

Polling District and Places Review

Cabinet

Date: 7th December 2016

Author:	Leader of the Council Director of Law and Democratic Services
Wards:	Blunsdon and Highworth, Covingham & Dorcan, Eastcott, Gorse Hill & Pinehurst, Rodbourne Cheney, St Andrews and St Margaret and South Marston.
Locality Affected:	North East, Town Centre, North Central, North, East
Parishes Affected:	Highworth and Stratton St Margaret

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 To undertake a review of polling places within the wards of Eastcott and Rodbourne Cheney, to adjust the polling district boundaries within the Blunsdon & Highworth and Stratton & South Marston wards and to create new polling districts in Covingham & Dorcan, Gorse Hill & Pinehurst and St Andrews wards.
- 1.2 The Police and Crime Commissioner, Borough Elections and European Referendum earlier this year highlighted that some venues were either no longer suitable for use as polling stations or were unavailable for use at future elections.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to request the Council to:

- 2.1 Endorse the recommended changes to Polling Places within the Borough as follows:
 - 2.1.1 Blunsdon & Highworth Ward - that an adjustment to the polling district boundary for electoral registers BHH and BHF be made and the streets listed in Appendix 1a are moved from electoral register BHH to BHF.
 - 2.1.2 Eastcott Ward - that the polling place for electoral register ETC relocate to Savernake Street Social Hall from King William Street Primary School.
 - 2.1.3 Rodbourne Cheney Ward - that the polling place for electoral register RCC relocate to St Andrews Church Hall from Rodbourne Cheney Primary School.
 - 2.1.4 St Margaret and South Marston Ward - that an adjustment to the polling district boundary for electoral registers SMA and SMB be made and the streets listed in Appendix 4a are moved from electoral register SMA to SMB.
 - 2.1.5 Covingham & Dorcan – that a new polling district CDE be created and the streets listed in Appendix 5 be moved from electoral register CDC to CDE.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from *Sally Sprason*
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- 2.1.6 Gorse Hill & Pinehurst ward - that a new polling district GPF be created and the streets listed in Appendix 6 be moved from electoral register GPA to GPF.
- 2.1.7 St Andrews - that a new polling district SAE be created and the streets listed in Appendix 7 be moved from electoral registers BHC and SAD to SAE.
- 2.2 Note that the Director of Law and Democratic Services (as Returning Officer) will implement the proposed changes for future Borough, Parish and Parliamentary elections.

3. Detail

Blunsdon and Highworth Ward

- 3.1 Electors on the BHH & BHF registers currently vote at Highworth Community Rooms (BHF electorate total 1,658) and Highworth Community Centre (BHH electorate total 2,076).
- 3.2 Following the elections in 2016 a number of complaints were received from electors in specific areas stating that the Community Centre was not a convenient polling station. They stated that the Community Rooms were much closer and provided easier access and a more convenient polling station, and they therefore requested the polling station be changed to the Community Rooms.
- 3.3 Ward members were consulted and supported the proposed change. It is therefore recommended that the BHH and BHF polling district boundary be adjusted to move the following streets from BHH to BHF:

Cherry Orchard; Downs View; Orange Close; Queens Ave; Turnpike Road and Vorda Road

This will result in the new electorate totals of BHF (2,133) and BHH (1601). See Appendix 1 for a map and Appendix 1a for a street list showing the proposed adjustment to the polling district boundary for BHF and BHH.

Eastcott Ward

- 3.4 The ETC register in Eastcott Ward (electorate of 2,399) currently vote at King William Street Primary School. Using the school as a polling station does mean that the school has to close on polling day which causes considerable difficulties for the school and parents. The Elections Team do try to avoid using schools where there is an alternative suitable premises available. Savernake Street Social Hall has been identified as a polling place within the polling district. Contact has been made with the owners who are happy for us to use the

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premises. There is a large room with good disabled access and car parking making it suitable to use as a polling station.

- 3.5 Ward councillors have been consulted prompting a mixed response to the proposal. One Councillor felt there was a historical usage of the school but was happy to support the change. Another Councillor suggested the Moose Hall as an alternative location, we have written to them but to date have not received a response. As an attempt is always made to use locations other than schools, due to the disruption a whole school closure creates; the recommendation is that the polling place should be moved from King William Street School to Savernake Street Social Hall. See Appendix 2 for a map of ETC showing the current and proposed polling place.

Rodbourne Cheney Ward

- 3.6 The RCC register (electorate of 2,977) currently vote at Rodbourne Cheney Primary School. However, feedback received from the school, the school's Parent Teacher Association and parents after elections in 2016 was that the use of the school as a polling station caused significant difficulties and disruption as the school needs to close on polling day. Again as an attempt is always made to use locations other than schools St Andrews Church Hall has been identified as a polling place within the polling district. Contact has been made with the owners who are happy for us to use the premises. The premises has been inspected and will provide a large hall with good disabled access and car parking making it suitable to use as a polling station.
- 3.7 During the consultation period the local MP and a ward member confirmed that they were in support of the proposal, no comments were received from the other ward members. Therefore, it is recommended that the polling place be moved from Rodbourne Cheney Primary School to St Andrews Church Hall. See Appendix 3 for a map for RCC showing the current and proposed polling place.

