

General Purposes Committee Meeting		Agenda Item:
Meeting Date	6 October 2014	
Report Title	Polling Districts and Places	
Portfolio Holder	Leader	
SMT Lead	Abdool Kara	
Head of Service	Mark Radford	
Lead Officer	Katherine Bescoby	
Key Decision	No	
Classification	Open	
Forward Plan	N/A	
Recommendations	1. The General Purposes Committee is asked to consider the consultation responses arising from the review of Polling Districts and Places, and recommend that Council approve the Returning Officer's proposals, as set out in Appendix I and II.	

1. Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council was required to undertake a review of all polling districts and places within the 16 months from 1 October 2013, and a scheme for consultation purposes was agreed by General Purposes Committee on 3 February 2014.
- 1.2 This report sets out the results of the 12 week consultation. Appendix I sets out the wards where comments have been received as part of the consultation. Appendix II sets out those wards where no comments have been made. The General Purposes Committee is asked to consider this and make recommendations to Council.

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, we do monitor this more regularly and have, when necessary, made arrangements for alternative polling places/stations with the agreement of the Council/(Acting) Returning Officer.
- 2.2 It may be useful to clarify that 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. Proposal

- 3.1 Appendix I of the report sets out the consultation responses received by Ward, and the Returning Officer's responses and subsequent proposals. The General Purposes Committee is required to review the proposals in view of the feedback from the consultation, and make recommendations to Council.
- 3.2 Appendix II of the report sets out those Wards where, aside from a response in support of Bredgar Village Hall, no responses to the consultation were received. Consequently, no changes to the original proposals are being suggested, and the General Purposes Committee is asked to recommend to Council that the Polling Districts and Places be agreed as listed.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Committee may make suggestions for alternative venues; however, consideration does need to be given to practical aspects in terms of venues available within the ward, particularly given the complexities of the number of polls taking place on 7 May 2015 (Parliamentary, Borough, and Parish).

5. Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.3 A Notice was published to launch the review and a webpage set up inviting people to make comments on the proposals. All Borough Ward Members, County Members, Parish Councils, MPs, and Party Contacts were made aware of the consultation and invited to give feedback.

6. Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Localism
Financial, Resource and Property	We are seeking to retain the current number of polling stations (which must be located within the polling place); however, there may be some variations in price but this will be kept within existing budgets.
Legal and Statutory	The Council has undertaken the review in accordance with the Electoral Administration Act 2006.
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this time.
Sustainability	None identified at this stage
Health & Wellbeing	None identified at this stage
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. 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	The 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.
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7. Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Polling Districts and Places: responses to review and proposals
- Appendix II: Polling Districts and Places: no responses received in opposition to the proposals

8. Background Papers

8.1 Details of the documents that were available for public consultation are available to view on our website

<http://www.swale.gov.uk/polling-district-review/>

Previous reports and minutes are also available to view www.swale.gov.uk