

Polling District and Polling Place Review 2023/24

Strategy & Resources Committee

Tuesday, 30 January 2024

Report of: Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer

Purpose: For decision

Publication status: Unrestricted

Wards affected: All

Executive summary:

The Council is required to complete a review of all polling districts and polling places every 5 years. It has been necessary to undertake this review following the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) electoral review of Tandridge.

This report recommends the polling district scheme be amended with consequential changes necessary following the review. There are no further recommended changes to the scheme.

This report supports the Council's priority of: Building a better Council.

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Recommendations to Committee:

That:

- A. consequential changes be made to the polling district scheme to reflect the outcome of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England electoral review of Tandridge, namely:
 - a. the polling place for polling district EC (recommended reference LNC2) be Lingfield & Dormansland Community Hall.

- b. a new polling district (ON2) be created to reflect the boundary changes between Oxted North and Oxted South, and that the polling place be Oxted Community Hall.
 - c. that polling districts in Caterham be amended to reflect the new Portley & Queens Park and Westway wards.
 - d. a new polling district (WAW2) be created to reflect the boundary changes between Warlingham West and Whyteleafe.
- B. polling district references be amended to reflect the ward they are within.
- C. no further changes to polling district or polling places be made.

Reason for recommendations:

The Council has a duty to divide its area into polling districts for the purpose of Parliamentary Elections and designate polling places for these districts. The Council has a similar power to constitute polling districts for local government elections. It has been necessary to update designated polling districts and places following the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) electoral review of Tandridge. The approval of the polling district scheme will ensure voters have the necessary facilities for voting at future elections.

Introduction and background

1. Section 18C of The Representation of the People Act 1983 requires the Council to complete a review of all polling districts and polling places every 5 years. The last review was completed in 2019, and the next one must have taken place between October 2023 and January 2025.
2. The scope of the review is limited to polling districts and polling places and cannot include other electoral areas.
3. The 2023 review commenced on 6 November 2023. A consultation period was held in which councillors, parish councils, county councillors, the MP, the Tandridge Access Group and members of the public were invited to comment on the current arrangements. The consultation period ended on 4 December 2023. The Returning Officer also commented on the current arrangements, and these were published on the Council's website at: www.tandridge.gov.uk/Your-council/Voting-and-elections/Polling-District-and-Polling-Places-review. Consideration of the representations received was undertaken throughout November and December.
4. The Council must exercise its duties with a view to giving all electors such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. A polling place for any polling district must be an area in the district unless there are special circumstances which make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partially outside the district.

These powers must be exercised so that electors from any parliamentary polling district can, in the absence of special circumstances, be allocated to a polling station within the parliamentary polling place for that district. The Council is also under a duty to designate as polling places, so far as is reasonable and practicable, only places which are accessible to electors with disabilities.

5. **Definitions:**

- a. A **polling district** is a geographical area created by the subdivision of a Parliamentary constituency. Each Parish is to be a separate polling district.
 - b. A **polling place** is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the Returning Officer. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from the across the polling district.
 - c. A **polling station** is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Polling stations are chosen by the relevant Returning Officer for the election, rather than the local authority.
6. The representations received during the consultation period and officer's comments after consideration of the representations are detailed in appendix A.
7. Appendix B contains the amended polling scheme recommended for adoption. This includes consequential changes made as a result of the LGBCE electoral review. It also contains changes to polling district references to reflect the new ward boundaries and update existing references, so they reflect the name of the ward they are within.
8. The polling scheme also contains new polling districts in Warlingham West and Oxted to take account of the changes to parish wards in those areas following the LGBCE electoral review.
9. Aside from the consequential changes necessary as a result of the LGBCE electoral review, there are no other changes recommended. This follows consideration of the polling arrangements in the below areas, as a result of comments received during the consultation:

Godstone

Consideration was given to using St Stephen's Church Hall instead of the Sports Association Hall for Godstone Central. The church hall building has suitable facilities for use as a polling station. However, concern was raised by ward members and Surrey County Council Highways about the lack of car parking spaces and the impact on the A22. The recommendation is therefore that the polling arrangements remain unchanged.

