# HERTSMERE BOROUGH COUNCIL

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| Meeting name & Date | **FULL COUNCIL****23rd January 2019** |
| Agenda item |  |
| Report title | **Polling District and Polling Places Review 2018** |
| Report reference no. |  |
| Wards affected | All wards |
| Report author, job title & email | Donald Graham, Returning Officerdonald.graham@hertsmere.gov.ukSam Langford, Electoral Services Managersam.langford@hertsmere.gov.uk  |
| List of Appendices | 1. Proposed Scheme2. List of contacted consultees3. Consultation responses4. ARO’s comments |
| Reason for urgency | Not applicable |

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| **PUBLIC REPORT - this report is available to the public.** |

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1. **RECOMMENDATION**

* 1. That in relation to the to the periodic review of polling places and polling districts in the parliamentary constituency of Hertsmere approved by Council on 11 July 2018, Council notes:
		1. the list of persons consulted set out at Annexe 1;
		2. the consultation responses set out at Annexe 2;

* + 1. the statutory representations of the Acting Returning Officer set out at Annexe 3; and
		2. the recommendations of the Constitution Review and Member Development Panel as summarised in paragraph 4.6 of the officers report.

1.2. That Council approved the revised Scheme of Polling Districts and Polling Places set out in the Table at Annexe 4, such scheme to take effect from the publication of the revised version of the electoral register on 1 February 2019.

1.3 That the revised Scheme of Polling Places and Polling Districts set out in the Table at Annexe 4 be published on the Council’s web-site together with a copy of the statutory representations of the Acting Returning Officer and the consultation responses received during the consultation process.

1. **PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT**

2.1 This report sets out the recommendations of the Constitution Review and Member Development Working Party in relation to the review of Hertsmere’s polling districts, polling places and polling stations carried out by the Returning Officer/Acting Returning Officer pursuant to Section 18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983 as amended by Section 17 of the Electoral Administration Act 2013. Accordingly, Council is requested to adopt the Scheme of Polling Districts and Polling Places set out in the Table at Annexe 4.

**3 BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) carried out an Electoral Review of Hertsmere Borough Council between August 2016 and November 2017. This resulted in changes to warding pattern and ward boundaries in some areas of the Borough. The aim of the review was to deliver electoral equality for voters in local elections by ensuring each Councillor represents approximately the same number of electors.

3.2 The Hertsmere (Electoral Changes) Order 2018, to implement recommendations made by the LGBCE for new electoral arrangements in Hertsmere, was made on 25 April 2018. As these new ward arrangements will come into force at the local elections in 2019, Hertsmere was required to undertake a polling district, polling place and polling station review as its existing polling districts no longer fall within the lines of the new wards.

3.2 In addition, the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 require the Council to complete a review of all Parliamentary polling districts and polling places every 5 years. The next review must be completed between October 2018 and January 2020.

3.3 A ‘polling district’ is a geographical area created by the subdivision a Parliamentary constituency and a ‘polling place’ is the building or area in which polling stations will be provided by the Returning Officer. A ‘polling station’ is therefore the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place.

3.4 It is the Council that is responsible for approving a scheme constituting ‘polling districts’ and designating ‘polling places’ but it is the Returning Officer for the relevant election who will be responsible for selecting the polling stations, albeit located within the designated polling places. In addition, because the review includes parliamentary constituency polling districts and polling places, the Returning Officer is required to comment on both the existing polling stations and the polling stations that would be likely to be used if any new proposal for a polling place was accepted.

3.5 Each parish is required to be designated as a polling district and a polling place must be designated within a polling district in order that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district.

3.6 In the case of a Parliamentary election a polling place for any polling district must be within the polling district unless there are special circumstances which make it desirable to designate a building or area wholly or partially outside the polling district. In addition, the Council must exercise its duties to constitute polling districts and designate polling places with a view to giving all electors such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. Similarly, for Local Government elections the Council is under a duty in the designation of a polling place within a polling district to exercise these powers in order that electors from any polling district can, in the absence of special circumstances be allocated to a polling station within a polling place for that district. The Council is also under a duty to designate as polling places, so far as is reasonable and practicable, only places which are accessible to electors with disabilities.

**4 The 2018 Polling District and Polling Places Review**

4.1 At the Full Council Meeting on 18th July 2018, the Council agreed to appoint the Constitutional Review and Member Development Panel (CRMDP) to consider the consultation responses, review the proposed changes and make recommendations to the Council on a revised Scheme of Polling Districts and Polling Places for 2018.

4.2 As part of preparing a proposed revised Polling Districts and Polling Places Scheme the CRMDP took into account as key considerations the convenience for electors and the accessibility for voters with disabilities. In addition, current and potential housing developments in the short to mid-term period were taken into account.

