

**REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2007**

**Agenda Item 6**

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**Background Papers:-** Electoral Administration Act 2006, EC28/2007 Circular, Schedule of Current Polling Districts and Polling Places and letters of representation  
**Financial Implications:-** None  
**Equalities Implications:-** Detailed in report  
**Legal Implications:-** Detailed in report  
**Options:** Detailed in report  
**Risks:** Detailed in report

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The report considers the recent review of polling districts and polling places and seeks a decision on matters arising out of the review.

The review is a function of the Council and must be conducted by the end of December 2007 and thereafter on a four yearly cycle. It must ensure that all electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and that they are also accessible.

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL**

1. That subject to a satisfactory access audit being completed, the polling place for Wethersfield could be considered for a change from the United Reform Church School Room to the Wethersfield Village Hall.
2. That the Returning Officer carries out a further review of the current polling places for Polling Districts CK (Witham South) and DE (St Andrews Halstead) and prepares a report on his findings and recommendations to a future Council meeting.
3. That all other Polling Districts and Polling Places remain unchanged.

## REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2007

### **Legal Framework**

The Council must designate a polling place for every polling district unless the size or other circumstances of the polling district are such that the situation of the polling place does not materially affect the convenience of the electorate. In determining where polling places should be located the Council must seek to ensure that all the electors have reasonable facilities for voting as are practical in the circumstances and that, so far as is reasonable and practical, polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled.

In undertaking a review, the Council must publish notice of the review and consult the Returning Officer for every parliamentary constituency which is wholly or partly in its area to enable the Returning Officer to make representations to the Council. The notice should allow any elector in the area to make representations which could include proposals for alternative polling places. On completion of the review the Council must give reasons for its decisions in the review and publish such other information as may be prescribed.

### **Consultations**

The formal consultation period ended on 31<sup>st</sup> October. Full details of the review were placed on the Council's website. In addition to this, specific consultations were undertaken with all Members of the Council, all parish and town councils and the Returning Officer.

Various responses were received and these are summarised in the Appendix. The appendix provides details of the polling district, the ward, the polling place and the specific comments received in response to the consultation. It also sets out any proposed action. As can be seen, there was a limited response to the consultation.

The Returning Officer's comments on the review are as follows:-

That the current polling places, whilst not ideal in all cases, appear to meet the needs of the voter in location and access.

With regard to the comments on the polling places in the Appendix, where comments have been received I do not disagree with any of the comments in the proposed action column and see little benefit of any change to polling places that have been effective for numerous elections. I would be agreeable to a further review of the Witham South and St Andrews, Halstead polling places prior to the next scheduled election and report back to the Council on this matter

### **Proposals for Consideration**

Polling District CK – Witham

It is noted that this is an unusual situation but it is one that has existed for some time and affects only 33% of the electorate in the ward. The representation received does

contain alternatives to the current polling place and these ought to be investigated before the next elections.

#### Polling District DE – Halstead

Given the percentage of electors involved, it is suggested that this area is kept under review so that other potential polling places can be identified and investigated.

#### Polling District – Wethersfield

That subject to a satisfactory access audit being completed, the polling place for Wethersfield could be considered for a change from the United Reform Church School Room to the Wethersfield Village Hall.

## REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES – APPENDIX

WARD	POLLING DISTRICT & POLLING STATION	COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING CONSULTATION	COMMENT /PROPOSED ACTION
Bumpstead	Sturmer – Sturmer Village Hall	That all properties to the southeast of Bumpstead Brook where it crosses the A1017 should be able to vote in the Parish of Sturmer as at present they must travel to Steeple Bumpstead.	These properties are in the Upper Colne Ward. The review does not permit changes to ward boundaries; this change would require a review by the Boundary Commission. <i>No action required</i>
Bradwell, Silver End & Rivenhall	Bradwell – Church Hall, Church Road Bradwell	Only suitable location for a polling station is the Village Hall in Church Road Bradwell	Current polling station appears to be better located to residents than the village hall.
Bradwell, Silver End & Rivenhall		Three polling stations are well located for each village, are on or near bus routes and all have parking. Disability access has improved in recent years. It would be more convenient to have additional stations (ie Rivenhall End) but would resource issues rule this out.	Legislation only permits one polling place per polling district. <i>No action required</i>
Hedingham & Maplestead	Wickham St Paul – Village Hall	Keep existing polling station	<i>No action required</i>
Coggeshall & North Feering/Kelvedon	Feering North & Feering South – Community Centre, Coggeshall Road, Feering	It is an anomaly that such a small village is split into two polling districts.	The review does not permit changes to ward boundaries; this change would require a review by the Boundary Commission. <i>No action required</i>

WARD	POLLING DISTRICT & POLLING STATION	COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING CONSULTATION	COMMENT /PROPOSED ACTION
Witham South	Witham (Hatfield) – RAFA Club Witham (South) - Dengie Close Community Centre	Opposed to siting of polling places outside the polling district and to the situation in Witham South and in particular the polling district of CK which sits outside of the polling district yet caters for almost 2000 voters. Whilst an alternative polling place is provided in the adjacent polling district, the route involves crossing very busy roads and further to travel. Possible alternative for CK include the Adult Education College and its associated buildings; does the redevelopment of Bridge Hospital offer any scope; Ivy Chimneys? Alternative would be a mobile polling place. Concerned with the situation and notes that the promised polling station for Hatfield Road and Maltings Lane estates has still not materialised. Situation could be resolved by using either the Adult Education Centre or the John Bramston School. Replacement polling station will be required when the Forest Road Community Centre is closed.	The Council notes the unusual position of a polling place outside of the polling district. No suitable alternative has been secured to date. Consideration has been given to alternatives, however the RAFA Club has been used for the last two District Council elections. 33% of the electors for this ward are in the CK polling district. It is suggested that the current location is continued with a request to the Returning Officer to further review the polling place location. <i>Recommendation to Council</i>
Three Fields	Wethersfield (Village)- United Reform Church School Room	Residents concerned as to the use of a religious building for polling purposes and the Village Hall is seen as “neutral” and more suitable. For electors there is no difference in travelling distance between the two sites. See plan attached to Appendix. The Village Hall has good wheelchair access and disabled toilet facilities.	There is nothing in the legislation preventing a religious building being used for polling purposes. The Village Hall is very close to the current polling station and subject to an audit access it may be a suitable alternative. However little benefit will be.

<b>WARD</b>	<b>POLLING DISTRICT &amp; POLLING STATION</b>	<b>COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING CONSULTATION</b>	<b>COMMENT /PROPOSED ACTION</b>
Three Fields cont'd			gained from a change of polling place. <i>Recommendation to Council</i>
Kelvedon	Kelvedon – The Institute, High Street, Kelvedon	Current polling station provides a satisfactory Polling Station being centrally located and having adequate disabled access.	<i>No action required</i>
Rayne	Rayne – Rayne Village Hall	Happy with current arrangements.	<i>No action required</i>
Cressing & Stisted	Stisted – Montefiore Institute	Happy with current arrangements.	<i>No action required</i>
St Andrews Halstead	St Andrews (North) – Queens Hall, Chipping Hill St Andrews (South) – St Andrews Church Hall, Parsonage Street	For voters living in the Stanley Road/Beridge Road area, Trinity Hall would be more convenient. Unreasonable to expect the electorate to travel a significant distance.	55% of the electors for this ward are in the polling district referred to in this request. It is suggested that the polling place for St Andrews (South) is kept under review beyond the timescale of this current review to identify alternative suitable polling arrangements. <i>Recommendation to Council</i>