

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

ELECTORAL REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE ON 16 October 2019

PART A: REPORT

SUBJECT: Review of Polling Stations in the Arun District 2019 – Stage 2
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DATE: 30 September 2019

EXTN: 37600

PORTFOLIO AREA: Corporate Support
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2016 require the Council to conduct a formal review of its polling districts, places and stations. At its meeting on 16 July 2019 the Electoral Review Sub-Committee (ERSC) agreed the proposed timetable and process for the Review.

This report sets out the findings of the Review and seeks agreement to the polling districts and polling stations/places to be used for elections from 2020 onwards. The recommendations of the Committee will be presented to Full Council on 13 November 2019

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a) That the Committee recommends acceptance of the location of polling stations/places as set out in Appendix 1 from 2020 onwards.
- b) That delegated authority be given to the Returning Officer to complete any outstanding work identified in Appendix 1.
- c) That delegated authority be given to the Returning Officer to make changes to polling stations where these are required urgently.

1. BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 The Council is legally required to conduct a formal review of its polling districts, polling places (building within which polling stations are located, there may be more than one polling station at a polling place) and polling stations, every five years. The review mainly covers the location of the polling station within the polling District and convenience for voters in that polling district, as well as a review of polling district boundaries where necessary. The last review was approved at Full Council on 5 November 2014, in time to be incorporated into the Electoral Register on 1 December 2014, prior to the deadline of 31 January 2015. The current review should be

completed in time to be incorporated into the Electoral Register on 1 December 2019 and before the deadline of 31 January 2020.

- 1.2 Stage 1 of the review commenced on 18 July 2019 with the results being analysed during September 2019. Consultation took place with MPs, councillors, neighbouring authorities, all candidates and agents from the May 2019 elections, disability groups and members of the public.
- 1.3 The review focused on polling districts which are areas comprising a number of roads and houses allocated to a polling place/polling station within a ward, and locations and venues used for polling stations. The aim is to locate polling stations within a convenient distance from the majority of electors' homes, with the premises being easy to find and accessible to all. It did not consider ward boundaries which are determined independently of the Council by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).

2. OUTCOME OF REVIEW

- 2.1 There are 91 polling districts and places/stations within the Arun District, which will increase to 96 under the current proposals. Appendix 1 lists the full schedule of polling districts and places/stations which, following the review, are recommended by the Returning Officer (RO) for use from 2020 onwards. Final approval for the schedule will be at Full Council on 13 November, after which we will need to write to electors whose polling station has changed. Therefore if a 'snap' General Election is called in the next few weeks we will be using existing polling stations where they are available.
- 2.2 Appendix 1 includes comments received from consultees and comments received from Presiding Officers who worked in polling stations in May 2019, thus providing very current information. In total we received 171 comments via the online survey and a handful of other comments by e-mail, some more detailed than others.
- 2.3 There were no comments received for 62 out of the 91 polling districts, which we take to be positive. There were 18 polling districts with positive or mainly positive comments, 4 mixed and 7 negative. The table below shows the overall nature of comments across the District. Appendix 2 lists the comments from the survey individually. It should be noted that there were a small number of comments in addition to the online survey.

Polling districts	91	100%
No comment	62	68%
Positive or mainly positive	18	20%
Mixed	4	4%
negative	7	8%

- 2.4 Guidance states that a polling district should cover no more than 2500 voters in person, which is therefore one of the criteria for the current review. It is likely that some polling districts will need further review within the next five years as new

developments are built. It should also be noted that the electorate numbers given in Appendix 1 are all electors and does not take into account the number who may vote by other means (proxy or postal votes). In addition to this a number of criteria need to be taken into account by the RO when a polling station location is considered:

- Central location (so far as is possible) for the polling district
- Easy access for electors (including those with a disability)
- Good facilities for electors and staff working in the polling station (private and quiet space for voting, appropriate furniture, toilets, kitchen, lighting both internal and external, heating etc)
- Adequate parking
- Avoiding the use of schools where possible
- Not using facilities with a political association
- Availability – just because a venue is suitable, it doesn't mean it is available – there are very limited circumstances and types of venues which the RO can insist on using and generally good will works better!

