

Waverley Borough Council

Report to: Council

Date: 12 December 2023

Ward(s) affected: Cranleigh East / Godalming Binscombe & Charterhouse

Report of Director: Transformation & Governance

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Report Status: Open

Key Decision: No

Temporary designation of polling places in Cranleigh East and Godalming Binscombe & Charterhouse

1. Executive Summary

The designation of a polling place for a polling district is a duty of the Council and, in accordance with Waverley's constitution, the decision to amend a polling station more than six months before a poll must be agreed by Council.

Three designated polling places are unavailable for use on 2 May 2024 and suitable alternatives have been identified by Officers for use in the scheduled Police and Crime Commissioner elections and other polls until the usual venues are available.

2. Recommendation

The Standards and General Purposes considered the Temporary designation of polling places in Cranleigh East and Godalming Binscombe & Charterhouse at their meeting on 29 November 2023.

2.1 Recommendation to Council:

The Standards and General Purposes Committee recommends that the Council approves a temporary designation of polling places until the usual venues are available for:

- (a) Cranleigh East 1 – St Nicolas Church Rooms
- (b) Godalming Binscombe – Waverley Family Centre
- (c) Godalming Charterhouse – St John the Evangelist Church; contingent upon further suitable parking arrangements being sought.

3. Reason(s) for recommendation:

- 3.1 To ensure a suitable venue is designated as the polling place for voters in Cranleigh East 1, Binscombe and Charterhouse polling districts for polls whilst their usual polling place is unavailable.

4. Exemption from publication

- 4.1 None.

5. Purpose of Report

- 5.1 This report asks the Council to consider the temporary designation of polling places in the polling districts of Cranleigh East 1, Binscombe and Charterhouse, for polls in 2024 due to the unavailability of the usual venues.

6. Strategic Priorities

- 6.1 The proposals support the strategic priority of local, open, participative government.

7. Background

- 7.1 A polling district is a geographical area within a ward which a polling place can be determined. A polling place is defined as a building or a place within which voting takes place. The polling station is the room or area in which the voting takes place. The polling station must be within the polling place.
- 7.2 Electoral Commission guidance states that polling places should be designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the district.
- 7.3 Waverley's constitution states that, after consultation with ward councillors, party agents and candidates (if applicable), the Returning Officer may amend the designation of a polling place, where within six months of an election (a) a designated polling place unexpectedly becomes unavailable; and (b) it is impractical to report to Council. As officers have been notified of the unavailability of the venues more than six months before the scheduled elections on 2 May 2024, the temporary designation of polling places must be a Council decision.
- 7.4 Due to renovations or prior bookings, three designated polling stations are not available for the scheduled Police and Crime Commissioner election on 2 May 2024. Two of the venues will not be available for the whole of 2024.

7.5 Alternative venues have been identified as shown in the table below:

Polling District	Designated Polling Place	Proposed temporary polling place	Assessment of new venue
Cranleigh East 1	Cranleigh Arts Centre, High Street, Cranleigh, GU6 8AS Unavailable on 2 May 2023 only	St Nicolas Church Rooms, Church Lane, Cranleigh GU6 8AE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conveniently located for electors. - Good access for voters with mobility issues - Ample parking
Binscombe	Binscombe Church, Barnes Road GU7 3RF Unavailable for 2024	Waverley Family Centre, Green Lane, Farncombe GU7 3TB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Owned by Surrey County Council & operated by Barnardos - Good venue with good access for voters with mobility issues - Parking available
Charterhouse	Armoury Building, Charterhouse School, Hurtmore Road, Godalming GU7 2DX Unavailable for 2024	St John the Evangelist Church, Farncombe GU7 3EJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not in polling district or electoral ward but relatively close to majority of residents & no suitable venue identified within polling district - Good venue with access for voters with mobility issues - Limited parking but on street available & WBC owned car park in short walking distance

Other options considered

7.6 Officers assessed the suitability of a number of other venues as outlined in the table below.

Venue considered	
Cranleigh East 1	
Park Mead Primary School	<p>All Electors in Cranleigh East ward to vote in polling place for electors in Cranleigh East 2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would be a very large electorate - Further distance for electors to travel
Binscombe	
Farncombe Youth Football Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good location - Unable to make contact with venue manager - Site not fully evaluated
Old Quaker Burial Ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No building now available as now an apple orchard - No parking - Unsuitable
Loseley Fields Primary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good accessible venue - Potential to disrupt education so alternative preferable
Charterhouse	
Guardian House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good location, ample parking - Unable to gain full access so availability is unknown
Eastlake Care Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good location & ample parking - Disability access is good

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Room for hire is very small – would not be able to accommodate polling station
The Old Chapels, Nightingale Cemetery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good location & parking - Venue used for vocational training, carpentry, joinery & metalwork. - Not suitable for polling station
Waverley Family Centre (if agreed for Binscombe)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good venue but may be confusing / limited space for three polling stations due to size of electorate - Long distance to travel for electors.

7.7 Officers have assessed the suitability of the proposed temporary venues, and they meet accessibility standards and are suitable for use as a polling station. Staff at each venue has confirmed that they are willing to accommodate a polling station for elections.

8. Consultations

8.1 Feedback from previous polls and comments made in the Polling District and Polling Place Review 2023 have been taken into consideration when identifying alternative venues.

9. Key Risks

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

10. Financial Implications

10.1 Any financial implications of this report will be met from approved budgets for Waverley elections and external contributions if elections/referendums are held on behalf of Government or other public bodies.

11. Legal Implications

11.1 The law requires the designation of polling places to effect elections. The polling place is where the elections will take place. The arrangements proposed are temporary due to unavailability.

12. Human Resource Implications

12.1 There are no direct HR implications in relation to the proposals in the report.

13. Equality and Diversity Implications

13.1 All polling places have been visited by officers to ensure access arrangements meet required standards for electors and staff.

13.2 We will monitor the polling stations to ensure there are no negative impacts and will review each polling station after the Police and Crime Commissioner election in May 2024.

14. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications

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

15. Summary of Options

- 17.1 It is a requirement for the Council to designate polling places for polls unless, within six months of an election (a) a designated polling place unexpectedly becomes unavailable; and (b) it is impractical to report to Council.
- 17.2 The Committee may decide to request officers to seek alternative arrangements in any of the three areas identified in this report. As notice of the unavailability of the designated polling places has been given more than six months before the elections on 2 May 2024, a special meeting of the Standards & General Purposes Committee and/or Council would be needed to confirm polling place arrangements.

18. Conclusion

- 18.1 Three polling places are unavailable for use as a polling station on 2 May 2024 and/or for the whole of 2024. The Council must therefore designate another venue as a polling place in Cranleigh East 1, Binscombe and Charterhouse.
- 18.2 The alternative venues in this report have been assessed by Officers and they are suitable for use as a polling place on 2 May 2024 and any other polls in 2024, if necessary.
- 18.3 This is a temporary designation of polling places. The polling place will revert back to the usual polling place once the venues are available again.

19. Background Papers

- 19.1 None.

Appendices

20.1 None.

Please ensure the following service areas have signed off your report.
Please complete this box, and do not delete.

Service	Sign off date
Finance / S.151 Officer	14/11/2023
Legal / Governance	20/11/2023
HR	15/11/2023
Equalities	
Lead Councillor	21/11/2023
CMB	
Executive Briefing/Liaison	
Committee Services	