

UPDATE OF REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

Agenda Item 7

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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.
Council 17th December 2007

Financial Implications:- None
Equalities Implications:- Detailed
Legal Implications:- Detailed
Options: Detailed
Risks: None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report updates Members on the ongoing Polling Station review considerations for Polling Districts CK (Witham South) and DE (ST Andrews Halstead).

Members will also be presented with a recommendation for the Polling Place at (CD) Wethersfield .

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

- 1 That Members support the retention of the United Reform Church School Room at Wethersfield (CD) as the Polling Place.
- 2 That Members support a full and formal review of the Polling District of St Andrews (South) Halstead (DE)
- 3 That Members support the use of the Sports Pavilion, Spinks Lane as Polling Place for the Electorate of Witham South (CK)

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Background

Members considered a comprehensive report on the suitability of Polling Places at their meeting on the 17th December 2007.

The review, which was conducted as a requirement of the Electoral Administration Act 2006, required all authorities to seek the views of the electorate and interested groups and organisations on the appropriateness of Polling Places used at Elections.

All recommendations were accepted by Members however 3 issues remain outstanding and this report advises members on proposals to conclude the review.

Three Fields Wethersfield (Village) (CD)

Current Polling Place – United Reform Church School Room.

Residents questioned the appropriateness of the use of a religious building as the Polling Place and whilst there is no legislative restriction, an inspection of the suggested alternative at the Village Hall was conducted.

The Village Hall represents a suitable alternative but does not offer any significant improvements over the existing Polling Place. Given this it is proposed to retain the existing Polling Place at the United Reform Church School Room.

Ward member consultation

The proposals have been discussed with ward members and both understand the rationale in concluding this specific review.

St Andrews (South) Halstead (DE)

Current Polling Place St Andrews Church Hall, Parsonage Street
Electorate 2829.

Representation has been made suggesting that electors from the Stanley Road/Beridge Road area could use the Polling Place at Holy Trinity School, Beridge Road. This venue is currently used as the Polling Place for the Greenstead Green and Halstead Rural Polling District as no suitable alternative Polling location is available within the prescribed boundaries.

Whilst there is no legislative restriction on using the same Polling Place to accommodate voting in 2 different Polling Districts, it is a decision which would require detailed planning and consideration to ensure that the conduct of each election is not compromised.

Halstead St Andrews is currently divided into 2 areas North and South. There is a legislative requirement for the Polling Place to be located within the Polling District, however where there is

no suitable Polling Place alternative arrangements can be made. The Polling Place designated for St Andrews South meets the legislative requirement being located within the Polling District.

Having considered this matter further and, in reviewing the geographical area covered (Appendix 'A' refers), the Chief Executive is minded to recommend to Council a formal review of the entire Polling District of St Andrews (South) Halstead. In so doing the Council will enter into a formal consultation process with residents, interested groups and organisations.

Ward member consultation

The proposals above have been discussed with ward members who are supportive of the actions proposed.

Witham South (Hatfield) (CK)

Representation was considered regarding the location of the designated Polling Place being outside the Polling District. In addition the location requires electors to cross a busy junction to access the Polling Place.

Initial investigations have focused on the use of the new Adult Education College, John Bramston School and the new BDC controlled Sports Pavilion located in Spinks Lane. Both the College and School Principals have indicated a reluctance to make their establishments available for use by the Council. As a consequence continuing investigations are focused on utilising the BDC controlled facility at the Sports Pavilion.

A full audit of the Sports Pavilion facility has now been completed and all aspects are fit for purpose. It is therefore proposed to use this facility for future elections.

Ward member consultation

The proposal above has been discussed with ward members who are satisfied with the arrangements as outlined