4.3 The review process began 1 October 2018 with the publication of a Public Notice of the Review, a schedule of the existing scheme and a schedule of the proposed scheme highlighting the proposed changes. These were published at the Civic Offices and on the Council’s website. The consultation opened on 2 October 2018 and Hertsmere Borough councillors, parish councils and identified persons/groups who have a special interest in the disabled, were invited to comment on both the existing arrangements and to make any representations in respect of any alternative proposals for change. A list of consultees is set out in Annexe1 and the deadline for representations was 30th November 2018.

4.4 Sixteen responses were received in total and these are set out in Annexe 2. Although one objection was received to the use of an existing Polling Place (The Toby Carvery at Studio Way Borehamwood), no objections were received in respect of the proposed changes to the existing Scheme and a number of the consultation responses were supportive of these. All representations received can be found at Annexe 2 and these will be published on the Council’s website on 24th January.

4.5 The Acting Returning Officer has also submitted his statutory representations containing his observations and recommendations and these are set out in Annexe 3.

4.6 The CRMDP considered the consultation responses including the statutory representations of the Acting Returning Officer at its meeting held on 10 December 2018 and the Panel unanimously agreed to recommend to Council the adoption of the revised Polling Districts and Polling Places Scheme set out in the Table at Annexe 4. The changes to the existing Scheme are highlighted in yellow for ease of reference.

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**5 FINANCIAL AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 As a result of this review, we have identified three new buildings. Each of these will be single polling stations and will require one Presiding Officer and two poll clerks. Summerswood School and Shenley Chapel replace polling stations that are no longer available to us. The cost of the station and the staff has already been considered within the 2019/2020 draft budget. We estimate that the costs will increase by approx £6000. The non-council proportion, in line with the usual election practice, will be claimed back from Government / Parishes. As an example at the May 2015 elections Hertsmere claimed back 50% of the cost.

5.2 There will be additional start-up costs for these stations as we will need to ensure that they have adequate signage, polling booths and stationery. We have also identified the need for additional screens for separating the polling station from the main building at The Toby Carvery and Merryhill School Bushey. Start-up costs can be funded from the Elections Reserve and ongoing costs can be met from within the 2019/20 draft budget

5.3 For the May 2019 election; to ensure the proposed changes cause minimal disruption for electors the RO will appoint an extra poll clerk in areas most affected by the changes. We estimate this will be approx 10 extra poll clerks at a cost of approx £2500. This cost can be met from within the 2019/20 draft budget

**6 LEGAL POWERS RELIED ON AND ANY LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 To comply with Section 17 of the Electoral Administration Act 2013, Hertsmere Borough Council is required to conduct a review of all parliamentary polling districts and polling places within the Hertsmere Parliamentary Constituency by 31st January 2020.

6.2 Notice of intention to republish the register of electors in accordance with section 13(3) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 to be displayed at both the Civic Offices and on the Council’s website from 18th January 2019.

6.3 On 1st February 2019 the full register will be republished under the new arrangements

**7 EFFICIENCY GAINS AND VALUE FOR MONEY**

7.1 If the new proposal is adopted, the positive voter experience at polling stations in the Borough will be maintained which will be a contribution to the overall efficiency of the election process.

**8 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 The proposed scheme will help eliminate the risk of queues forming at polling stations in Hertsmere.

**9 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The Returning Officer will have to recruit additional staff to run polling stations as per paragraph 5.

**10 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The Council must seek to ensure that all the electors in the Borough/Constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those with a disability, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons. The proposed Polling District and Polling Places scheme supports this vision.

**11 CORPORATE PLAN and POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 None for the purposes of this report.

*Do the proposals comply with the aspirations of the Corporate Plan? Do they impact on the policy framework? (see Section 4.3 of the Constitution if in doubt) - any proposals that fall outside the policy framework must be recommended to the Council for Do the proposals comply with the aspirations of the Corporate Plan? Do they impact on the policy framework? (see Section 4.3 of the Constitution if in doubt) - any proposals that fall outside the policy framework must be recommended to the Council for Do the proposals comply with the aspirations of the Corporate Plan? Do they impact on the policy framework? (see Section 4.3 of the Constitution if in doubt) - any proposals that fall outside the policy framework must be recommended to the Council for Do the proposals comply with the aspirations of the Corporate Plan? Do they impact on the policy framework? (see Section 4.3 of the Constitution if in doubt) - any proposals that fall outside the policy framework must be recommended to the Council for*

**12 ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 None for the purposes of this report.

**13 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 None for the purposes of this report.

**14 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS USEDTO PREPARE THIS REPORT**

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| **Document** **Title:** | **Filed at:** |
| None | N/A |

**15 CONSULTATION ON DRAFT REPORT**

15.1 A draft of this report was sent to the following on the following dates:

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| **Consultee** | **Report sent** | **Comments rcvd** |
| Chief Executive | 21/12/2018 | Yes |
| Head of Finance | 21/12/2018 | Yes |
| Head of Legal & Democratic Services | 21/12/2018 | Yes |