

# ITEM 22 – APPENDIX Q

## WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE – 1<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2013

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### Title:

#### **REVIEW OF PARTICULAR POLLING PLACES**

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Robert Knowles]**

**[Wards Affected: Farnham Upper Hale, Bramley Busbridge and Hascombe,  
Farnham Bourne South, Godalming Charterhouse, Witley and Hambledon,  
Frensham Dockenfield and Tilford]**

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### Summary and purpose:

To outline the representations received for the Review of Particular Polling Places.

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### How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

An active democratic process which involves as many electors as possible is central to supporting the Council's corporate priorities.

### Financial Implications:

This review is being conducted without the need for any additional staff or financial resources.

In the event of any change of polling station use from a school to hall or other community facility, there would be an increase in the cost of venue hire to be met from elections fees. This is because publicly funded schools may be used as polling places free of a hire charge. The only requirement is to pay running costs including heating and lighting, together with any extra caretaking costs required on polling day.

### Legal Implications:

Waverley has a legal responsibility, pursuant to Section 18 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006, to carry out a review of polling districts and polling places every four years. The last full review was conducted in 2011. This does not preclude a review being conducted of a particular polling place or district at any time. 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 next compulsory review must now be started and completed between 1 October 2013 and 31 January 2015.

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### Introduction

1. **Hale School, Upper Hale Road, Farnham, GU9 6LR – Farnham Upper Hale Ward.**

Representations have been received from the Head Teacher of Hale School who supports the view expressed previously by parents that an alternative location be considered which would allow the school to remain open. The

School Governors support this view due to the disruption they have said is caused to parents, staff and pupils as a result of closure due to use of the venue as a polling station.

2. Concerns have been expressed by the Head Teacher regarding the possibility of using Sandy Hill Community Bungalow as the alternative venue. She cannot see how this venue could be used during the school day as it is in the centre of the school site being an integral part of the Childrens' Centre. There is no parking with limited access for disabled drivers which is only available through the School's secure vehicle barrier. Hale School objects to the use of Sandy Hill Community Bungalow on the grounds of accessibility and children's safety as the entrance is very close to the School's Infant classes. The Head Teacher considers that there is a very real safeguarding issue and urges that the Returning Officer and Councillors look at the proximity of the site to the school.
3. Hale School have suggested that the Hale Institute Village Hall, Linwood, Wings Road, Farnham, GU9 0HN be used as an alternative venue, being a community building in a central location with ample parking. A WBC Councillor has made representations that the Hale Institute is on the edge of Upper Hale Ward, not in the middle and that although there is parking, the school is able to offer more parking.
4. The report writer has visited the Hale Institute Village Hall to assess its suitability. The Hall is situated on Wings Road which is off Upper Hale Road. The Hall provides: good parking provision with 20 – 30 spaces and 2 allocated spaces for disabled users, a main entrance on the roadside of the premises which has been adapted for disabled users, a large hall for polling station provision with adequate heating and lighting and good kitchen facilities for polling station staff use. The Hall is available to hire on future polling days for the requisite number of hours. The report writer has assessed the facilities as being suitable for use as a polling station.
5. **Busbridge Junior School, Brighton Road, Busbridge, GU7 1XA – Bramley Busbridge and Hascombe Ward.**  
Representations have been received from Busbridge Junior School saying that if in future there is more than one election in an academic year they would appreciate it if an alternative venue could be considered for one of them. They have given Busbridge Infant School as an example of an alternative venue in these circumstances.
6. Representations have been received from Busbridge Village Hall where discussions have taken place with staff of Blue Willow Nursery School, parents and the Management Committee of Busbridge Village Hall. The Village Hall have stated that because they are a very well used hall and a significant number of users would be affected that they do not wish for the Hall to be used as an alternative Polling Station.
7. Representations have been received from Busbridge Parish Council providing an alternative venue within Busbridge of Clock Barn Hall, Hambledon Road,

Busbridge, Godalming, Surrey, GU8 4AY. This venue has been visited by the report writer to assess its suitability. The owner would be very happy to accommodate use as a polling station. While the facility itself appeared suitable for use as a polling station including good disabled access and parking, the route that many voters would need to take to reach the Hall may be considered to be unsuitable. The distance between the current polling station at Busbridge Junior School and Clock Barn Hall is 1.2 miles and 1 mile of that particular route is along Hambledon Lane. This Lane does not have pavements on either side of the entire length leading to the entrance to the Clock Barn Hall, it is undulating in nature and has no street lights.

