designate and change polling stations. The Service Director Legal and Democratic Services has been designated as the Council's Returning Officer.
- 1.3 Responsibility for electoral arrangements is within this committee's terms of reference.
- 1.4 The next elections are set for May 2021.

## Authority

- 1.5 Although there are statutory requirements to make polling places available there are circumstances when a change to the polling arrangements may still be required at short notice, for example fire, lack of availability. Due to current uncertainties with the pandemic there is also concern regarding covid restrictions and requirements as regards both availability and inadequate facilities. Committee approval would be required for any change.
- 1.6 Due to the timescales it is recommended that the Committee grants authority to the Service Director Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with political group leaders, to make any change to a polling place that may be required to negate the need for any special meetings to be called at very short notice.
- 1.7 Relevant Ward Members would also be consulted on any such change in advance and all Members would be informed.
- 1.8 The authority would not affect the statutory requirement to undertake the 4 yearly review of polling places which would come through the Council's decision making process in the normal way and be subject to full consultation.

## Other options considered

- 1.9 Calling a special meeting, however this may still cause some delay which could affect communications to electors on voting arrangements and multiple meetings may be required if there was more than one change. Use of the urgency provisions which was discounted as a separate process would also be required if there was more than one change proposed.

## Legal and financial implications

- 1.10 None except as set out in the body of this report.

## Corporate implications

- 1.11 Ensures appropriate electoral arrangements can be made in a timely manner.

## Consultation and communication

- 1.12 None.

## Next steps and review

None.

## Background papers

*Buckinghamshire Council Constitution:*

<https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s5397/Buckinghamshire%20Council%20Constitution.pdf>

