

## **WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **STANDARDS & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**30 NOVEMBER 2022**

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**Title:**

**Polling District and Polling Place Review 2022**

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**Head of Service:** **Stephen Rix, Interim Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services**

**Key decision:** **No**

**Access:** **Public**

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#### **1. Purpose and summary**

- 1.1 As a consequence of the recent boundary review of the wards of Waverley Borough Council and the Community Governance Review of the Towns and Parishes within the Borough, it is necessary for the Council to review the polling districts and location of polling places to make sure they are in the right areas for the new boundaries.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to agree the outcome of the Polling District and Polling Places Review. The new polling districts and polling places will be used for elections from May 2023 onwards.

#### **2. Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Standards and General Purposes Committee endorses the proposed polling district and polling places and recommends that they are approved by Council.

#### **3. Reason for the recommendation**

To ensure the proposed polling districts and polling places (annexe 2), which have been developed from the responses received during the consultation (annexe 1), are adopted and will be used in elections from May 2023.

#### **4. Background**

- 4.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has undertaken a review of the Council's electoral arrangements and made recommendations for new warding patterns to be used for elections from May 2023 onwards. The Council has also undertaken a Community Governance Review (CGR) of the electoral arrangements for all towns and parishes within the Borough.

4.2 The LGBCE published its final recommendations in March 2022 and the Order was made in November 2022. The Council's CGR recommendations were agreed at Council in June 2022. Some of the recommendations in the CGR require consent from the LGBCE to make the proposed amendment. Consent has not yet been granted for any area.

Whilst conducting the Polling District and Polling Places Review, the following potential outcomes have been considered when identifying suitable arrangements:

- (a) Consent is granted from the LGBCE to all areas
- (b) Consent is not granted from the LGBCE to any area
- (c) Consent is granted to some areas but not others

4.3 This interim Polling District and Polling Places Review must be undertaken to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place for the May 2023 elections.

4.4 Definitions of terms used in this report:

- Polling District: the area created by the division of a constituency, ward or division into smaller parts, within which a polling place can be determined which is convenient to electors.
- Polling Place: The building or area within a polling district in which polling stations will be selected by the Returning Officer.
- Polling Station- the room or building within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places, polling stations are chosen by the Returning Officer.

4.5 The responsibility for designating polling districts and polling places is for the Council to determine.

4.6 In designating polling places, the Council must seek to ensure that:

- (a) all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
- (b) so far as is reasonable and practicable, every polling place is accessible to electors who are disabled.

#### The review process

4.7 A review has been undertaken in accordance with Schedule A1 of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

4.8 Public notice of the review was given on 30 September 2022 and information was published on the Council's website. The consultation period was from 30 September to 11 November, and allowed for comments to be made on the existing arrangements and the proposals.

- 4.9 Once Council has agreed the polling districts and polling places, details will be published together with the reasons for decisions taken. The Council must publish correspondence and representation received by the Returning Officer in connection with the review, correspondence sent to any person in relation to the review, and the details of the designation of polling districts and polling places within the local authority area because of the review.

## **5. Relationship to the Corporate Strategy and Service Plan**

- 5.1 This report supports the Council's aim for 'open, democratic and participative governance'.

## **6. Implications of decision**

### **6.1 Resource (Finance, procurement, staffing, IT)**

**Drafted by:** Rosie Plaistowe-Melham, Financial Services Manager

Any financial implications of this report will be met from approved budgets for elections and referendums.

### **6.2 Risk management**

The Council is required to designate polling districts and polling places to effectively conduct the elections in May 2023. By agreeing the recommendations in this report, the Council will be meeting its statutory duties.

If the proposals in this report are not agreed and recommended to Council, a special Standards & General Purposes Committee and/or Council meeting would need to be scheduled. There is a risk that if they are not agreed in a timely manner, suitable arrangements will not be put in place ahead of next May's elections leading to a reputational risk to the Council and failure to provide the Returning Officer with the necessary information to conduct the elections.

### **6.3 Legal**

**Drafted by:** Stephen Rix, Interim Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services

*Agreeing the recommendations in this report will ensure that the Council complies with its obligation to review polling districts and polling places under the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 and the Representation of the People Act 1983.*

*The Council is required to follow the rules set out in section 18C and Schedule A1 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and this has been adhered to throughout the review process.*

### **6.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion**

A key consideration of this review is to improve access to polling stations for all electors and to ensure voters can cast their vote easily and efficiently.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and it demonstrated positive implications for individuals and communities.

All new stations have been visited to ensure access arrangements meet required standards. Officers have also visited polling stations where concerns were raised via representations in the consultation.

We will be monitoring the polling stations to ensure there are no negative impacts and will review each polling station after the elections in May 2023.

## **6.5 Climate emergency declaration**

There are no direct climate emergency implications arising from this report.

## **7. Consultation and engagement**

The 6-week consultation period was between 30 September and 11 November 2022. Officers contacted Borough and County Councillors, Town and Parish clerks, local MPs, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey and local groups including public and voluntary organisations to advise them of the review and invite them to participate in the consultation. The review was also publicised on social media channels.

A total of 13 responses were received. These are set out in Annexe 1. Officers also considered comments that had been received during previous electoral events from stakeholders.

## **8. Other options considered**

8.1 It is a requirement for the Council to designate new polling districts and polling places following the boundary changes and alternative options are limited.

8.2 The Committee may decide to request officers to further review certain parts of the proposals. Due to the tight timetable, a special meeting of the Standards & General Purposes Committee and/or Council would be required to review the changes.

## **9. Governance journey**

9.1 The Committee is asked to make a recommendation to Full Council.

### **Annexes:**

Annexe 1 – responses received during the consultation

Annexe 2 – list of polling districts and their polling places based on CGR recommendations

Annexe 3- list of polling districts and their polling places based on LGBCE review

Annexe 4 – Maps of polling districts

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### **Background Papers**

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

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Agreed and signed off by:

Legal Services: Stephen Rix, Interim Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services, 17/11/22

Head of Finance: Rosie Plaistowe-Melham, Financial Services Manager, 16/11/22

Strategic Director: Name, Post, date