

To: Council  
10 January 2024

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## **Polling District and Polling Place Review 2024 Returning Officer**

### **1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report asks the council to agree the Returning Officer's proposed polling district and polling place scheme following public consultation and consideration by the Electoral Review Steering Group.

### **2 Recommendation**

- 2.1 **That the Returning Officer's proposed polling district and polling place scheme, summarised in Annex B is agreed.**

### **3 Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 (ERA 2013) requires the council to undertake a polling district and polling place review within a specified period. The period for this review commenced on 1 October 2023 and concludes on 31 January 2025.
- 3.2 Since the council concluded the last polling district and polling place review, the Parliamentary Boundary Commission has published revised parliamentary constituency boundaries which will come into effect at the next UK General Election.
- 3.3 Undertaking the compulsory review during this period allows the council to meet its statutory obligations set out in the (ERA 2013).

### **4 Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 Several alternative polling locations were investigated by officers as part of the review process in line with suggestions made by the public during the consultation period. The Electoral Steering Group reviewed the proposed responses to the consultation and asked for some areas to be kept under review.

### **5 Supporting Information**

Polling district

- 5.1 A polling district is appointed by the council and is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency for the purposes of a UK Parliamentary election. In England, each parish must be a separate polling district. This means that a parish must not be in a polling district which has a part of a different parish within it, or any unparished part of the local authority area within it. A borough ward, however, may be comprised of multiple polling districts across more than one parish.

Polling place

- 5.2 A polling place is designated by the council and refers to the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer. 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.

#### Polling stations

- 5.3 A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the local authority, polling stations are chosen by the relevant Returning Officer for the election.
- 5.4 No changes to the overall number of polling places have been proposed by this review.
- 5.5 Guidance issued by the Electoral Commission explains that one of the primary purposes of undertaking these reviews is to ensure that the needs of electors with accessibility issues are suitably considered when designating polling places and polling stations.
- 5.6 A full polling review was undertaken in late 2022 with officers visiting each polling place to ensure their continued suitability with specific consideration given to the then forthcoming requirements specified by the Elections Act 2022 and the introduction of Voter ID.
- 5.7 The principal purpose of this most recent review is to comply with the requirements of the ERA 2013 to undertake and conclude the review within the required timescales.
- 5.8 Private organisations are under no obligation to host polling places.

## **6 Consultation and Other Considerations**

### Legal Advice

- 6.1 The legal considerations are included within the body of the report.

### Financial Advice

- 6.2 There are no financial implications associated with this report. The proposal maintains the current number of polling places and as such there is no change in the financial cost position.

### Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 A public consultation was undertaken commencing on 16 October and concluding on 13 November. 19 representations were received.
- 6.4 The majority of responses were supportive of the arrangements currently in place. There were some requests to look at alternative polling locations in the BTTC, BTWR and the Chavey Down area of Winkfield Parish as well as some additional comments about improving signage and parking at existing locations.
- 6.5 The Electoral Review Steering group considered each of these representations and the proposed responses, which are summarised in Annex B.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 An Equalities Impact Assessment was completed at the commencement of the review and highlighted the need to ensure that all venues identified as polling places offered suitable facilities for those with physical or other accessibility requirements.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 Failure to follow proper process for the implementation of any polling changes could result in significant financial and reputational damage to Bracknell Forest Council.

Climate Change and Ecological Impacts

- 6.6 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to have no impact on emissions of CO2 due to the nature of the exercise which is predominantly administrative using existing resources.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 6.7 None identified.

Background Papers

None

Contact for further information

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