

REVIEW OF RUSHMOOR'S POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Over the past four months, the Council has been undertaking a review of its polling districts and polling places. The Elections Group and other Members of the Council have been involved in progressing the review process. The purpose of this Report is to recommend changes to the arrangements for polling districts and polling places.

The Committee is requested to recommend to the Council to approve the proposed changes to polling districts and polling places set out in this Report.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 places a duty on the Council to divide the Borough into polling districts for the purposes of Parliamentary elections and to designate a polling place for each district. The arrangements are generally used for other elections and there is a requirement to keep these arrangements under review. The Electoral Administration Act 2006 requires that regular reviews are undertaken. It has been the Council's practice to assess its polling places and districts on an annual basis to reflect experience and local changes.
- 1.2 In carrying out the review, consideration has been given to a range of issues with specific regard to the criteria of:
 - using existing polling places where possible
 - accessibility for electors
 - avoiding the use of mobile stations/temporary structures
 - ensuring the facilities meet the requirements of a range of electoral events

2. REVIEW PROCESS

- 2.1 The stages in the review process were as follows:
 - Notification of the review primarily through the Council's website and online media.
 - Consultation process with stakeholders and the local community.
 - Preliminary consideration by the Elections Group.

- Discussion with ward Members where issues were raised through the consultation to consider the issues and to finalise proposed polling districts and places.
- Review meeting by the Elections Group on 13th January 2021
- Recommendation to the Licensing, Audit and General Purposes Committee and the Council in February 2021.

3. SCHEDULE OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

3.1 Attached to this Report is a schedule setting out the polling places. The schedule largely meets the criteria established at the start of the review process and the number of changes proposed is minimal. The Elections Group is proposing that there are two new polling places and that only St John's Ward will have a change made to its polling district.

3.2 The proposed two new permanent polling places will be at:

- Parsonage Farm Nursery and Infant School (St Johns Ward)
- Elim Pentecostal Church Hall (North Town Ward)

3.3 The Elections Group also noted that, due to Ascension Church Hall (Rowhill Ward) not being available in 2021, a temporary arrangement should be put in place. This is likely to involve using another venue or venues (eg Rowhill Nature Reserve). The intention would be to revert to using Ascension Church Hall in 2022. In addition, the polling station for Wellington Ward may need to be changed in 2021 because of the use of Princes Hall as a vaccination site. Alternatives are being considered, the most likely being the Empire in the High Street.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 If the Council approves the recommendations, the number of polling places will increase by one. The financial implications of this are minimal and have been provided for through the budgeting process for the elections.

4.2 Where there are changes, there will be a small one-off cost of providing some additional publicity of the new venues to electors. There will also be some minor changes to be made to the Electoral Register and these will be picked up for March 2021.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The Council is required to carry out a review of polling districts and polling places periodically and this review has been a useful exercise to check the suitability of the existing arrangements. In some wards there were few alternatives to the existing places and the exercise has shown that the arrangements are generally fit for purpose.

5.2 The Elections Group will keep the arrangements under review and consider whether any adjustments need to be made for 2022.

Andrew Colver
Head of Democracy and Community

Background Papers:
Schedule of polling districts and polling places

Contacts:

Andrew Colver, Head of Democracy and Community – 01252 398820 –
andrew.colver@rushmoor.gov.uk

Vicci Pepper, Elections Officer, Democracy and Community – 01252 398826 –
vicci.pepper@rushmoor.gov.uk