

26 January 2022	ITEM: 13
Council	
Interim Review of Polling Places, Polling Districts and Polling Stations	
Wards and communities affected: Aveley & Uplands, Belhus, Chadwell St Mary, Grays Riverside, Grays Thurrock, Ockendon, South Chafford, Stanford East & Corringham Town	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive and Returning Officer	
Accountable Officer: Mark Bowen, Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer	
Accountable Director: Sean Clark, Corporate Director Resources and Place Delivery	
This report is public	

Executive Summary

This report requests Council to consider and approve the recommendations of the Returning Officer and Chief Executive in relation to an interim review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations in the Polling Districts listed below and for the reasons outlined in the Appendix.

- 1. Recommendation(s)**
 - 1.1 That Aveley Hub be confirmed as the polling place for Aveley and Uplands, polling district B**
 - 1.2 That Royal British Legion Hall be confirmed as the polling place for Belhus, polling district F**
 - 1.3 That Chadwell Library be confirmed as the polling place for Chadwell St Mary, polling district J**
 - 1.4 That Inspire Youth Hub be confirmed as the polling place for Grays Riverside, polling district V**
 - 1.5 That United Reform Church, Bradleigh Avenue be confirmed as the polling place for Grays Thurrock, polling district Y**

- 1.6 That Belhus Village Hall be confirmed as the polling place for Ockendon, polling district AF**
- 1.7 That Bannantyne Gym be confirmed as the polling place for South Chafford, polling district AL**
- 1.8 That Springhouse Club be confirmed as a temporary polling place for Stanford East & Corringham Town, polling district AP, for the polls to be held in May 2022.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The report sets out the legal requirements. Appendix 1 outlines the options considered, alternative locations and the Returning Officer recommendation for each Ward.
- 2.2 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced the requirement for all Councils to undertake a full review of all polling districts and stations to improve accessibility. Additional Statutory Instruments were issued in late December 2006.
- 2.3 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The last full review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and polling stations was undertaken and brought to Council 29 January 2020. This report is not part of a statutory review.
- 2.4 Local authorities must comply with the following legislative requirements regarding the designation of polling districts and polling places:
- each parish in England and community in Wales is to be a separate polling district, unless special circumstances apply
 - in Scotland, each electoral ward must be divided into two or more separate polling districts, unless special circumstances apply
 - the council must designate a polling place for each polling district, unless the size or other circumstances of a polling district are such that the situation of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electors
 - the polling place must be an area in the district, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the district (for example, if no accessible polling place can be identified in the district)
 - the polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station
- 2.5 The Returning Officer has the right to use schools as polling stations. Given recent government guidance and because schools and education have been disrupted in 2020/21 due to Covid-19, Electoral Services would prefer not to use schools where possible alternatives may exist.

2.6 Local authorities must also comply with the following access requirements. As part of the review, they must:

- Seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- Seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

2.7 The council must have regard to the accessibility to disabled persons of potential polling stations in any place which it is considering designating as a polling place or the designation of which as a polling place it is reviewing.

2.8 Staff of the Returning Officer visited each site and viewed the proposed venue.

2.9 The proposed changes were consulted on with relevant people. Group Leaders, Ward members directly affected by the proposed change, the Member of Parliament for Thurrock and for South Basildon and East Thurrock and Election Agents.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The issues, options and recommendation for each polling station is detailed in Appendix 1, along with a map. If appropriate distances from existing locations are also shown.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The reasons for recommendations are informed by the staff of the Returning Officer and the reasons outlined in Appendix 1.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 A full consultation was undertaken in the Review of Polling Places, Polling Districts and Polling Stations which began in 2019 and concluded 31 January 2020. This interim review is required to determine and agree changes to polling places ahead of the next full statutory review.

5.2 Group Leaders, Ward Members and MPs have been apprised of the Returning Officers recommendations. The main comments related to proposed changes to polling places within Aveley & Uplands, Grays Riverside and Grays Thurrock.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 The Council continually seeks to ensure services are accessible by all users

and the review will help to ensure that those electors who wish to vote will not be put off by inaccessible polling stations. The proposed changes have been reviewed to actively encourage participation and in some cases will limit impact on other parts of the community on polling day.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Dammy Adewole**

Senior Management Accountant, Resources & Place

All costs associated with the changes in polling places or polling stations are contained within the electoral services budget.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Mark Bowen**

Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 (the 2006 Act) introduced the requirement for all Councils to undertake a periodic full review of all polling districts and stations throughout their area. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 (the 2013 Act) introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. Both the 2006 Act and the 2013 Act amended the Representation of the People Act 1983.

The 2013 Act stated that the review must be started and completed in a 16 month period every five years after 1 October 2013. The previous review period was concluded 31 January 2020. This interim review is required to determine and agree changes to polling places ahead of the next full statutory review and in time for the next scheduled polls in May 2022.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**

Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer, Adults, Housing and Health

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on Local Authorities to promote equal opportunities. These considerations should sit alongside the statutory obligations set out in the Electoral Administration Act. The Electoral Administration Act (2006) and the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 seeks to improve the engagement in the electoral

process by ensuring that polling places are accessible to all. The proposed changes will improve access to the electoral process, in line with the objective of the legislation.

The proposals contained in the report will aid community participation in elections, by bringing the polling stations nearer to the voters and ensuring adequate facilities are available. The research of appropriate polling places gave consideration to the use of religious buildings and access requirements

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children

None

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

The Electoral Commission – Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

9. **Appendices to the report**

Appendix 1 – Returning Officer Recommendations.

Report Author

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