Burstow, Horne & Outwood

Consideration was given to using Lingfield Cricket Club, West Park Road as a polling station for voters in Horne. Currently they vote at the Centenary Hall, Smallfield. Whilst the facilities at the cricket club would make it suitable for use as a polling station, there are concerns around the safety of vehicles entering from and exiting the club onto the busy West Park Road. There would also be a financial and staffing resource implications. Officers therefore recommend that the polling arrangements remain unchanged.

Warlingham East, Chelsham & Farleigh

Warlingham Sports Club, as an alternative to Warlingham Methodist Church, was considered. However, there are insufficient voters located within a convenient distance to the Sports Club to make it viable. Viability could only be achieved by reducing the number of stations at the church from one to two. However, the location of voters means the majority benefit from a polling station at the church. Therefore, the recommendation is that polling arrangements remain unchanged.

10. The following voters will see a change in their polling station as a result of the outcome of the boundary review.

Lingfield & Crowhurst

Approximately 477 voters in Felcourt will move from St John's Church to Lingfield and Dormansland Community Hall. This is to reflect Felcourt moving into the Lingfield & Crowhurst ward and will mean all voters voting in Lingfield Parish Council elections will do so at the same location.

Oxted South

Approximately 310 voters in Oxted South will be moved into Oxted North as a result of the boundary review. Their polling station will therefore change to Oxted Community Hall.

Caterham on the Hill

Approximately 1,935 voters will see a change in their polling station due to the changes to wards made in Caterham on the Hill. Approximately 1,775 will move from de Stafford School to the Arc as a result of part of Portley moving into Westway. 160 will move from the Arc to Caterham Hill Library as a result of part of a small part of Westway moving to the new Portley & Queens Park ward.

Whyteleafe

Approximately 320 voters in the new Whyteleafe East Parish ward will be moved into Warlingham West as a result of the change to the Warlingham West and Whyteleafe boundary. Their polling station will therefore change to Warlingham Community Library.

We will write out to all properties where there is a change in the polling station in March 2024. Poll cards sent to voters at the end of March 2024 informing them of the May 2024 elections will also contain this information. Election publicity issued by the Council in the lead up to the election will encourage voters to ensure they check where their polling station is located in advance of election day. They will be able to do this on the Council's website. The above figures include absent voters.

Consultation

11. Consultation has been undertaken as set out in paragraph 3 of this report. Ward members were consulted during consideration of options detailed in paragraph 9.

Key implications

Comments of the Chief Finance Officer

No funding is available from Central Government to undertake the review. Therefore, all costs associated with the review and its implementation must be contained within the current Democratic Services budget. Costs involved are minimal and consist of a modest amount of officer time.

Comments of the Head of Legal Services

Under s.18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council has a legal duty to undertake a review of polling districts and places every five years. This requirement was introduced in accordance with the provisions Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, with the first review having taken place in November 2014. Each review must be completed within 16 months of 1 October every five years, starting with 1 October 2013.

As Members are aware, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) reviewed proposals for new ward arrangements in the District which included reviewing the number of wards, their boundaries and the number of councillors per ward. As a result of this review the number of Councillors to be elected at the Local Elections in May 2024 has increased from 42 to 43. There will be 18 wards and 10 three-councillor, five two-councillor, three single-councillor wards. The boundaries of 10 wards will change and 10 will stay the same.

Equality

The Council must seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting in as are practicable in the circumstances; and so far as reasonable and practicable, polling places are accessible to all electors. The recommendations in this report ensure that this requirement is met.

Consultation on the polling districts and polling place was undertaken with the Tandridge Access Group.

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed and no potential disproportionate impact has been identified. This is attached as Appendix C to this report.

Climate change

There are no significant environmental / sustainability implications associated with this report.

Appendices

Appendix A - Representations received during the review and officer comments.

Appendix B – Proposed polling district scheme.

Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment

Background papers

None.

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