

PART A

Report to: Council

Date of meeting: 31 January 2023

Report author: Electoral Services Manager

Title: New Polling Station Locations from May 2023

1.0 Summary

1.1 In consequence to the Elections Act 2022 it has been necessary for the Returning Officer to arrange for all polling station venues within Watford Borough to be revisited and checked to ensure that all comply with the accessibility requirements, together with an additional facility to undertake voter ID checks in private when required.

2.0 Risks

2.1

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
Inability for voters to vote in person	Damage to local democracy if voters unable to participate in local elections	Accept and use revised polling venues detailed within report	Treat	2
Inability for voters to vote in person	Damage to Council, Returning Officer, and Election Staff reputation	Accept and use revised polling venues detailed within report	Treat	2
Inability for voters to vote in person	Failure in part with implementation of Elections Act 2022 requirements	Accept and use revised polling venues detailed within report	Treat	2

3.0 Recommendation

3.1 That Council agrees to the movement and addition of polling station locations within the Central; Holywell; and Oxhey Borough Ward locations as set out in bold in paragraph 4.3 of the report.

Further information:

Gordon Amos

gordon.amos@watford.gov.uk

Tel: 01923 278339

Report approved by: Carol Chen, Group Head of Democracy and Governance

4.0 Detailed proposal

- 4.1 Due to the introduction of the Elections Act 2022, it has been necessary for the Returning Officer to arrange for the inspection of all of the current polling stations in the Borough. As members will know the 2022 Act requires that voters bring to the polling station an approved form of identification to be eligible to vote. This means that polling staff will need to check that photo ID against the individual and in cases where voters are wearing full-face coverings these will need to be removed by the voter for the check to be made. Therefore, there needs to be an area set aside where these full-face coverings can be removed in private, a check made, and the voter can put back on the full-face covering. In addition, the Act requires polling stations to be accessible. Following the inspections, it has been necessary to make some changes to the locations of 2 polling stations and the addition of 2 polling stations for the new KD polling district, to reduce the numbers attending at Chessbrook ESC and LC polling district due to the new developments at Riverwell starting to be occupied.
- 4.2 At present for the LC Polling District due to the current small number of voters it is intended to use St Matthews Church Hall, but the Returning Officer is actively looking for a new venue closer to the development. The other new KD Polling District will be accommodated in a new venue and Chessbrook will have a reduced number of polling stations going down from 3 to 2.

4.3 Set out below are the details of the movement and addition of polling stations within Central, Holywell and Oxhey Borough Wards with effect from May 2023.

Polling District	Polling Station Venue	Proposed Polling Station Venue	Total Stations at venue	Address	Ward	
HB (Part)	Watford Christian Spiritualist Church	NEW: Relocation to Derby Road Baptist Church	2	125 Escort Rd, Watford, WD17 2PY	Central	
HB (Part)	Watford Christian Spiritualist Church			125 Escort Rd, Watford, WD17 2PY	Central	
HC	Central Primary School Stanley Road, Watford, WD17 2LX			1	Derby Road, Watford, WD17 2LZ	Central
HD	Holy Rood Premises Percy Road, Watford, WD18 1PJ			1	Church Street, Watford, WD18 0EG	Central
HE	The Wellspring Church Centre			1	1 Wellspring Way, Watford, WD17 2AH	Central
KA (Part)	Chessbrook Education Support Centre	NEW: Green Building relocation of one station from Chessbrook ESC	Reduced total stations at venue from 3 to 2	Tolpits Lane, Watford, WD18 6LJ	Holywell	
KA (Part) & KC	Chessbrook Education Support Centre			Tolpits Lane, Watford, WD18 6LJ	Holywell	
KB (Part)	Holywell Primary School			Tolpits Lane, Watford, WD18 6LL	Holywell	
KB (Part)	Holywell Primary School			Tolpits Lane, Watford, WD18 6LL	Holywell	
NEW: KD	Currently no venue			1	Adjacent Holywell Allotments, Scammell Way, Watford, WD18 6AF	Holywell

Polling District	Polling Station Venue	Proposed Polling Station Venue	Total Stations at venue	Address	Ward
LA (Part)	St Matthews Church Hall	Provisionally St Matthews Church Hall but alternative is being sought for future elections due to anticipated increase in elector numbers as the Riverwell Development proceeds.	2 (combined with one of existing stations for polling district LA)	St Matthews Close, Watford, WD19 4ST	Oxhey
LA (Part)	St Matthews Church Hall			St Matthews Close, Watford, WD19 4ST	Oxhey
LB (Part)	Bushey & Oxhey Infants School			Aldenham Road, Bushey, Watford, WD23 2QH	Oxhey
LB (Part)	Bushey & Oxhey Infants School			Aldenham Road, Bushey, Watford, WD23 2QH	Oxhey
NEW: LC	Currently no venue			St Matthews Close, Watford, WD19 4ST	Oxhey

5.0 **Implications**

5.1 **Financial**

5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the proposals are within existing budgets.

5.2 **Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)**

5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that Returning Officers are regularly required to review the polling station requirements within their area and suggest any changes that will make it easier for electors to cast their votes to council for approval.

5.3 **Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection**

5.3.1 In consequence of the Elections Act 2022 all polling stations used within the Watford electoral boundary have been reviewed by officers to ensure the accessibility and Voter ID privacy checking requirements are covered in accordance with the Act.

Having had regard to the council's obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, it is considered that officers are not required to undertake a Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this report.

5.4 **Staffing**

5.4.1 There will be need to increase the number of (temporary) polling staff (1 x presiding officer + 2 poll clerks) to cover a new additional polling station to service electors within the new Oxhey Ward Riverwell development area within polling district LC. The development is ongoing and the current electorate relatively low but is expected to increase substantially. At present no actual polling station location has been found, but enquiries continue, and it is hoped that a suitable venue will be secured. However, if not achieved before March 2023 electors within polling district LC will be allotted to vote at St Matthews Church Hall, St Matthews Close, Watford (same venue as used for electors within the Oxhey LA polling district) for the local election poll on 4 May 2023.

5.5 **Accommodation**

5.5.1 Not applicable

5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 Not applicable

5.7 **Sustainability**

5.7.1 Not applicable

Appendices

None

Background papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.