

COUNCIL

12 March 2018

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

Report of the Chief Executive

Strategic Aim:	All		
Exempt Information	No		
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Mr O Hemsley, Leader		
Contact Officer(s):	Debbie Mogg, Director for Resources	01572 758358	dmogg@rutland.gov.uk
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Ward Councillors	Oakham North West - Mr R Gale and Mr A Mann		

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council:

1. Approves the designation of the Oakham United Football Club building, Main Road, Barleythorpe, Oakham, Rutland, LE15 7EE as the designated polling place for the polling district of Barleythorpe.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Council approval of the recommendations of the Returning Officer to conclude the review of polling districts and polling places for Oakham North West Ward.

2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 The Representation of the Representation of the People Act 1983 places a duty on the Council to divide the District into polling districts and to designate polling places for each district. The Council also has a duty to keep those arrangement under review.
- 2.2 The Electoral Registration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The last compulsory review was conducted in January 2015 and the next compulsory

review is due to be conducted within the period of 16 months that start on 1 October 2018.

- 2.3 Between compulsory reviews, all polling places and polling stations used should be kept under consideration, and an evaluation of their suitability carried out after each election. If any changes are identified as being necessary, the same steps should be followed as for conducting the compulsory review.
- 2.4 For ease of reference Appendix A contains a definition of terms relating to polling place reviews from the Electoral Commission.
- 2.5 The Electoral Commission recommends a maximum of 2,500 electors for a single polling station. The current electorate in the ward of Oakham North West now exceeds this maximum.
- 2.6 The parish of Barleythorpe is already a polling district in its own right, however the electorate was insufficient to merit its own parish council and therefore did not vote at this level. The electorate were therefore allocated to the polling place for the Oakham North West Ward. Following an increase in population within Barleythorpe a parish council was formed following a community governance review which will mean that electors will now also vote at a parish level. This has prompted this review into the suitability and convenience of current polling arrangements for the parish as the existing polling place was outside of its boundaries.
- 2.7 The current list of polling districts, polling places and polling stations for the Ward of Oakham North West is shown at Appendix B.
- 2.8 Securing a more suitable venue for those electors in the parish of Barleythorpe would take away the strain and overcrowding on the polling station currently used alongside the electorate for Oakham North West. The increase in electorate in the parish of Barleythorpe now merits its own polling station in a situation closer to the parish. The Oakham United Football Club premises was identified as the most appropriate location for a polling station within the parish.

3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 Public notice of the review was given on 17 January 2018. The documents made available for public inspection included information about the review process, current electorate figures, ward maps showing the existing polling district boundaries and details of the current polling places. Details of the venue were attached to the consultation documentation and posted on the website. Additionally photographs of the accommodation areas to be used for the polling station are shown at Appendix C. A copy of the consultation letter and accompanying documentation is attached at Appendix D.
- 3.2 The single, current, designated polling place and station for all electors in Oakham North West and Barleythorpe is the Scout Hut Building on Grampian Way. This review proposes a second polling station specifically for the parish of Barleythorpe with the voters from Oakham North West remaining at their current voting place.
- 3.3 The same information was also supplied directly to specific consultees: relevant ward members, the Acting Returning Officer for the UK Parliamentary constituency, political parties, parish clerks and parish meeting representatives,

third sector organisations, including groups representing the disabled and key holders of polling stations (to identify any development or refurbishment plans which might impact on the availability of premises).

- 3.4 No objections have been received from those specifically consulted, or from members of the public. All consultation responses have been collated at Appendix E. It was considered that suitability and convenience were the principal criteria when reviewing polling places.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The only other option would be to house two polling stations in the same current polling place (the Scout Hut on Grampian Way). This is not considered viable as the Scout Hut is not large enough to house two separate polling stations.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The increase in the number of polling stations will increase overall costs to the council for district ward elections. For these elections there would be an increase in the cost to the council of £655 (based on the current additional cost of the hire of a second polling station, staff and staff training). The potential hire cost of the football club is £35 less than that of the Scout Hut. There is provision in the Medium Term Financial Plan for the cost of local elections in 19/20.
- 5.2 For parish elections the polling station costs are met by the parish regardless of which polling station is used. Based on current costs, using the recommended new polling station situated within the parish would be more cost effective than using the current polling station within the Scout Hut.
- 5.3 For Parliamentary elections the council recovers the costs of hiring polling stations from the electoral claims unit and therefore there would be no increase in costs for parliamentary elections.

6 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The review has been conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the guidance issued by the Electoral Commission.

7 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening form has been completed and no adverse impacts were identified.

8 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no adverse community safety implications and adopting a new polling station within the parish of Barleythorpe for its electors would mean that electors would not have to travel to a polling station outside of the parish and thus this would represent a safer voting option for the parish.

9 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no adverse health and wellbeing implications if a second polling station

was adopted in the Oakham North West Ward, indeed for the electorate affected it be beneficial as the recommended new polling station would be within the parish and closer to all residents.

10 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 It is considered that continued use the Scout Hut for the full electorate of the Oakham North West Ward is not sustainable.
- 10.2 The increase in electorate in Barleythorpe necessitates alternative polling provisions for the parish.
- 10.3 The Scout Hut is not large enough to comfortably cater for two polling stations.
- 10.4 The size of electorate attending from the parish of Barleythorpe would need to travel disproportionately further than the remaining electorate of the ward.
- 10.5 The benefits to the electors within the parish being able to vote at a polling station situated within the parish far outweigh small increase in costs at district ward elections which normally only take place once every 4 years.
- 10.6 Whilst there are some financial implications in establishing a second polling station within the County ward it is felt that these are outweighed by the suitability and convenience of a second polling station specifically for the parish of Barleythorpe to accommodate the increasing electorate.
- 10.7 It is therefore recommended that a separate polling station be used for the parish of Barleythorpe, within the premises of Oakham United Football Club for the reasons shown below

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 There are no background papers.

12 APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A – Definition of Terms.
- 12.2 Appendix B – Polling districts, polling places and polling stations – Ward of Oakham North West.
- 12.3 Appendix C – Photographs of the accommodation areas to be used for the polling station.
- 12.4 Appendix D - Example letter to stakeholders and supporting documentation.
- 12.5 Appendix E – Comments from Stakeholders.
- 12.6 Appendix F – Polling place/polling station – evaluation checklist.

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.