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Subject to approval at the next Electoral Review Sub-Committee meeting

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ELECTORAL REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE

16 October 2019 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Jones (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Mrs Cooper, Goodheart, Gunner, Lury and Oppler

Councillor Bennett was also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

Apologies: Councillors Purchase and Mrs Baker

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In view of the nature of the issues to be discussed in Minute number 7 [Review of Polling District, Polling Places and Polling Stations], it was recognised that all Members' of the Sub-Committee had a Personal Interest in their capacity as having been candidates and electors during both Town/Parish Elections 2 May 2019 and European Parliamentary Election 23 May 2019.

7. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2019 were approved by the Sub-Committee as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

8. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICT, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

Nigel Lynn, Electoral Registration Officer introduced the report to Members and the Group Head of Policy provided an overview of the findings from the review. She explained that the Sub-Committee were being asked to approve three recommendations going to Full Council on 13 November 2019.

Key points highlighted were:

- 91 Polling Districts currently, increasing to 96 under the current proposal that was recommended to be used from 2020 onwards.
- If a 'snap' General Election was to be called over the next few weeks, it was planned that the Council would use the existing polling stations where they were available.
- 171 comments had been received from the online survey completed, no comments were received for 62 out of the 91 polling districts and that was viewed to be positive.
- Availability of polling places and stations was raised as a manageable risk, but for Members to be aware that just because a venue is suitable, it does not mean it would be available to use.

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Members participated in a full debate on areas that it was recommended now required a change of polling district as set out in point 2.7 of the report and appendix 3.

Members were supportive of the recommendations they were being asked to approve, but they were also very keen that the Council continues to review all polling stations whenever feedback is received.

The Sub-Committee

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL – That

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

9. CANVASS REFORM 2020

The Group Head of Policy made Members aware of the Government's intention to simplify the process and reduce the need for resources. She advised that a detailed briefing had been given at the Electoral Review Sub-Committee on 12/02/19 and that this would be circulated to Members.

Feedback was that if the legislative timetable was to be met for the data matching part of the process, we understand that it would need to be laid before parliament in the middle of October.

The elections focus in the Queens Speech was for voters to provide photo ID with no mention of canvass reform. The Council don't know at this point if it means that the canvass reform is further along than we thought, or if the Government is not committing fully at this point given their wider agenda.

The key issue was that the national data matching needs legislation in place. If the data matching in January could not be completed, there would be a question about canvass reform for next year given that the District have the PCC election in May 2020. A snap general election would of course have a serious impact on the timetable.

The Sub-Committee noted the update.

(The meeting concluded at 6.38 pm)