

# Agenda

## Urgent Decisions Committee Meeting

Date: Monday, 10 June 2024

Time 6.30 pm

Venue: Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT\*

Membership:

Councillors Mike Baldock (Vice-Chair), Lloyd Bowen, Tim Gibson (Chair), Angela Harrison, James Hunt, Elliott Jayes and Hannah Perkin.

Quorum = 3

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	Pages
1. Emergency Evacuation Procedure	
Visitors and members of the public who are unfamiliar with the building and procedures are advised that:	
(a) The fire alarm is a continuous loud ringing. In the event that a fire drill is planned during the meeting, the Chair will advise of this.	
(b) Exit routes from the chamber are located on each side of the room, one directly to a fire escape, the other to the stairs opposite the lifts.	
(c) In the event of the alarm sounding, leave the building via the nearest safe exit and gather at the assembly point on the far side of the car park. Do not leave the assembly point or re-enter the building until advised to do so. Do not use the lifts.	
(d) Anyone unable to use the stairs should make themselves known during this agenda item.	
2. Apologies for Absence	
3. Declarations of Interest	
Councillors should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their families or friends.	
The Chair will ask Members if they have any disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) or disclosable non-pecuniary interests (DNPIs) to declare in respect of items on the agenda. Members with a DPI in an item must leave the room for that item and may not participate in the debate or vote.	
Aside from disclosable interests, where a fair-minded and informed observer would think there was a real possibility that a Member might be	

biased or predetermined on an item, the Member should declare this and leave the room while that item is considered.

Members who are in any doubt about interests, bias or predetermination should contact the monitoring officer for advice prior to the meeting.

4. New Polling Station Venue for the General Election on 4 July 2024

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### **Issued on Friday, 31 May 2024**

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**Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council,  
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT**

<b>Urgent Decisions Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	10 June 2024
<b>Report Title</b>	Review of Polling Place – Throwley (ETH)
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Larissa Reed, Chief Executive and Returning Officer
<b>Head of Service</b>	
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Jo Millard, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. The proposed change to the polling station in Throwley be approved.

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 Council is asked to consider proposals to change arrangements for voting in the Throwley polling district as an alternative, permanent building is available.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a requirement for Councils to undertake a review of polling districts and places in 2007 and every four years thereafter. In practice, however, this is monitored more regularly and where necessary, arrangements have been made for alternative polling places/stations, with the agreement of the Council and the Returning Officer. A full review will be carried out later this year but an urgent review of the polling station on The Green at Throwley is necessary as temporary polling stations are logistically complex, costly to arrange and in short supply for the upcoming General Election.
- 2.2 To clarify, the Council is responsible for setting the polling district (a geographical area of a ward) and polling places (a geographical area within a polling district that the polling station must be located within). The Returning Officer is responsible for locating the polling station, which must be within the polling place.

## **3 Proposals**

- 3.1 It is proposed that St. Michael and All Angels Church at Throwley is used instead of a temporary building on the Green.
- 3.2 A portacabin, and more recently a motorhome, have been used as polling stations on The Green, but the costs of hiring and delivery of a portacabin can be high, and the more narrow roads leading to The Green make delivery difficult for both options. Portacabins buildings are in also in short supply.

3.3 As the vicar has confirmed St. Michael and All Angels Church in Throwley is available and is suitable in terms of size, disabled access, and costs, and there is parking available nearby, it is recommended that the polling place be extended to the church so that the Returning Officer may use this venue at future elections whilst also retaining the option to use The Green if necessary.

## 4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

4.1 Council may make suggestions for alternative venues, however consideration does need to be given to practical aspects in terms of the venues available within the wards and within the timescale needed to secure a venue.

## 5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

5.1 Councillor Terry Thompson, Ward Member, has given his support to use the Church, and the suggestion of using it as an alternative was made by several residents at the recent PCC Election.

## 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Ensuring voters are able to vote at the most convenient and commodious venue within the polling place contributes to the objective to strengthen democracy within the emerging corporate plan.
Financial, Resource and Property	We are seeking to retain the current number of polling stations (which must be located within the polling place); the church fees are lower than the costs of hiring a portacabin).
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The Council is required to take a full review in accordance with the Electoral Administration Act 2006, but in practice keeps polling stations under regular review.
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this time.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None identified at this time.
Health and Wellbeing	None identified at this time.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this time.

Risk Management and Health and Safety	The purpose of the review is to ensure that all voters have reasonable facilities for voting. It is important that venues meet health and safety requirements so as not to put voters at risk and election staff have assessed the venue. Polling Station staff are encouraged to give feedback on venues and each station is visited by a Polling Station Inspector on election day.
Equality and Diversity	One purpose of the review is to ensure that all electors in the Borough have reasonable facilities for voting, and that as far as is reasonable and practicable, facilities for voting are accessible for disabled people.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this time

## 7 Background Papers

None

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