

Urgent Decisions Meeting	
Meeting Date	20 March 2024
Report Title	Review of Polling Place – Chalkwell Ward (C - Chalkwell polling district)
EMT Lead	Larissa Reed, Chief Executive and Returning Officer
Head of Service	
Lead Officer	Jo Millard, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. The proposed change to the polling place in the Chalkwell Ward be approved.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 Council is asked to consider proposals to change arrangements for voting in the Chalkwell polling district as the most recently used site at the Coniston Hotel is not available for the Police and Crime Commissioner election in May 2024.

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 this year but an urgent review of the polling station at the Coniston Hotel in Chalkwell is necessary as the venue is unavailable for the Police and Crime Commissioner election in May 2024.
- 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 the hall to the rear of the Methodist Church, High Street, Sittingbourne is used instead of the Coniston Hotel, London Road, Sittingbourne.
- 3.2 The Coniston Hotel has been used in recent years but is now unavailable for the date of the Police and Crime Commissioners Election in May 2024.
- 3.3 As the hall to the rear of the Methodist Church, High Street, Sittingbourne 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 hall to the rear of the Methodist Church so that the Returning Officer may use this venue at future elections whilst also retaining the option to use the Coniston Hotel.

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 Charlie Miller, Ward Member, has given his full support.

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 quote from the Methodist Church is lower than the costs of hiring the room at the Coniston Hotel.
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 Appendices

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

- Appendix I: Photos of room and Map of area showing location

8 Background Papers

None