



Borough of Gosport

Notice is hereby given that an **EXTRAORDINARY MEETING** of the **COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF GOSPORT** will be held in the **TOWN HALL, GOSPORT** on **WEDNESDAY** the **TWELFTH DAY OF DECEMBER 2007** at **6.00PM** AND **ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL ARE HEREBY SUMMONED TO ATTEND TO CONSIDER AND RESOLVE THE FOLLOWING BUSINESS –**

1. To receive apologies from Members for their inability to attend the Meeting.
2. To consider any Mayor's Communications.
3. To receive Deputations in accordance with Standing Order No 3.5 and to answer Public Questions pursuant to Standing Order No 3.6, such questions to be answered orally during a time not exceeding 15 minutes.

(NOTE: Standing Order No 3.5 requires that notice of a Deputation should be received by the Borough Solicitor **NOT LATER THAN 12 O'CLOCK NOON ON MONDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2007** and likewise Standing Order No 3.6 requires that notice of a Public Question should be received by the Borough Solicitor **NOT LATER THAN 12 O'CLOCK NOON ON MONDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2007**).

4. Questions (if any) pursuant to Standing Order No 3.4

(NOTE: Members are reminded that Standing Order No 3.4 requires that Notice of Question pursuant to that Standing Order must be received by the Borough Solicitor **NOT LATER THAN 12 O'CLOCK NOON ON TUESDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2007**).

5. Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

To consider the report of the Chief Executive (copy to follow).

IAN LYCETT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

TOWN HALL
GOSPORT

04 December 2007

NOTE: (1) MEMBERS ARE REQUESTED TO NOTE THAT IF THE COUNCIL WISHES TO CONTINUE ITS BUSINESS BEYOND 9.30PM THEN THE MAYOR MUST MOVE SUCH A PROPOSITION IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER 4.11.18.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5

Board/Committee:	COUNCIL
Date of Meeting:	12 December 2007
Title:	Proposals for the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places
Author:	Chief Executive
Status:	FOR DECISION

Purpose

To advise the Council of the responses to consultation on the Review of the Parliamentary Constituency Polling Districts and Polling Places and to agree changes as set out in this report.

Recommendation

1. To note the response to consultation
2. To approve the Polling Districts and Polling Places set out in the Schedule
3. To agree to fund the net cost of the provision of disabled access facilities at Solent Evangelical Church by virement from Land Charges income

1 Background

- 1.1 The Council is required by Section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 to carry out the review of Polling Districts and Polling Places for the Parliamentary Constituency by the end of this year. The review will not consider the boundary of the Parliamentary Constituency. The arrangements put in place following the review will be used for Local Government elections.
- 1.2 The Council set up a Sub-Board to consider draft proposals for consultation. The Sub-Board met on 25 October and 11 November 2007 and the draft proposals for consultation are attached at Appendix 1

2 Report

- 2.1 A Polling District is the area created by the division of a constituency into smaller parts within which a polling place can be determined which is convenient to electors.
- 2.2 A Polling Place is the building or area in which Polling Stations will be selected by the Returning Officer

- 2.3 A Polling Station is the room or building where the poll takes place. It is chosen by the Returning Officer for the election and publicised on the Notice of Poll and communicated to electors on the Poll Card

Procedure for Review

- 2.4 The Council has to give notice that it is conducting a review in accordance with the relevant regulations including seeking responses from the electorate, bodies or persons with expertise in access for persons with disabilities on their proposals. The notice was given on 13 November 2007.
- 2.5 The Returning Officer has to be consulted and must respond to the consultation with details of existing polling stations and polling stations that would probably be used based on any newly recommended Polling Place. The Returning Officer's response has to be published within 30 days of receipt by the Council. The Returning Officer's response is attached as Appendix 2
- 2.6 Once the Council has considered the response to its consultation the final proposals have to be published and the Register of Electors amended to reflect the review.
- 2.7 The Electoral Commission has produced guidance to assist Councils in undertaking their review. Therefore a set of reference documents have been prepared to assist the Council and were placed before the Sub-board and are available for inspection.
- 2.8 In order to take account of future requirements proposed areas of new residential development and projected population changes may need to be considered. However, I have been advised that these are not materially different.
- 2.9 The Returning Officer has checked the records from Polling Station Inspectors and reports from other polling station staff about the condition of polling stations and accessibility of the currently used polling stations and has commented on the proposals.
- 2.10 When undertaking the review of Polling Districts the Council must seek to ensure that all electors in the constituency in its area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- 2.11 When reviewing polling places the Council must
- seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in its area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
 - seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable

every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled

- have regard to the accessibility to disabled persons of potential polling stations in any place which it is considering designating as a polling place or the designation of which as a polling place it is reviewing
- unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the polling district designate polling places in the polling district
- ensure the polling place for a polling district is small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station.

If no polling place is designated for a polling district then the polling district is to be taken to be the polling place.

