

28 February 2024		ITEM: 10
Council		
Amendment to Polling Place and Station		
Wards and communities affected: Belhus Ward	Key Decision: Not applicable	
Report of: Councillor Jefferies, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Environment, Economic Development and Directional Leadership		
Accountable Assistant Director: n/a		
Accountable Director: Dave Smith, Chief Executive and Returning Officer		
This report is public		
Version: Final		

Executive Summary

This report is to inform Council of a Polling Place amendment within Belhus Ward.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That members note the new polling arrangements for Belhus Ward, polling districts E2 and F. The new polling place is Belhus Park Scout Hall, Faymore Gardens.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Council received a report on 31 January 2024 detailing the statutory Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations. At that meeting members approved the polling places for forthcoming elections.
- 2.2 Following the meeting, Electoral Services began the formal booking process to confirm polling places for elections to be held on 2 May 2024. Discussions with The Royal British Legion in Belhus Ward indicated that a confirmed booking was unlikely to be available for elections in May 2024. Due to the election timetable and printing deadlines, an urgent decision on any change was required.
- 2.3 An interim review of the ward confirmed that Belhus Park Scout Hall, Faymore Gardens is available to hire and a suitable alternative. It is less than 300ft away from Royal British Legion Hall.

Version Control (delete as appropriate)

Version 1 - First draft ready for DMT, SLT and Commissioner input; **Version 2** - Second Draft ready for Portfolio Holder, Leader and other Member Input; **Version 3** - Third draft for any further comments; **Version Committee** – Draft ready for submission to public committee; **Version Cabinet** – Final version ready for Cabinet/Executive decision

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 A polling place is required for polling district E2 and F within Belhus Ward. Electors from polling district E2 currently vote outside of the polling district as there is not a suitable venue in E2. Belhus Park Scout Hall provides the electorate with a suitable polling place for both polling districts, with adequate facilities and parking within sight of the previous polling place.
- 3.2 An urgent decision was required due to the impending election timetable and printing deadlines.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The reason for the recommendation is for members to note the change arising in Belhus Ward since the report to council on 31 January 2024.

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

- 5.1 N/a

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 change in polling place will ensure that the electorate has a suitable and accessible polling station. Changes to polling places will be communicated to electors on poll cards, in statutory notices and signage as appropriate.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Rosie Hurst**
Interim Finance Manager (15 February 2024)

All costs associated with polling places will be contained within the electoral services budget. The proposed hire charge for Belhus Scout Hall for May 2024 is £250. Royal British Legion charged £250 at the last election in 2023.

There is no additional financial impact for this proposed change.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Jayne Middleton-Albooye**
Interim Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer
(15/02/2024)

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Local authorities are required to review their polling districts and polling places for UK Parliamentary constituencies at least once every five years. In addition to compulsory reviews, local authorities may also conduct additional reviews at other points depending on local circumstances. The outcome of the compulsory review was approved by Full Council on 31 January 2024.

If a building becomes unavailable before an election, the polling place can be changed by the local authority in accordance with their decision-making arrangements. There are no known further issues with existing polling places or stations, but the following process is detailed within the constitution.

Constitution, Chapter 6, Part 1 – functions which are delegated to Officers.

Rule 7.1 The Chief Executive shall: (d) in cases of urgency or emergency, take any decision on behalf of the Council (after consultation with the Leader)

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Team Manager, Community Development Team
(15/02/2024)

The proposal contained within the report will aid community participation in providing an accessible polling place for electors to partake in the democratic process.

7.4 **Risks**

N/a

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

N/a

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):

- Thurrock Council Constitution

9. **Appendices to the report**

- none

Report Author:

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Electoral Services Manager, Electoral Services

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