

PART A

Report to: Council
Date of Meeting: 16 March 2016
Report of: Head of Democracy and Governance
Title: Polling District & Polling Places Review subsequent to publication of The Watford (Electoral Changes) Order 2016

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report sets out the outcome of a review undertaken of the Polling Districts and Polling Places within Watford following conduct of an electoral review of the Borough's electoral wards by the Local Government Boundary Commission.
- 1.2 The Borough's Ward boundary changes as detailed in The Watford (Electoral Changes) Order 2016 are documented in Appendix A. The order has not made major changes to the majority of the Borough's existing wards but pockets of properties/electors have been moved from one to another and it has been necessary to consider the polling district and polling station requirements for these locations in conjunction with the existing Hertfordshire County Council Electoral Division boundaries which were unchanged for Watford in the recent County Council electoral review.
- 1.3 As Council will see there has been need to create a number of new polling districts to ensure elections at both Borough from May 2016 and County Level can be conducted without problem or confusion.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Polling District; Polling Places and Polling Station arrangements within the Borough as detailed in Appendix B are agreed.

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Report approved by:

Managing Director

3.0 Introduction

3.1 BACKGROUND

3.1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England were obligated to undertake an electoral review of Watford Borough Council due to the high levels of electoral inequality where some councillors represent many more - or many fewer – voters than others.

3.1.2 In undertaking the review the Local Government Boundary Commission was required to:

- a) Publish notice of the holding of a review;
- b) Conduct public consultation on new ward boundaries (12 May to 6 July 2015);
- c) Conduct public consultation on draft recommendations for new ward boundaries (25 August to 19 October 2015);
- d) Publication of final recommendations for new ward boundaries (3 December 2015);
- e) Following Parliamentary approval – Implement new arrangements at local elections.

3.1.3 This has now been done and concluded with publication of The Watford (Electoral Changes) Order 2016 on 4th February 2016 to deliver improved levels of electoral equality for local voters within the Borough with effect and going from Borough Council elections on 5th May 2016.

3.1.4 Following publication of the Order a review of the Borough's polling districts, polling places and polling stations was undertaken with primary objective to ensure that polling districts and polling station requirements for all locations were compatible with the existing Hertfordshire County Council Electoral Division boundaries.

A **polling district** is a geographical sub division of a Borough Ward/County Electoral Division. A **polling place** is the geographical area in which a polling station is located. A **polling station** is the actual venue where the process of voting takes place, and must be within the polling

place designated for the particular polling district. Historically it has been the practice to designate the entire polling district as the polling place in Watford, so that it is easier for polling stations to be altered in the event of a building becoming unavailable, however, there were 2 exceptions within the Tudor Ward where the polling stations were designated and shared with adjacent polling districts namely:-

Tudor Ward - Polling District FA

Polling Station - (Station B) Parkgate Youth & Community Centre

Shared with

Callowland Ward Polling District EA - (Station A) Parkgate Youth & Community Centre

And

Tudor Ward - Polling District FC

Polling Station - (Station A) Centrepoint House

Shared with

Central Ward Polling District HA - (Station B) Centrepoint House

These exceptions (FA & FC) have been historic due to limited alternatives and relatively low electorates in the respective polling district areas.

However, both stations are in relative close and convenient proximity to the polling districts served and do not appear to cause problem or difficulties for the electors.

Subsequent to the new Borough electoral arrangements both these polling stations will have revised polling districts allocated as follows –

Tudor Ward - Polling District FA and

Tudor Ward - Polling District FE - (112 Bushey Mill Lane)

Polling Station - (Station B) Parkgate Youth & Community Centre

Shared with

Callowland Ward Polling District EA - (Station A) Parkgate Youth & Community Centre

At future County Council Elections the polling station for same polling district would be as follows –

Meriden Tudor Division - Polling District FA

Polling Station - (Station B) Parkgate Youth & Community Centre

Shared with

North Watford (formally Callowland Leggatts) Division - Polling District FE

North Watford (formally Callowland Leggatts) Division - Polling District EA - Polling Station - (Station A) Parkgate Youth & Community Centre

And

Tudor Ward - Polling District FC and

Tudor Ward - Polling District FD –

Polling Station - Centrepoint House

At future County Council Elections the polling station for same polling district would be as follows –

Meriden Tudor Division - Polling District FC

Polling Station - (Station A) Centrepoint House

Shared with

Central Watford & Oxhey (formally Central Oxhey) Division - Polling District FD Polling Station - (Station B) Centrepoint House

3.1.5 Other locations where similar Borough/County boundary variations, necessitating creation of additional polling districts are detailed in Appendix B.

3.2 CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN AND CHANGES REQUIRED AS A RESULT OF THE WATFORD (ELECTORAL CHANGES) ORDER 2016

3.2.1 A meeting with Meriden members of the Council was held to consult on polling station options due to extensive renovation work and temporary loss of facilities at Meriden Community Centre and it was decided that best option to retain the polling station venue within the Meriden estate

boundaries until completion of the Community Centre works was for use of portakabin buildings.

3.2.2 Alternative options, in particular to avoid disruption/closure of an additional school were considered with regard to Nascot Polling District GB which previously used St Thomas' United Reformed Church Hall for voting purposes. This venue has now ceased to be available and a number of alternative venues within the polling district were contacted and visited including suggestions from ward members. Consequently at 5th May elections and 23rd June referendum it has been agreed to use St Andrews Church Hall as the polling station venue for this polling district.

3.2.3 Polling Districts and provision of polling stations within the remainder of Borough has generally been achieved by allotting the new polling district to the nearest polling station at which votes for the appropriate election i.e. same ward is held. Full detail detailed in Appendix B.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Financial

The Director of Finance comments that the changes can be implemented from within existing budgets.

4.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

The Head of Democracy & Governance comments that it is a duty of the Council to undertake a polling district/polling station review including full consultation every 4 years, and following a Boundary Review. Although, this Council's practice has been to continuously review at and after each election held. Groups and electors will all have opportunity to express any concerns and provide alternative suggestions for polling stations after the current necessary changes have been used and had chance to settle.

4.3 Staffing

None

4.4 Accommodation

This is contained in Appendix B.

4.5 Equalities

Both venue changes – portakabin at Meriden and St Andrews Church, Nascot have disability access checked and confirmed although both do require access ramps to be provided.

4.6 Community Safety

N/A

4.7 Sustainability

N/A

4.8 Potential Risks

N/A

Appendices

Appendix A – Borough's Ward boundary changes as detailed in The Watford (Electoral Changes) Order 2016

Appendix B – Polling District / Polling Station allocation for Borough and County Council elections going forward from 5th May 2016

Background papers:

None.

File reference:

None.