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| TITLE | Re-designation of Polling Places |
| FOR CONSIDERATION BY | Council on 14 December 2018 |
| WARD | Charvil and Maiden Erlegh |
| LEAD OFFICER | Andrew Moulton, Assistant Director Governance |

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

A polling place in which to enable applicable residents to cast their votes at any elections to be held during 2019.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council agree that for elections held in 2019:

- 1) Aldryngton School be designated as the Polling Place for Maiden Erlegh ward, instead of Maiden Erlegh School;
- 2) Charvil Village Hall be designated as the Polling Place for the whole of the Charvil ward.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

As Maiden Erlegh School no longer has the space to facilitate voting, it is necessary to designate an alternative Polling Place.

In Charvil ward, the designated polling place for polling district CAM1 is Jubilee Hall. We have been advised that this building has recently been sold in a poor state of repair, with the likelihood being that the building will be demolished.

We currently have a Working Group preparing recommendations for Polling Places throughout the Borough for 2020 onwards. With the final recommendations from the Polling Review Working Group due to be put forward to Full Council in the new year, it has been necessary to make this proposal for both Maiden Erlegh and Charvil Wards for any elections to be held in the respective areas during 2019.

Background

Section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 places a duty on each Borough Council to divide its area into 'Polling Districts' and to designate a 'Polling Place' for each polling district.

Maiden Erlegh Ward

Maiden Erlegh School has been the polling place for two polling districts in the Maiden Erlegh Ward for a number of years. However the Library, which was located inside the school building, was the space where the polling stations used to be sited. When the Library closed down, the vacant space was refurbished into a computer suite and as a result the area previously used is no longer available. As Maiden Erlegh School is a secondary school, elections tend to impact on GCSE revision and exam timetables and as a result the school has made a request for us to designate a new venue as a polling place.

There are several alternative venues in the area but the majority can't be booked as a right and are located in the top left hand corner of the area, right on the edge of the boundary, away from the majority of voters. Therefore Aldryngton School is put forward as the most suitable alternative. It is a well-known venue that has excellent facilities, onsite parking, is central to the majority of voters, on a bus route and has provision for disabled access.

Charvil Ward

As Jubilee Hall has been sold and is very likely to be demolished, we need to designate a new polling place for the area. There seems to be a distinct lack of alternative venues and it is therefore recommended that given the size of the electorate in this Polling District (only 452 electors) and the proximity of the voters to the polling place for CAM2, it is recommend that Charvil Village Hall is designated as the polling place for both polling districts within the Charvil Ward.

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.

Aldryngton School is located in Polling District EFW close to the boundary of EGW and is central to the majority of voters in both polling districts and meets all of the above criteria. It is therefore considered that this venue is the best option for the Ward for elections taking place in 2019.

Charvil Village Hall also meets all of the above criteria and is considered to be the best option for the Ward for elections taking place in 2019.

Further consideration will be given to these designations as part of the Polling District/Polling Place Review to form recommendations for the designated polling places throughout the Borough from 2020 onwards.

The proposals have been put to and agreed by the Ward members.

There is a risk to the Council if it chooses not to designate the best venue as a polling place.

These changes will be advertised as required by legislation.

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) | £0 | Yes | Revenue |
| Next Financial Year (Year 2) | £0 | Yes | Revenue |
| Following Financial Year (Year 3) | £0 | Yes | Revenue |

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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