Polling Districts

- 2.12 Changes are proposed to the following polling districts only
- Anglesey- all 3 polling districts
 - Forton- all 3 polling districts
 - Lee West- all 3 polling districts
 - Brockhurst – GE1 and GE2

Maps of these changes are at Appendix 3

- 2.13 No representations were received during the public consultation exercise

Polling Places

- 2.14 Representations have been received from Ward Councillors for Bridgemary South suggesting that Nobes Hall rather than St Matthews Church should be used as a polling station for GD 1. This has been considered but if the change was to be made more voters would be travelling further. However a further review of the possibility of using the Church facilities at Fisher Road will be undertaken in 12 months.
- 2.15 Representation has also been received from a Ward Councillor for Rowner and Holbrook asking that consideration be given to using Holbrook Recreation Centre as the polling place for GP1. Whilst there may be a room available access to this would be through the existing reception area, down a corridor with a number of doors and from a narrow corridor which is difficult to access in a wheelchair.
- 2.16 A number of polling places are outside the polling district and consideration has been given to alternative polling places within the polling district. There are changes to the polling places for the following polling districts:-

- Bridgemary North- GC 1 will now use Bridgemary Methodist Church rather than Bedenham Primary School as it is closer to the majority of voters
- Brockhurst- GE 1 the polling place for this district is Solent Evangelical Church which does not require a large number of voters to cross Brockhurst Road. However there is no suitable access for people with disabilities and it is not possible to use a temporary ramp. Therefore in order for this venue to continue to be used as a polling place it is essential that work to provide a suitable access is undertaken. The church agrees in principle and discussions are under-way to identify an appropriate scheme (see also Financial Services comments). If an access cannot be provided then the polling place would need to be changed to St Mary's School Norman Road which would require voters to walk further and also uphill over the bridge.
- Brockhurst GE3 – the Sub-Board initially wanted to designate Middlecroft Gospel Hall as the polling place for the GE3 polling district, but the Board of Trustees for the church declined the request. The church was considered to be central to the polling district, as opposed to the existing polling place at St John's School in Norman Road which is some distance away. Middlecroft Gospel Church has however, following discussions with officers, now agreed to the use of its building for polling purposes, and in accordance with the earlier wishes of the Sub-Board their offer has been tentatively accepted. This meant a revision to the polling district plans to the version originally agreed by the Sub-Board. The revised plans were referred to the Sub-Board members who were happy with the arrangement.
- Privett GO1 – I was asked to look into the practicability of using a room at Thorngate Halls as the polling place for the GO1 polling district. There is a choice of two rooms that could be made available – the Theatre or the Williams Room. Access to either room is not particularly good, especially for voters arriving by car and entering the building from the rear of the premises where they would need to negotiate a number of corridors to reach either polling station. This would also apply to disabled voters arriving by car. Access to the complex for disabled voters is good, but there is no direct access to the either room that may be used for polling. Access for voters arriving as pedestrians would be easier. Several signs would be needed to direct voters to the polling station.

The management could not guarantee the availability of either room in the event of an unscheduled election. Preference would be given to those that have pre-booked the rooms.

Current car parking policy provides for free parking for the first

20 minutes. There would be a charge for hiring the premises.

Under all the circumstances it is therefore not recommended that Thorngate Halls be used as a polling place.

2.17 Brockhurst Ward

The polling districts in the Brockhurst Ward were revised to take account of the provision of new polling places at Middlecroft Gospel Church (GE3) and the Thorngate Almshouse Trust in Melrose Gardens (GE2). With regard the GE2 polling district, the Board of Trustees at Thorngate Almshouse Trust have subsequently declined permission to use their building as a polling place because of potential on-site traffic management and parking problems.

It is recommended that the revised polling districts shown in the plan attached as appendix 3 should remain and that the polling place for the GE2 polling district should be at Brockhurst Baptist Church in Netherton Road.

2.18 The public consultation exercise ended at 4pm on Wednesday 5 December 2007. No representations had been made by that time.

2.19 The proposed schedule of polling districts and polling places, incorporating all amendments, is attached as Appendix 4

3 Risk Assessment

3.1 The Council has to comply with its statutory obligation and conduct the review before the end of the year

4 Conclusion

4.1 Once the Council has considered the response to the proposals and made their decision on the review any changes to the electoral register will need to amended.

Financial Services comments:	The total estimated cost to provide the disabled access referred to in 2.16 above is £12,000. While it is possible that the church may contribute towards this cost, the balance may be met from virement from Land Charges income
Legal Services comments:	Contained in the report
Service Improvement Plan implications:	None
Corporate Plan:	None

Risk Assessment:	See Section 3
Background papers:	Reports to Sub-Board 25 October and 12 November 2007
Appendices/Enclosures:	
Schedule	Review Proposals
Appendix 1	Draft Proposals for Consultation
Appendix 2	Returning Officers Response
Appendix 3	Maps of changes to Polling Districts
Appendix 4	Schedule of polling districts and polling places
Report author/ Lead Officer:	Ian Lycett