

## **WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE – 29/11/2016**

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**Title:**

**REVIEW OF PARTICULAR POLLING PLACES**

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Julia Potts]**

**[Wards Affected: Bramley Busbridge and Hascombe, Hindhead, Farnham Hale and Heath End, Cranleigh East, Godalming Central and Witley and Hambledon Wards]**

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**Summary and purpose:**

In the lead up to the conduct of the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections on 5 May 2016 and the Referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union on 23 June 2016, representations were submitted to the Returning Officer regarding certain polling places within the Borough. As a result a review has been undertaken of certain polling places with a view to either confirming their continued suitability or establishing if any suitable alternative options can be put in place where concerns have been raised.

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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 has been 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.

All election costs are fully reimbursable either from Parishes or central government. The only costs which are not are Waverley Borough elections. As the average hall hire cost is around £150.00 the increase in election costs would at most be negligible.

Currently the Borough Hall receives an income for the use of the Court Room in the Borough Hall complex on polling day. In the event of a change of venue for this polling station this income would need to be generated from an additional letting.

**Legal Implications:**

The Council has a legal responsibility, pursuant to Section 18 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 2014. This does not preclude a review being conducted of a particular polling place or district at any time.

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## **Introduction**

1. There are eighty designated polling stations positioned in 53 polling places across the Waverley Borough. Eight of these polling places are situated in schools. Some representations received have been regarding the use of schools as polling stations in a year when polls for the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections and the Referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union were conducted within seven weeks of each other.

### **Busbridge Junior School, Brighton Road, Busbridge, GU7 1XA – Bramley Busbridge and Hascombe ward**

2. Busbridge Junior School is used currently as a single polling station with a current electorate of 661.
3. Representations have been received requesting that Busbridge Junior School no longer be used as a polling place. This is due to the disruption caused to pupils and the impact on parents and carers required to make arrangements for childcare on polling day due to the school's closure, particularly in 2016 with two polls conducted in May and June.
4. A review was conducted of the use of Busbridge Junior School in 2013 and its continued use agreed.
5. It remains the case that use of Busbridge Village Hall is not possible as the facility is used as a private nursery and not available for hire.
6. Since the 2013 review, work to address disabled access has been undertaken at Busbridge Church, Brighton Road, GU7 1XA. There is a hall with its own entrance and facilities to the rear of the church. This hall could accommodate a single polling station. Disabled access is available from Hambledon Road. There are no parking restrictions on Hambledon Road and polling station staff could be requested to reserve a car parking space for disabled users on the road. It may be possible for arrangements to be made with the village hall to reserve car parking spaces there for electors as an additional option to parking on Hambledon Road. There are two pedestrian access points from Brighton Road, one via steps and the other via a new pathway. Both the rear and front pathways to the hall are on a slight incline due to the location of the church. The hall is available for hire.

### **Beacon Hill Primary School, Beacon Hill Road, Hindhead, GU26 6NR – Hindhead ward**

7. Beacon Hill Primary School is used currently for two polling stations with a total electorate of 3281.

8. Representations have been received requesting that an alternative venue be identified for the same reasons as those outlined for Busbridge Junior School above.
9. Enquiries have been made at Beacon Hill United Reformed Church, Churt Road, Hindhead. The hall is currently undergoing major refurbishment and as a result cannot be fully assessed at this time. Enquiries have been made at Beacon Hill British Legion. This venue is not considered suitable for use as a polling station due to current disabled access arrangements.
10. A full assessment has been conducted of St Albans Church Community Hall, Tilford Road, Hindhead, GU26 6RB. The hall, which is capable of accommodating two polling stations, is situated to the rear of the church. Facilities are good with ample car parking and level access to the hall. The hall is available for hire as a polling station venue.

**The Common Room, Gorselands, Alma Lane, GU9 0NB – Hale and Heath End ward**

11. The Common Room is currently designated as the polling place for the Hale and Heath End ward and accommodates one polling station with total electorate of 1530.
12. There are plans for future development at this premises and it may not be possible to use the venue as a polling station in the future. The venue is currently being used for food bank provision. A twelve month lease arrangement has been agreed with Farnham Community Christian Trust (FCCT) on the understanding that the venue can be used for elections during the term of the lease. Arrangements will be made for the venue to be completely cleared for polling day.
13. Enquiries have been made at Holy Family Church, Alma Lane. This venue is not considered suitable for use as a polling station due to current disabled access arrangements.

