

Summary Sheet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet and Commissioners' Decision Making Meeting – 13 November 2017

Report Title

Interim Review of Polling Places 2017

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Judith Badger, Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Anston and Woodsetts, Brinsworth and Catcliffe, Maltby, Rother Vale

Summary

This report deals with an interim, partial review of polling places within the Borough of Rotherham. Following approval from Council on 12 July 2017 to undertake a review, a public consultation on the current polling scheme and the Returning Officer's proposals started on 21 July and ended on 29 September 2017. This report considers the consultation responses and makes recommendations for the implementation of revised polling arrangements.

Recommendations

1. That Council be recommended to approve the proposals for polling places as outlined in Appendix 1, in particular that:
 - a. The polling place for AD polling district be changed from Anston Hillcrest Primary School to the Methodist Community Hall, Sheffield Road.
 - b. The polling place for CG and KG polling districts be changed from the AMRC Design Prototyping & Testing Centre, Wallis Way to the AMP Technology Centre, Brunel Way.

- c. The polling place for ID polling district be changed from the Maltby Service Centre, Braithwell Road to the Wesley Centre, Blyth Road.
- d. The polling place for KB polling district be changed from the mobile library to Aston Fence Junior & Infant School.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 - Polling place scheme, Returning Officer's proposals and responses to the consultation

Background Papers

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places Consultation Paper – 21 July 2017

[Electoral Commission guidance on the review of polling districts and polling places](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Council – 13 December 2017

Council Approval Required

Yes

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Interim Review of Polling Places 2017

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That Council be recommended to approve the proposals for polling places as outlined in Appendix 1, in particular that:
 - a. The polling place for AD polling district be changed from Anston Hillcrest Primary School to the Methodist Community Hall, Sheffield Road.
 - b. The polling place for CG and KG polling districts be changed from the AMRC Design Prototyping & Testing Centre, Wallis Way to the AMP Technology Centre, Brunel Way.
 - c. The polling place for ID polling district be changed from the Maltby Service Centre, Braithwell Road to the Wesley Centre, Blyth Road.
 - d. The polling place for KB polling district be changed from the mobile library to Aston Fence Junior & Infant School.

2. Background

- 2.1 Under the Representation of the People Act 1983 (the 1983 Act), the council has a duty to divide its area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each district.
- 2.2 The following definitions may be helpful when considering the report.
 - “Polling districts” are geographical electoral areas into which wards and constituencies may be sub-divided.
 - “Polling places” are the buildings or areas designated by the council where electors in a polling district go to vote in person.
 - “Polling stations” are the number of issuing desks in the building that is the designated polling place.
- 2.3 The Electoral Administration Act 2006, as amended, introduced a duty on all local authorities in Great Britain to review their polling districts and polling places at least once every five years. The Council undertook the last full compulsory review between November 2013 and December 2014. The next full compulsory review is due to take place between November 2018 and December 2019. That full review will take into account the new borough ward boundaries which will be in place for the May 2020 local government elections, as well as potential new parliamentary constituency boundaries.
- 2.4 The 1983 Act (Section 18C(3)) allows a local authority to conduct an interim review of polling places within its area, outside the timescales for a compulsory review. The Council gave approval to undertake an interim review of polling places on 12 July 2017, to address issues which had arisen with four of the council’s designated polling places in Anston & Woodsetts, Brinsworth & Catcliffe, Maltby and Rother Vale wards.

- 2.5 Although the process for an interim review is not stated in legislation, the interim review has been undertaken with regard to the Electoral Commission guidance on the review of polling districts and polling places, which includes publishing the scheme of polling places and the Returning Officer's proposals for changes. A consultation started on 21 July and ended on 29 September 2017, inviting views on the proposals and any alternative venues for polling places.

3. Key Issues

3.1 Anston and Woodsetts Ward

The current polling place for AD polling district is Anston Hillcrest Primary School. The Council has been asked to consider designating a different polling place. Returning Officer staff have provisionally identified a potentially suitable alternative site for a polling place, at the Methodist Community Hall on Sheffield Road. Consultees were invited to comment on this proposed change, and there have been no objections raised about the use of the Community Hall, though concerns have been raised by a ward councillor about traffic volumes on an already busy stretch of road. Highways have confirmed that they would support Electoral Services in an attempt to prevent any on street car parking in proximity to the polling station, thereby avoiding any potential obstruction of the road.