St Margarets and South Marston Ward

- 3.8 The SMA and SMB registers currently vote at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (SMA electorate total 2,867) and Grange Leisure Centre (SMB electorate total 2,766). Feedback received from some electors in SMA after the elections in 2016 stated that they had difficulty in accessing the polling station at the church as it was too far for them to walk. The Grange Leisure polling station was much nearer and provided easier access and, therefore they requested that the polling station be changed.
- 3.9 The local MP and ward members were consulted on the proposed changes and the responses received supported the change. Therefore it is recommended that the boundary be adjusted to move the following streets from SMA to SMB:

Blake Crescent; Church Street; Ermin Street (Nos. 73 to 289); Hatherall Close;

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Kenwin Close; Park Street; Slaters Orchard; St Margarets Green; Walnut Tree Close; and Watermead

This will result in the new electorate totals of SMA (1,890) and SMB (3,743). See Appendix 4 for a map and Appendix 4a for a street list showing the proposed adjustment to the polling district boundary for SMA and SMB.

Covingham and Dorcan Ward

- 3.10 As a result of the recent Community Governance Review it is recommended that a polling district CDE be created and the following streets be moved from CDC to CDE:

Avocet Close; Bullfinch Close; Firecrest View; Hawfinch Close; Mallard Close; Moorhen Close; Nuthatch Close; Owl Close; Pheasant Close

This will result in the new electorate totals of CDC (2,887) and CDE (436) and the polling place for electoral register CDE will be St Pauls Church, St Pauls Drive, Covingham. See Appendix 5 for a street list of CDE.

Gorse Hill & Pinehurst Ward

- 3.11 As a result of the recent Community Governance Review it is recommended that a polling district GPF be created and the following streets be moved from GPA to GPF:

Claremont Court; Eastville Road; Haydon View Road; Mendip Close; Orchard Close; Sunningdale Road; Whitworth Road (Nos. 68-114 evens)

This will result in the new electorate totals of GPA (2,682) and GPF (358) and the polling place for electoral register GPF will be Pinetrees Community Centre, The Circle, Pinehurst. See Appendix 6 for a street list of GPF.

St Andrews Ward

- 3.12 As a result of the recent Community Governance Review it is recommended that a polling district SAE be created and properties be moved from BHC and SAD to SAE.

BHC to SAE:

The Cottage, Tadpole Farm and Flats 1&2 and the Annex, Tadpole Cottages

SAD to SAE:

Bluebell House, Tadpole Mews; and Primrose House, Tadpole Mews; and Orchard House, Tadpole Mews

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This will result in the new electorate totals of BHC (1467), SAD (3300) and SAE (8) and the polling place for electoral register SAE will be Redhouse Community Centre, Frankel Way, Redhouse. See Appendix 7 for a street list of SAE.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 A number of options have been considered in the report. No other options have been put forward by interested parties.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 The cost of the alternative polling places will be approximately

5.1.1 Savernake Street Social Hall (ETC) £192

5.1.2 St Andrews Church Hall (RCC) £160

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Legal and Human Rights implications have been taken fully into account in the preparation of this Briefing Note and it is believed the recommendations are compatible with Convention rights.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 No other specific implications were identified during the preparation of this report.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 A Diversity Impact Assessment has not been completed in relation to this report. Good practice has been implemented through good and appropriate consultation in relation to all proposals. Good inclusion practice has been implemented when considering changes in polling venues to ensure they are accessible for voters. This demonstrates our duty to advance equality of opportunity.

Risk Management

- 5.5 Risks were considered when looking at the possibility of moving to an alternative polling place. It is believed there are no unmitigated risks. For example new polling places were visited and assessed regarding their suitability for use as a polling station.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

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6.2 The two Members of Parliament for Swindon North and Swindon South have both been consulted.

6.3 Relevant Ward Councillors have been consulted.

6.4 The Parish Councils were consulted on initial suggestions and interim recommendations.

7. Background Papers

7.1 None.

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 – map for BHF.

8.2 Appendix 1a- street list for BHF.

8.3 Appendix 2 - map for ETC.

8.4 Appendix 3 - map for RCC.

8.5 Appendix 4 – map for SMB.

8.6 Appendix 4a- street list for SMB.

8.7 Appendix 5- street list for CDE

8.8 Appendix 6 – street list for GHF

8.9 Appendix 7 – street list for SAE

9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan

9.1 This is not a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for October 2016.