**Cranleigh Arts Centre, 1 High Street, Cranleigh, Surrey, GU6 8AS – Cranleigh East ward.**

14. Cranleigh Arts Centre is currently designated as the polling place for Cranleigh East ward and accommodates two polling stations with total electorate of 3022.
15. A complaint was received from an elector on 5 May 2016 polling day that he was unable to park at Cranleigh Arts Centre. Upon investigation, the Centre advised that they were no longer providing parking for electors on polling day.
16. Cranleigh Village Hall, Village Way, Cranleigh, GU6 8AF was used for the 23 June 2016 European Union Referendum as the Arts Centre was not available for hire. The Village Hall was an excellent venue providing a very large light hall that could accommodate a good layout for two polling stations. Free car parking spaces were set aside for voters in the adjacent public car park on Village Way.

17. The Village Hall falls just within the Cranleigh West ward. Section 18 (c) Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended) (RPA) states: "the polling place for any polling district shall be an area in that district, except where special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the polling district, and shall be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the polling district how they will be able to reach the polling station;" The Village Hall is not available for hire on the first Thursday in May for the next four years. However in the event that an election falls on an alternative date, hire of Cranleigh Village Hall could be given consideration.
18. Enquiries have been made as to the availability and suitability of the Guide Hall, Village Way, Cranleigh and a response is awaited from the booking clerk.
19. An assessment has been carried out of Cranleigh Leisure Centre, Village Way, Cranleigh. The Centre falls just within the Cranleigh West ward and so special circumstances pursuant to Section 18 (c) RPA 1983 would need to be found to designate the Centre as a polling place. There are two rooms that could accommodate a double polling station. The large dance studio on the ground floor can be accessed directly from the Village Way car park, but its use would not be financially viable due to the number of classes run in that room that would have to be cancelled and fees reimbursed. There is a multi-purpose room which can be accessed via a slope from the reception area. The hire charge for the multi-purpose room is competitively priced. Car parking spaces could be set aside for voters in the main part of the Village Way car park. Leisure Centre staff would be placed on the reception desk to allow voters through the turnstiles. Polling station staff would need to use the café for refreshments.

**The Court Room, Borough Hall complex, Bridge Street, Godalming, GU7 1HR – Godalming Central ward**

20. The Court Room is currently designated as the polling place for Godalming Central ward and accommodates one polling station with total electorate of 1611. There are no parking facilities at the venue.
21. The Wilfred Noyce Youth and Community Centre, Crown Court, High Street, Godalming, GU7 1DY has availability in the Wyatt Room for use as a polling station. This is a light room sufficiently sized to accommodate a single polling station. There is level access to the venue and parking spaces for disabled users adjacent to the building. Free car parking spaces could be set aside for electors in the Crown Court car park. The Centre is situated within the Godalming Central ward.

**The Chichester Hall, Petworth Road, Witley, Godalming, GU8 5PL – Witley and Hambledon ward**

22. Representations were received on the 5 May 2016 polling day from some electors regarding the use of the Chichester Hall. The electors were concerned that they were required to access the polling station from the busy Petworth Road.

23. Complaints had been received in recent years regarding continued use of The Chandler School, Witley as a polling station due to the disruption caused to pupils, staff and parents. The Chichester Hall was designated as the polling place instead of Chandler School and used for the first time for the 5 May 2016 polls.

### **Conclusion**

24. Alternative polling station venues have been identified as set out in the table below.

<b>Polling District</b>	<b>Existing Polling Place</b>	<b>Proposed Polling Place</b>
IB - Busbridge	Busbridge Junior School	Busbridge Church, Brighton Road, Godalming
CF - Hindhead	Beacon Hill Primary School, Hindhead	St.Albans Church Community Hall, Tilford Road, Hindhead
AB - Central	Court Room, Borough Hall, Godalming	Wilfred Noyce Youth and Community Centre, Godalming
KA – Cranleigh East	Cranleigh Arts Centre, High Street, Cranleigh	Cranleigh Leisure Centre, Village Way, Cranleigh

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that:

1. agreement be given to the use of Busbridge Church, Brighton Road, Godalming as a polling place instead of Busbridge Junior School;
2. agreement be given to the use of St. Albans Church Community Hall, Tilford Road, Hindhead as a polling place instead of Beacon Hill Primary School, Beacon Hill Road, Hindhead;
3. the Common Room, Gorselands, Alma Lane, Farnham remains the designated polling place for the Hale and Heath End ward;
4. agreement be given to the use of Cranleigh Leisure Centre, Village Way, Cranleigh as a polling place instead of Cranleigh Arts Centre, High Street, Cranleigh;
5. agreement be given to the use of the Wilfred Noyce Youth and Community Centre, Crown Court, High Street, Godalming as a polling place instead of the Court Room, Borough Hall, Godalming; and
6. Chichester Hall remains the designated polling place for the Witley and Hambledon ward.

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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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