

Council Meeting		Agenda Item: 14
Meeting Date	25 January 2017	
Report Title	Review of Polling Places – Halfway Polling Districts	
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. That the proposed change to the polling place for the Halfway Polling Districts (East and West) be approved.	

1. Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council is asked consider a proposal to change the polling place for the Halfway Polling Districts (East and West) to cover the whole of the polling district. This will enable the Returning Officer to select an alternative polling station within that area.

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.
- 2.2 In practice, however, we monitor this more regularly and have, when necessary, made arrangements for alternative polling places/ stations with the agreement of the Council/(Acting) Returning Officer.
- 2.3 The last full review was carried out in 2014, prior to the all-out Borough elections held in May 2015 (which were combined with the Parliamentary and Parish elections, using the new ward boundaries).
- 2.4 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 It is proposed that Halfway Houses School is no longer used as a polling station, and that St. Peter's Church Hall, Queenborough Road, Minster-on-Sea, ME12 3DD is used instead.

- 3.2 The reason for this proposal is that Halfway Houses School has recently moved location to Danley Road, Sheerness, ME12 3AP. Due to the layout of the new school, it would be very difficult for the school to accommodate a polling station and remain open. The Headteacher is keen to keep the school open on polling day, and so has asked us to look for an alternative venue.
- 3.3 As an alternative venue is available nearby and is a suitable venue in terms of size, disabled access and car parking, it is recommended that the polling place is extended to include the whole of the polling district, so that the Returning Officer can locate the polling station at St Peter's Church Hall, but still has the option to use Halfway Houses School if required in the future.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Council may make suggestions for alternative venues within the wards. However, consideration does need to be given to the practical requirements for running a polling station in terms of assessing the venues that may be available, which will be used for the KCC elections in May 2017.

5. Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.3 Ward Members and Group Leaders have been asked for their views regarding the proposed change. Responses received have been positive. A full polling station review is due to be undertaken in 2018 which will include full public consultation.

6. Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Running elections effectively meets the Council's priority of being "a Council to be proud of".
Financial, Resource and Property	We are seeking to retain the current number of polling stations (which must be located within the polling place) and remain within existing budgets.
Legal and Statutory	The Council is required to take a full review in accordance with the Electoral Administration Act 2006, which is next due in 2018. However, the Electoral Services Team keeps all polling stations under regular review.
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.

	Each polling station is visited by a Polling Station Inspector on election day, and all polling station staff are encouraged to give feedback on venues following elections.
Equality and Diversity	The purpose of the review is to ensure that all electors in the Borough have reasonable facilities for voting, and that, in so far as is reasonable and practicable, facilities for voting are accessible for disabled people.

7. Appendices

7.1 None.

8. Background Papers

8.1 None.