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REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, PLACES AND STATIONS

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To report the findings of the Review of Polling Districts, Places and Stations.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Polling Districts, Places and Polling Stations, listed as an **Annex** to this report, be adopted for the purposes of the Representation of the People Act 1983.
- 2.2 That the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) be authorised to make any necessary adjustments in the light of availability in consultation with political party agents.

3. Issues and Choices

- 3.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006) requires the Council to divide its area into polling districts and keep the polling districts under review (Section 18).
- 3.2 The Rules to be taken into account in reviewing Polling Districts and Polling Places are:
 - (a) All Electors should have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and in particular, the Council shall, so far as is reasonably practicable, designate as Polling Places only places which are accessible to electors who are disabled.
 - (b) Each Parish shall, in the absence of special circumstances, be a separate Polling District.
 - (c) The Polling Place for any Polling District shall be an area in that District, except where special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the Polling District.
 - (d) The Polling Place should be sufficiently well described to indicate to Electors in different parts of the Polling District how they will be able to reach the Polling Station.

- 3.3 This Review has been undertaken by the ERO to meet the statutory requirement for the Authority to conduct such a Review in accordance with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 which introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. Under the Act a review must be started and completed between 1 October 2017 and 31 January 2018 (inclusive).
- 3.4 In conducting this Review, the ERO has published notice of the Review on the Council's website, and has consulted all councillors, political parties and parish councils. As part of this consultation all electors for the area were invited to make representations.
- 3.5 The comments of councillors and others have been carefully considered and the Annex has been compiled taking them into account. All those who responded to the consultation have been informed of the recommendations set out in the Annex. It's been explained that in some instances it has not been possible to address all the comments made, sometimes for practical reasons and, in other instances, because the experience of the ERO and her staff suggest that the alternative proposals would not be as effective in terms of access as the arrangements proposed in the Annex.
- 3.6 In addition, the Centre for Integrated Living (CIL), which considers the needs of disabled people in gaining access to buildings, has been commissioned to undertake a Disability Access Audit (DAA) of seven polling stations and one potential polling station. This is added to the six stations which were subject to a DAA as part of the 2013 Review, eight stations in 2011 and the 11 stations in 2007. This rolling programme of DAA will continue in future reviews. CIL's recommendations will be implemented at future elections as far as practicable. The recommendations will be passed to the locations concerned to be actioned as necessary.
- 3.7 The Annex indicates the proposed polling places and polling districts. The comments column provides information on the reasons for any changes that have been made since the Review held in 2013 or now proposed as a result of this Review.
- 3.8 It is inevitable that, from time to time, premises will not be available on election days; either because they have prior bookings, or are the subject of redecoration or building works, or the use of the premises has changed (this is particularly the case with schools as classes expand in developing areas). It is recommended, therefore, that the ERO should be authorised to change the venue of polling stations, within polling districts as far as possible, to meet any changing circumstances between formal reviews, in which case party election agents will be kept fully informed and their comments will be invited if time allows.

4. Implications

4.1 Policy

It is the Council's policy to promote engagement through the democratic process.

4.2 Resources and Risk

The Council is required to meet the costs of heating, lighting and caretaking for the use of any buildings the costs of which are met from public funds. In respect of other buildings, a reasonable charge is made. The costs are met from the Elections budget, and are reimbursed, either wholly or in part, from Government funds in the case of Parliamentary or European Parliamentary elections.

Background Papers: Correspondence with Parish Councils, councillors, representation groups and individuals.