

Report To:	COUNCIL	Date:	1 OCTOBER 2020
Heading:	INTERIM REVIEW OF POLLING PLACES		
Portfolio Holder:	PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND CROSS PORTFOLIO SUPPORT		
Ward/s:	ALL WARDS		
Key Decision:	NO		
Subject to Call-In:	NO		

Purpose of Report

This report sets out proposals for revised polling places following an interim review dealing with urgent polling place issues. The proposals are based on the recommendations of the Polling Places Review Working Group.

Recommendation(s)

1. That Council approves the recommendations of the Polling Places Review Working Group
 - Brand Court to replace Stanton Hill Boys Brigade
 - The Skegby Scout and Guide Headquarters to replace The Beeches
2. Should a polling place be unavailable in the run up to an election, the Returning Officer be delegated authority to select an appropriate alternative and formal retrospective approval be sought by Council following the election should this be a permanent proposed change;
3. To note that approved changes will take effect on the 2 October 2020.
4. The Polling Places Review Working Group continue under its current terms of reference to undertake work on additional polling places identified as being at risk.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

To deal with urgent polling place issues following a review of the availability of existing polling places for the 2021 Elections. To ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and that, as far as is reasonable and practicable, polling places are accessible to disabled electors.

Alternative Options Considered

None.

Detailed Information

Introduction

A full review of polling places and polling districts took place in 2018 in line with the requirements set out in the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 and Representation of the People Act 1983.

Following the district council elections and UK parliamentary general election held in 2019, some issues have been identified in relation to a small number of polling places. It is good practice to keep polling places under review to identify any issues and ensure that electors have reasonable facilities for voting.

The Polling Place Review and Ward Name Working Group was approved at Council on 4 June 2020 to make recommendations to the Council for any revisions to the scheme.

Interim Review Process

The Polling Places Review Working Group have met on three occasions to conduct an interim review and report final recommendations to Council on 1 October 2020, in line with the timetable and remit set out and approved by the Council.

Following work undertaken by the Elections team in contacting, reviewing and assessing viable locations, Members of the working group discussed possible alternative venues, taking into consideration;

- Size
- Accessibility
- Location
- Parking
- Availability

Members of the cross party working group then agreed the most suitable locations based on the above factors for recommendation to Council. Another factor in these considerations is the potential implications associated with the COVID-19 Pandemic. All locations being considered were done so on the basis of social distancing arrangements including access and exit points and sufficient distance opportunities for one way systems, where possible.

Final Proposals

Both Brand Court and the Skegby Scout and Guide Headquarters were consulted upon. No comments were received during this consultation.

During the latter stages of the review, additional polling places have come to our notice as being at risk of non-availability, but too late to consider and include as part of the consultation process. As such it is suggested that the Polling Places Review Working Group continue under its current terms of reference to undertake work on additional polling stations identified as being at risk in line with the outline timetable set out below:

- **w/c 19 October 2020** - Working Group to meet to consider alternatives to go forward for consultation
- **4 week consultation starting on 23 October 2020**
- **w/c 23 November 2020** – Working Group to meet to make recommendations to Council for approval
- **3 December 2020** - Council to approve final recommendations

Implications

Corporate Plan:

Enable thriving, prosperous and self-sufficient communities where people shape their own futures.

Ensure effective community leadership, through good governance, transparency, accountability and appropriate behaviours.

Legal:

A full review of polling places and polling districts was completed in 2018 in line with legislative requirements. This interim review, as approved by Council on the 4 June 2020 has been carried out to deal with urgent polling place issues identified.

Finance:

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	Costs arising from the review can be met from existing budgets
General Fund – Capital Programme	None
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	None
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	None

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
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Elector confusion around changes to existing polling places Social distancing requirements of potential venues and cleansing as a result of COVID-19 Pandemic	Effective communications around changes thorough health and safety considerations in relation to COVID-19 on any venues approved.
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Human Resources:

None

Equalities:

The purpose of the review is to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and that, as far as is reasonable and practicable, polling places are accessible to disabled electors.

Report Author and Contact Officer

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