

Polling Place review Halstead St Andrews South

Agenda Item 7

Contact Details:- Steve Daynes
Designation:- Democracy Manager
Ext. No:- 2751
E Mail Address:- steve.daynes@braintree.gov.uk

Background Papers:- Electoral Administration Act 2006, EC28/2007 Circular, Schedule of Current Polling Districts and Polling Places and letters of representation.
Council 17th December 2007
Council 14th April 2008
Individual consultation to Councillors 17th September 2008

Financial Implications:- None

Equalities Implications:- Revised arrangements will improved access for electorate and no representations have been received from individuals or access groups

Legal Implications:- None

Options: Outlined in report

Risks: None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 placed an obligation on the Returning Officer to conduct both Polling District and Polling Place reviews by December 2007 with the outcomes being approved by Full Council on the 17th December 2007 and 14th April 2008.

As a result of public representation made to the Council during the period of consultation Members accepted a recommendation from the Returning Officer for the formal review of voting arrangements for the ward of Halstead St Andrews South (DE).

Representation focussed on the need for residents of the Beridge Road area of the polling district having to travel to the Polling Place situated at the top of Parsonage Street, in so doing passing a Polling Place situated at Holy Trinity Primary School in Beridge Road.

The report now seeks a decision on which option is to be adopted following representation from the consultees

DECISION

Members are requested to decide between options as outlined in the consultation

Halstead St Andrews South Polling District/Polling Place review

Options

Option 1

Using Bridge Street and the High Street as a natural boundary the residents to the West of this could use the Polling place at Beridge Road and the residents to the East retaining St Andrews Church Hall.

Electorate

Beridge Road	860
St Andrews Church Hall	2,040

Option 2

Using the River Colne as a natural boundary to the North and the existing Ward boundary to the South the residents could use the Polling place at Beridge Road with the residents on the Balls Farm estate and to the North of the River Colne retaining St Andrews Church Hall.

Electorate

Beridge Road	818
St Andrews Church Hall	2,082

Option 3

Using the River Colne as a natural boundary to the North and the existing Ward boundary to the South the residents could use the Polling place at Beridge Road with residents to the North of the River Colne retaining St Andrews Church Hall.

Electorate

Beridge Road	1,500
St Andrews Church Hall	1,400

The options will be on display at Causeway House prior to the meeting

Responses to consultation

The consultation process started on the 17th September and closed on the 9th October. The options were sent to all District Councillors, County Council member for Halstead, Halstead Town Council, political agents and Uttlesford District Council. Further publicity was featured in the Halstead Gazette.

Halstead Town Council considered the options at their meeting on the 18th September 2008 and have indicated their preference for Option 1 which, in their view minimises the number of electors who will have their traditional polling arrangements changed.

Councillor Messenger favoured option 1 but expressed concern about the danger of confusing the electorate when moving polling stations. He requested that clear guidance be supplied at the next election.

Uttlesford District Council have been consulted as they are technically responsible for the St Andrews South polling place at Parliamentary elections. This will not however be the case at the

next parliamentary election as Braintree will assume responsibility following the last round of boundary changes. Their returning officer did however indicate that in his opinion option 3 represented his favoured option

The Returning Officer recognises the desire to minimise impact to the electorate but equally the overriding consideration has to be access arrangements for all electors in the St Andrews South polling district. He has concluded that Option 1 may represent improved access to the electorate at this time. It should however be recognised that there may still be a need to review the Polling District numbers in the future.