8. Consideration has been given to whether the Busbridge list could be accommodated at the Sports' Pavilion, Holloway Hill Recreation Ground, off Busbridge Lane, due to its proximity to Busbridge. There is already a double polling station at the Sports' Pavilion with a combined total electorate of 3,349 presently. This is a high number of electors and the turnout at this station is generally good. It would not be possible to combine the Busbridge list with that of the Sports' Pavilion as it would make the combined total too large and in excess of the figure recommended by the Electoral commission. In addition the lists could not be combined as they fall under different electoral wards – Busbridge falls within the Busbridge Parish Council and the Sports' Pavilion falls under Godalming Town Council. The only remaining option would be to set up a separate polling station for the Busbridge list in a separate room at the Sports' Pavilion.
9. **South Farnham Infants' School, School Lane, Lower Bourne, Farnham, GU10 3PE – Farnham Bourne South Ward**  
Representations have been received from the Head Teacher of South Farnham Infants' School who has stated that use of the School as a polling station is incredibly disruptive for the School and community as it necessitates 200 children being sent home for the day with all the associate issues related to childcare and disruption in employment for parents and carers. The Infant School site is very steep for voters and there is very little parking.
10. Alternative venues have been suggested: St Martin's Hall on the Bourne Green, The Cricket Pavilion on the Bourne Green, Indigo Café next to the Bourne Stores and Post Office and the Taylor Hall (5<sup>th</sup> Farnham Scout HQ) opposite the Fox Pub in the centre of the Bourne Village. All of these venues fall within the BB Bourne South ward.
11. Enquiries have been made regarding the suitability of St.Martin's Hall, Bourne Green, Dene Lane, Lower Bourne, GU10 3PW. The Council has been informed by the Manager at St.Martin's Hall that the Hall is not available for hire as the Woodland Nursery School is run there on a daily basis during the week.
12. Enquiries have been made regarding the suitability of The Cricket Pavilion, Bourne Green, Old Frensham Road, Lower Bourne, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 3PR. No response has been received from the Cricket Club to enquiries made to date.

13. Enquiries have been made regarding the suitability of the Indigo Community Café, 44c Frensham Road, Lower Bourne, GU10 0PX. The report writer has visited the venue to assess its suitability. The Indigo Café is run as a not for profit organisation. The Café is situated on Frensham Road at the junction with Lodge Hill Road. Some parking is available further up Lodge Hill Road. There are double yellow lines outside and opposite the premises on Frensham Road with the exception of a space that could accommodate two to three cars. There are no allocated spaces for disabled users. The manager of the Café has offered the use of the premises at the same time as running the Café – this would require some partitioning of the one room that the Café is run out of. The Café is open from 8.30am to 4.30pm. The venue is in very good order with a small kitchen. There is one entrance into the premises. This has two steps and would require a ramp to enable use by disabled users. The report writer has assessed this venue as unsuitable for use as a polling station due to the difficulties regarding parking provision in the vicinity of the venue and the fact that the Café would be run at the same time as polling station staff are running a polling station in the same room.
14. Enquiries have been made regarding the suitability of The Taylor Hall (5<sup>th</sup> Farnham Scout Headquarters), 32 Frensham Road, Lower Bourne, Farnham. The report writer has visited the venue in order to assess its suitability. The main entrance to the Hall is situated on Fox Road, off Frensham Road, opposite Stream Farm Road. There is one parking space on the site. Fox Road is a residential road and some on road parking is available. The Hall Manager has advised that people park on the road on the right hand side of Stream Farm Road and on the grass verge on the left hand side of that Road. Parking at the Fox Public House opposite the venue is for patrons only. There is a ramp up into the entrance lobby. The hall dimensions are 24' x 36'. There is adequate heating and lighting together with kitchen facilities. The report writer has concerns about the difficulties regarding adequate parking provision in the vicinity of the venue.
15. **Scouts Hall, Charterhouse Road, Godalming – Godalming Charterhouse ward.**  
Representations have been received from a Waverley Borough Councillor that as Godalming College is quite a large site they might have the space which could accommodate both the college and local schools to function if it became a Polling station.
16. A WBC Councillor has made representations that either Charterhouse School or the Baden Powell Hall in Tottenham Road be considered. The latter would be convenient for electors who cannot walk up Charterhouse Hill.
17. Enquiries have been made of Charterhouse School and the Bursar is not in agreement for a part of the School to be used as a polling station.
18. Enquiries have been made regarding the suitability of Baden Powell Hall, Tottenham Road, Farncombe, GU7 2HT. The report writer has visited the venue to assess its suitability. There is level access through the main doors