2.5 Whilst each location is unique and this is not a 'numbers' game, it is reassuring that 88% of the polling stations are currently deemed to be satisfactory in terms of location, facilities and suitability for electors with a disability. It is clear from the analysis that where we have been forced to use an alternative venue, despite being written to individually in advance of polling day as well as receiving a poll card, electors have generally (although not universally) been unhappy with the change. It is likely that this will occur with any 'snap' election due to the availability of venues and there are some concerns about the current likelihood of an election potentially just before Christmas.

2.6 The recommendation of the RO is that the majority of polling stations remain unchanged from previous elections, in some cases with improvements to the environment, eg heating, lighting, signage, disability access. Where a change of polling station is recommended by the RO comments from consultees have been included and the RO has explained the reason for his recommendation. These vary according to polling district and reflect various changes to communities and available facilities over the last 5 years.

2.7 Members are asked to note particular issues that require a change of polling districts – these are described below and maps can be found at Appendix 3:

- a) Summerlea Primary School (lines 40 and 90) – mixed response, as can be seen in line 40 and line 90 of Appendix 1. Whilst the School itself has expressed strong views about the inconvenience and risks to children of using it as a polling station, we have yet to find an alternative for all local electors in the two polling districts who vote there, BBRO3 and WRUSWN. At line 90 the recommendation is to move some electors to an alternative station, which will reduce the electorate registered to vote at Summerlea from 2584 to 2153. We will continue to keep this under review.
- b) The Loft, Bodyshop (Line 44) – mixed response. Taking into account the comments from the consultation it is recommended that BCWT3 is split so that some of this polling district merges with BCWT1. This will mean that the properties close to The

Loft will continue to vote there and the properties merging with BCWT1 will vote at the Wick Church Hall. In addition to this it is recommended that the properties on the Kingley Gate Estate split from BCWT1 to form their own polling district BCWT4. These electors would then vote at the keystone Centre in Eldon Way as this will be closer and more convenient for them

- c) Methodist Church Hall, Felpham (line 47) – we used the new Felpham Community Hall on 2 May 2019 but received a number of complaints about its location. The polling station moved back to the Methodist Church Hall for the European Parliamentary Election on 23 May because of the level of complaints, but we believe that the new Community Hall is the best location for the new Felpham Estate. The proposal therefore is to split BFELE3 so that the properties located on the new estate (423 electors) vote at the Felpham Community Hall forming a new polling district BFELE4, whilst the remaining properties at BFELE3 continue to vote at the Methodist Hall.
- d) St Mary's Centre Felpham (line 48) – connected to the previous point given that a number of the properties which form part of the new Felpham Estate vote at Felpham Community Hall (888 electors) it is proposed that BFELW2 is split to create a new polling district BFELW3 and the remaining properties in BFELW2 continue to vote at St Mary's Centre.
- e) Parkside Evangelical Church Hall (line 71) – Appendix 1 gives the RO response to suggestions around all of River Ward. The Flintstone Centre is no longer available to use as a polling station. It is proposed that BRIV2 forms a new polling district of BRIV2A (783 electors) who will continue to vote at Parkside Evangelical Church. The remaining BRIV2 to trial voting at the Guide Hall, Duke Street which we believe will be more convenient for many voters.

2.8 The RO and Elections Team continuously review all polling stations in response to feedback. It should also be noted that the vast majority of providers of polling stations work very well with us to make their premises available. However, there will be circumstances where changes need to be made at short notice due to circumstances outside the control of the provider or ourselves in order to ensure that the best possible arrangements are in place for people to vote.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) That the Committee recommends acceptance of the location of polling stations/places as set out in Appendix 1.
- b) That delegated authority be given to the Returning Officer to complete any outstanding work identified in Appendix 1.
- c) That delegated authority be given the to Returning Officer to make changes to polling stations where these are required urgently.

3. OPTIONS:

See Appendix 1

4. CONSULTATION:

Has consultation been undertaken with:

YES

NO

Relevant Town/Parish Council	✓	
Relevant District Ward Councillors	✓	
Other groups/persons (please specify) Staff teams involved in canvass, Electoral Registration Officer, neighbouring local authorities, candidates and agents from the May 2019 elections, disability groups, members of the public Members of ERSC at this meeting	✓	
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)	YES	NO
Financial		✓
Legal		✓
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		✓
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		✓
Sustainability		✓
Asset Management/Property/Land		✓
Technology		✓
Other (please explain)		✓
6. IMPLICATIONS:		

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION: Review of key democratic process
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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS: N/A
