

Agenda Item 75.

TITLE	Interim Review of Polling Places
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Council on 22 February 2018
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR	Andrew Moulton, Assistant Director Governance

OUTCOME/BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Review the Polling Places about which complaints or requests to change have been received within the Wokingham Borough area.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council agrees that no changes are to be made to the designated Polling Places at this time.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report gives details of all requests/comments received, what alternatives there are and any feedback from the resulting site visits.

Background

Under the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1983 the Council is required to undertake a review of polling districts and places periodically. A few complaints and requests to change had been received so an interim review was undertaken to consider if any polling places should be changed.

In preparation for the writing of this report, each Member was asked to voice their concerns with regard to the Polling Places in their ward. A schedule has been prepared highlighting issues raised, any suggested alternatives for consideration and feedback from any necessary site visits made.

Analysis of Issues

In designating Polling Places, certain rules have to be followed by the Council under the 1983 Act. These include that:

- (i) all electors must be given “such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.”
- (ii) so far as is reasonable and practicable, only places which are accessible to electors who are disabled should be designated, and:-
- (iii) the Polling Place should be within the Polling District, except where special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the Polling District.

Schedule of Polling Place Issues

Name of Polling Place	Comments/Issues	Alternatives Identified	Feedback from Site Visit
Arborfield Village Hall	Councillor Cowan reported that parking is problematic	None	Only option would be a portacabin, which would not be ideal. Arborfield Village Hall is therefore currently the best option.
St John Ambulance HQ	Councillor Baker reported that this was originally changed from the church hall due to disabled access. Church has now been altered so disabled access is no longer a problem	St John's Church Hall	No concerns with current arrangements so no need to change
Emmbrook Village Hall	Request from Hall to find alternative as inconvenient for preschool and other regular users. Request supported by Councillors Clark and Mirfin.	Emmbrook Social Club	Premises are substantially further away from the majority of voters. Access to Emmbrook Social Club is down an unlit, single width dirt track and the car park is full of pot holes all of which would be problematic for disabled voters. It is therefore deemed unsuitable as a Polling Place - only viable alternative would be to close one of the two local schools. As a result, both venue and Members accept that

			disruption to preschool is better than disruption to either of the local schools.
Hillside Primary School	Difficulties with elections staff gaining access to the school's staff facilities		School to be reminded of the need to provide access to suitable facilities to election staff throughout the day
Hurst Village Hall	Councillor Ferris suggested additional place for Polling District TBM		Not needed for 2018 so carry forward to full review
Maiden Erlegh School	Difficulties with election staff gaining access to the school's staff facilities		School to be reminded of the need to provide access to suitable facilities to elections staff throughout the day
Oaklands Junior School	School Governor requesting change suggesting Pinewood, although scheme would require traffic management measures. All ward Councillors suggest that at a recent meeting with school confirmed the school now accepts that it will remain a polling place as there is nothing else suitable in the area.	St Sebastian's Memorial Hall, junction of Nine Mile Rise and Honey Hill	St Sebastian's Hall has insufficient parking for a polling place this size, which would force voters to park on surrounding roads, causing congestion and a risk to pedestrians

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A	N/A	N/A

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Cross-Council Implications

N/A

List of Background Papers

Representation of the People Act 1983

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