of the venue which is a hall with staged area. A short flight of steps lead to good kitchen and toilet facilities. A ramp for the side door would be needed if any members of the public in wheelchairs required access to the toilet facilities. However the nature of the parking arrangements outside the Hall may be considered unsuitable. The Hall is situated on a very narrow residential road where cars are parked on both sides. It is anticipated that parking would be difficult throughout polling day but particularly before 9am and after 5pm with residents parking outside their properties as well as voters arriving to park. There is a pay and display car park opposite Farncombe Railway station and also parking available at the station but voters would need to pay to vote which would be unsatisfactory.

19. **The Vestry, Dockenfield Church, The Street, Dockenfield – Frensham Dockenfield and Tilford ward**  
Representations have been received from Dockenfield Parish Council regarding the suggestion that consideration be given to moving Dockenfield polling station to either Churt, Frensham or Tilford villages.
20. The Parish Council have concluded that moving the Dockenfield polling station would not be an option as it is part of the identity of the parish. There are people who live in the village who are elderly or cannot drive so for them this would be a huge inconvenience, which will mean even less voters. There is a heater in the vestry that could be used when it is cold and they have suggested that a signpost be used saying that the door is open. The Parish Councillors feel it would be a great shame not to be able to vote in their own Parish, especially when Localism is so high on the Political agenda. The Parish Council would like to be present when this item is discussed as they feel strongly this facility should not be lost.
21. Dockenfield Parish Council have advised that they expect to be able to provide two members of polling station staff from the parish community in order to assist the Local Returning Officer with the staffing of this particular polling station in forthcoming elections.

## **Conclusion**

There are further enquiries and assessments that can be completed within the remit of the Borough wide compulsory Review of Polling Places before making any recommendations regarding any particular alternative polling station venues.

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## **Recommendation**

That the Executive:

1. agrees with regards to the Hale Village Institute, to the Council seeking representations from such persons as it thinks have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.

2. agrees that these representations to be sought as part of a compulsory Review of Polling Places that is now required to be conducted Borough wide after 1 October 2013.
3. agrees with regards to the Hale Village Institute, to the Council seeking representations from political parties as to the suitability of this venue. These representations to be sought as part of the Review of Polling Places that is now required to be conducted Borough wide after 1 October 2013.
4. agrees to Busbridge Junior School continuing to be the designated polling place for Busbridge and that enquiries continue in the Busbridge parish to establish if a suitable alternative can be found.
5. agrees to enquiries continuing of the Cricket Pavilion on the Bourne Green as part of the Review of Polling Places that is now required to be conducted Borough wide after 1 October 2013.
6. agrees to the designated polling place of The Scout Hut, Charterhouse Road, continuing in the absence of any other suitable venue.
7. agrees to The Vestry, Dockenfield continuing to be the designated polling place for Dockenfield in light of the objections received from Dockenfield Parish Council and the assistance that has been offered by the Parish Council with the staffing of the polling station in forthcoming elections.

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#### Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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#### **CONTACT OFFICER:**

**Name: Tracey Stanbridge**

**Telephone: 01483 523413**

**E-mail: [tracey.stanbridge@waverley.gov.uk](mailto:tracey.stanbridge@waverley.gov.uk)**