

Council Report

Report of Acting Returning Officer

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Polling District & Polling Places Review 2022

Executive Summary

Following the final recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's Periodic Review of Electoral Arrangements for Guildford Borough Council in 2021-22, a review of all polling districts and polling places under the new warding patterns has been undertaken in preparation for the full Borough Council and Parish Council Elections to be held on 4 May 2023. The Register of Electors will be re-published on 1 February 2023 reflecting the new warding patterns.

The purpose of this report is to consider recommendations arising from the review including the consultation responses. All such reviews are based on polling districts and polling places for parliamentary elections. The arrangements made for parliamentary elections are also used at all other elections.

A list of existing polling districts and current designated polling places is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report.

The consultation period commenced on 4 October and ended on 15 November 2022 and ten responses were received. Details of the representations received during the consultation are set out in **Appendix 2**.

Maps of the proposed new polling districts, which have been amended in response to the consultation, are attached as **Appendices 3 - 23**. A list of the proposed Designated Polling Places for the new Polling Districts is attached as **Appendix 24**.

The Returning Officer is able to make temporary changes to polling places under delegated powers should the need arise at any election.

A screening Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out, but a full EIA was not considered to be appropriate.

Recommendation to Council:

- (1) That the new polling districts, as shown on the maps attached as Appendices 3 - 23 to this report, be approved.
- (2) That the designated polling places for each of the polling districts as shown on the maps in Appendices 3 – 23 to this report and listed by address in Appendix 24 be approved.

Reason for Recommendation:

As a result of this statutory review, the new designated polling places will improve elector polling experience and further reduce the necessity for schools to close on polling days.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Following the consultation on the review of polling districts and polling places, the Council is asked to approve the proposed new polling districts and designated polling places as shown on the maps in Appendices 3 – 23 and listed in Appendix 24 to this report. Once approved, the polling districts and designated polling places, will be used whenever an election is held within the Guildford Borough voting area.

2. Strategic Framework

- 2.1 The outcome of the polling district and polling place review and the changes made offer the public better access to polling places. It reflects as far as possible what the community needs given the sometimes still limited choice of public buildings available for voting. The relocation of some of the designated polling places will particularly assist with disabled access and the secrecy of the vote, which is a key consideration in the location of any polling station. This falls within the Community strategic priority.
- 2.2 In addition, where it has been possible to relocate a polling place away from a school, there will clearly be less disruption experienced by parents and children attending those schools which normally close on polling day. This ensures a better-quality service to the public and falls within our Value of providing good value for money services.

3. Background

- 3.1 The scope of the recent review of polling districts and polling places is in response to the Ward Boundary changes following the periodic electoral review carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The changes are now finalised with the approval by Parliament on 11 November 2022 of *The Guildford (Electoral Changes) Order 2022*. The changes affect the Wards and the number of Councillors within Guildford borough. The changes come into effect for the Borough Council Elections in May 2023, where 48 councillors will be elected to the new Wards.

- 3.2 The review covers the drawing of new polling district boundaries within wards, and the designation of polling places to serve each of those polling districts.
- 3.3 A polling district is a sub-area of an electoral area (such as a ward or constituency) that is divided for the purposes of delivering an election. In parished areas, each parish or parish ward is to be treated as a separate polling district. A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be located. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district. The polling station is the actual room or area where the voting takes place. There should be no more than 2,500 electors allocated to a particular polling station.
- 3.4 The responsibility for designating polling districts is for the Council to determine. In drawing up polling district boundaries the Council must ensure that all electors in the area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- 3.5 Polling places are normally designated within the boundary of the polling district unless there are special circumstances that prevent this, for example a lack of suitable buildings.
- 3.6 In designating polling places, the Council must seek to ensure that:
- a) all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and
 - b) so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled.
- 3.7 A list of the existing polling districts and current designated polling places is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report. All polling places that are to remain unchanged are deemed satisfactory for use at present, but the situation will, as always, be kept under review. Representations were sought from the Acting Returning Officers of Mole Valley, Surrey Heath and Woking constituencies that fall within the Guildford Borough boundary and no objections have been received regarding the continued use of these polling places at parliamentary elections.
- 3.8 The consultation period commenced on Tuesday 4 October 2022 with the public (via the website), councillors, MPs, election agents, presiding officers at polling stations, parish councils, Guildford Access Group, Acting Returning Officers and lettings managers of polling places. Views were sought on the location of the new polling districts and the polling places within those districts in relation to accessibility by the majority of the electorate and also disabled people. The deadline for receipt of comments was Tuesday 15 November 2022.
- 3.9 Ten representations were received from councillors, parish councils, and the public, details of which are set out in **Appendix 2**.
- 3.10 Most of the representations were in respect of the suitability of proposed polling places, in terms of location and suggestions were made for alternative venues. were received for new changes to polling places and The feasibility of alternative

venues has been evaluated by the Electoral Services Manager and recommendations discussed with local ward councillors and parish councils.

- 3.11 Every effort has been made to try to avoid using schools as polling places where it is necessary to close the school on polling day.
- 3.12 A screening Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed in April 2022. The main concerns were around disability and age. As these aspects have been fully taken into account in the review and the overall adverse impact score was low, it was not considered necessary to conduct a full EIA.
- 3.13 The Returning Officer has the delegated power to use an alternative polling place at any election/referendum should he consider it to be necessary to make a temporary change.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no significant financial implications arising from the proposals in this report. Costs associated with the hire of venues for use as polling stations are recovered in full for all elections, except Borough Council elections.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 We are legally obliged to have a polling place in each polling district if a suitable place is available. No other legal implications apply to the location of the designated polling places.
- 5.2 Schedule A1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983 prescribes the statutory steps for an authority conducting a polling district review.

6. Human Resource Implications

- 6.1 There are no human resource implications arising from the proposals in this report. Polling station staff (presiding officers and poll clerks) are appointed by the Returning Officer for each election. In considering suitable premises for designation as a polling place, the Returning Officer takes into account a number of factors, which include ensuring that the working conditions for the polling station staff are safe and adequate with appropriate rest facilities.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The Council is asked to approve the proposed new polling districts and designated polling places as shown on the maps in **Appendices 3 - 23** and the list of polling places set out in **Appendix 24**.
- 7.2 The Returning Officer, together with the Electoral Services Manager, will continue to review the use of individual polling places and make temporary changes under delegated powers as the need arises at each election.

8 Background Papers

Screening Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) (April 2022)

9 Appendices

Appendix 1: List of existing polling districts and current designated polling places

Appendix 2: Details of the representations received during the consultation and Returning Officer's response

Maps of new wards with proposed new polling districts:

Appendix 3: Ash South Ward

Appendix 4: Ash Vale Ward

Appendix 5: Ash Wharf Ward

Appendix 6: Bellfields & Slyfield Ward

Appendix 7: Burpham Ward

Appendix 8: Castle Ward

Appendix 9: Clandon & Horsley Ward

Appendix 10: Effingham Ward

Appendix 11: Merrow Ward

Appendix 12: Normandy & Pirbright Ward

Appendix 13: Onslow Ward

Appendix 14: Pilgrims Ward

Appendix 15: Send & Lovelace Ward

Appendix 16: Shalford Ward

Appendix 17: St Nicolas Ward

Appendix 18: Stoke Ward

Appendix 19: Stoughton North

Appendix 20: Stoughton South

Appendix 21: Tillingbourne Ward

Appendix 22: Westborough Ward

Appendix 23: Worplesdon Ward

Appendix 24: List of proposed designated polling places for the new polling districts