3.2 Brinsworth and Catcliffe Ward / Rother Vale Ward

The current polling place for CG / KG polling district is the AMRC Design Prototyping & Testing Centre, Wallis Way. The Council has been asked to look at alternative venues. Returning Officer staff have provisionally identified a potentially suitable alternative site, a meeting room at the AMP Technology Centre, Brunel Way. Consultees were invited to comment on this proposed change, and there have been no objections raised.

3.3 Maltby Ward

The current polling place for ID polling district is the Maltby Service Centre, Braithwell Road. Due to the expansion of services provided here, the centre is no longer ideal as a polling place. Returning Officer staff have provisionally identified a potentially suitable alternative site for a polling place, at the Wesley Centre, Blyth Road. Consultees were invited to comment on this proposed change, and there have been no objections raised.

3.4 Rother Vale Ward

A new polling place will need to be designated for KB polling district, with the withdrawal of the mobile library service. No suitable premises have been identified in the district, but the relatively nearby Aston Fence J & I School, which is already used as a polling place, can accommodate a further polling station. Consultees were invited to comment on this proposed change, and there have been no objections raised.

3.5 Further details about the existing polling scheme, the proposals for changes and responses to the consultation are outlined in Appendix 1.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

4.1 Option 1 – Do not change any polling places before the next full compulsory review. This option has been discounted. Although there are some premises which the Returning Officer has a right to use, this is not the case for all polling places, and where places become unavailable we must designate alternative venues.

4.2 Option 2 – Consider the results of the interim review and determine changes in time for the next scheduled elections in May 2018.

4.3 It is recommended that the proposals for changes to polling places as outlined in this report and Appendix 1 be approved.

5. Consultation

5.1 The consultation period for the review ran from 21 July 2017 to 29 September 2017. Public notice of the review was given, and information about the review made available on the council's website and in Customer Service Centres. Any registered elector was entitled to make representations.

5.2 Details of the review and the consultation paper were also sent to Ward Members, MPs, Parish Councils, and local groups including those representing disabled people. Electoral Services staff also attended a meeting with a local "Speakup" group, to discuss the review and to address any concerns about the accessibility of polling places. The meeting also provided the opportunity to provide additional information about what assistance is available to make the voting process accessible for disabled and learning disabled voters.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

6.1 The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 provides for decisions on polling districts and places to be made by the Council.

6.2 Once the council has made its determination, the conclusion of the review will be published. Certain persons, on specific grounds, can appeal to the Electoral Commission about the alteration of polling places.

6.3 The Assistant Director for Legal Services will be responsible for implementing the decisions. Electoral Services will take the measures to bring the changes into effect, so that new polling places are used for the next scheduled elections and any by elections which may occur.

6.4 Rotherham will undergo another full compulsory review in 2018/19, in time for the May 2020 local government and Police and Crime Commissioner elections, and taking into account new electoral boundaries.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 The financial and resource implications arising from this report will be met from within existing budgets.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 The council has a legal duty to review polling districts and polling places, as described in this report. Reviews of polling districts and places must take place in accordance with section 18C and Schedule A1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983 [as amended].

9. Human Resources Implications

- 9.1 None arising directly from this report.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 The voting age is 18 or over. The recommendations link to the council priority - every adult secure, responsible and empowered.

11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

- 11.1 The council must ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practical, every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to people who are disabled. Provision of reasonably convenient polling arrangements is an essential element of the free and fair elections required under Protocol 1, Article 3 of the Human Rights Act.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

- 12.1 None arising directly from this report.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 Polling places are essential for the conduct of elections. Inadequate provision of polling places and polling stations could have a detrimental effect on voter turnout and could be the source of an election challenge.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Dermot Pearson, Assistant Director – Legal Services

Approvals on behalf of:-

	Named Officer	Date
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services	Lisa Darnell	09/10/2017
Assistant Director of Legal Services	Dermot Pearson	06/10/2017
Head of Procurement (if appropriate)	N/A	
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)	N/A	

Report Author: Claire Wardle, Electoral Services Manager

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