

General Purposes Committee		Agenda Item:
Meeting Date	25 September 2018	
Report Title	Review of Polling Districts and Places	
Portfolio Holder	Leader	
SMT Lead	Mark Radford	
Head of Service	Mark Radford	
Lead Officer	Katherine Bescoby	
Key Decision	No	
Classification	Open	
Forward Plan	N/A	
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the General Purposes Committee considers the feedback to the consultation and the changes suggested to the polling districts and places as set out in Appendix I and makes recommendations to Council. 2. That the General Purposes Committee asks the Council to note the arrangements which will continue for the May 2019 elections as set out in Appendix II. 	

1. Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 In preparation for the elections in May 2019, a review of polling district and places has been undertaken. This report sets out details of the consultation, and the changes proposed. Some changes are as a result of feedback received, whilst others are as a result of increases in electorate.
- 1.2 Appendix I sets out the wards where feedback has been received and changes are proposed. Appendix II sets out those wards where no changes are proposed, and incorporates feedback where received.
- 1.3 The General Purposes Committee is asked to consider this and make recommendations to Council on 10 October 2018 regarding the arrangements for polling districts and places.

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.

- 2.3 There are currently 24 wards and 81 polling districts. If the proposals set out in the report are agreed, there will be 84 polling districts, or 85 if a separate polling district is established for the New Zealand estate. This will have cost implications.
- 2.4 The electoral register will need to be updated to reflect any revisions to polling districts, in time for publication of the revised electoral register, by 1 December 2018. The Council will therefore be asked to agree arrangements at the October Council meeting to ensure that there is sufficient time for this work to be completed.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 The General Purposes Committee considers the feedback to the consultation and the changes suggested to the polling districts and places as set out in Appendix I and makes recommendations to Council.
- 3.2 The General Purposes Committee asks the Council to note the arrangements which will continue for the May 2019 elections as set out in Appendix II.

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 areas where there are parish councils in parts of wards. Consideration must also be given to the costs and logistics of using mobile venues which also require a generator.

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, which has been promoted by the Communications team. The consultation started on 18 May and closed on 27 August 2018, and the review was drawn to the attention of Members. The Appendices set out details of feedback received and the Returning Officer's response. All Ward Members have been made aware of the consultation and have been invited to give feedback. Polling Station Inspectors who visit the stations at each election have also been asked to give feedback for the review. The (Acting) Returning Officer for Faversham and Mid Kent has also been made aware of the review.

6. Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Running elections effectively meets the Council's priority "A Council to be proud of".
Financial,	We are seeking to increase the current number of polling stations

Resource and Property	(which must be located within the polling place) to reflect the increase in electorate and the Electoral Commission requirement that there should be no more than 2500 electors per polling stations. It should be noted that there will be costs as a result of hiring additional venues and employing additional polling station staff. Furthermore, costs will increase if we are required to use portacabins, particularly if generators and equipment are also required, and the logistics and additional work involved in such temporary stations should also be taken into consideration.
Legal and Statutory	The Council has undertaken the review in accordance with the principles in the Electoral Administration Act 2006. The review has been undertaken earlier than required, but is considered necessary to ensure that suitable voter arrangements are in place for the May 2019 elections.
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.

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: feedback and proposals for consideration
- Appendix II: Polling Districts and Places: feedback where no changes are proposed.
- Maps

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