

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

AGENDA
ITEM NO

COUNCIL

16 JANUARY 2020

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Report Title	REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICT, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS 2019
Purpose of Report	To make final recommendations to the polling districts and places arrangements in the district following public consultation and incorporating the Community Governance Review agreed changes approved by Council.
Decision(s)	Council RESOLVES to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the schedule of polling districts and polling places 2020; 2. authorise the Democratic Services and Elections Manager to make necessary amendments to the register of electors. 3. Delegate responsibility to the Returning Officer to make any further polling place and polling station changes as necessary.
Consultation and Feedback	The review was undertaken in accordance with the published guidance and public consultation took place between Monday 12 August to Monday 14 October 2019 where Elected Members, County Councillors, MP's, Parish/Town Councils, resident associations, local disability groups and the public were invited to comment. Consultation responses are included in Appendix A.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	There are no significant financial implications arising from the changes proposed in this report. Lucy Clothier, Interim Accountancy Manager Tel: 01453 754343 Email: lucy.clothier@stroud.gov.uk
Legal Implications	All legal implications are set out in the body of the report Patrick Arran Interim Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer Tel: 01453 754369 Email: patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk
Report Author	Hannah Emery Democratic Services and Elections Manager Tel: 01453 754383 Email: hannah.emery@stroud.gov.uk
Options	The revised scheme of polling districts and places must be adopted to ensure that all polling district boundaries are cohesive with the recently adopted Community Governance Review boundary amendments.
Background Papers/ Appendices	Appendix A: Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2020 (includes consultation responses and link to map)

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Review was undertaken as required under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Electoral Administration Act 2013, and in accordance with relevant Electoral Commission Guidance.
- 1.2 Neither the boundaries for the parliamentary constituencies, local ward or parish boundaries are considered by this review.
- 1.3 The review requires the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) for each constituency which is wholly or partly in its area to comment on the existing and proposed arrangements.
- 1.4 There are a number of legislative guidelines which must be taken into consideration when undertaking a polling district review, these are:
 - 1.4.1 Each parish is to be a separate polling district unless special circumstances apply;
 - 1.4.2 The Council must designate a polling place for each polling district unless the situation of the polling station does not materially affect the convenience of the elector;
 - 1.4.3 A polling place must be in the area in the polling district unless special circumstances mean it is not possible to locate an appropriate place for polling, then it can be wholly or partly moved outside of the polling district;
 - 1.4.4 The polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station;
 - 1.4.5 Seek to ensure all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
 - 1.4.6 Seek to ensure the polling place has appropriate accessibility for electors who are disabled as far as is reasonable.
- 1.5 The public consultation ran from the 12 August to the 14 October and during this time the review was publicised regularly in addition to a dedicated page on the Council's website. In total, 22 consultation responses were received.

2. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

- 2.1 Appendix 1 to the report details the proposed amendments to polling districts and polling places including the associated electoral areas together with consultee comments and the Acting Returning Officer comments.
- 2.2 **Amendments to Polling District References**
- 2.3 The current polling districts are labelled with a series of letters and a number that relate to the name of the district ward they are part of i.e. AW1, B1. It is proposed that an amendment to the polling district references is made to reflect the current guidance and legislation. Guidance provided by the Electoral Commission states that using numbers as part of the polling district identifier

could cause confusion to elector numbers and therefore it is proposed that the polling district references are amended to letters only, i.e. AWA, BA etc.

- 2.4 This is with the exception of Minchinhampton polling districts which cannot be referenced MA, MB etc because Cotswold District Council use the same references for their polling districts and this would cause confusion at the time of a Parliamentary election when Minchinhampton forms part of the Cotswold Constituency. It is therefore recommended that Minchinhampton polling districts are referenced MAA, MBB, MCC etc.

2.5 **Amendments to polling district boundaries and names**

- 2.6 Amberley and Rodborough South Ward polling district boundary amendment: Following the Community Governance Review (CGR) in 2019, an amendment to the Amberley Parish boundary was approved to transfer 16 properties from Rodborough (South Ward Div 2) into Amberley. From this amendment the polling district boundary must be realigned to reflect the change in the parish boundary for Amberley and Rodborough.

- 2.7 Bisley and Chalford polling district boundary amendment: Following the CGR, an amendment to the Bisley (Eastcombe Ward) Parish boundary was approved to transfer 36 properties in Stonecote Ridge and 3 properties on The Ridge to Chalford (Bussage Ward Div 1). It was also agreed that Bisley (Eastcombe Ward) would absorb 4 properties on Middle Hill from Chalford (Bussage Ward Div 1). From this amendment the polling district boundary must be amended to reflect the change in the parish boundaries.

- 2.8 Cainscross and Stonehouse polling district boundary amendment: The outcome of the CGR resulted in the renaming of the parish/town wards which need to be reflected in the naming of the polling districts, it is therefore proposed that Stonehouse (Ebley Ward) is renamed to Stonehouse (Ryeford Ward). In addition to the name change, an amendment to the boundary of Stonehouse (Ryeford Ward) split the polling district to transfer 132 properties to Cainscross (Ebley Ward) and retain 57 properties in Stonehouse (Ebley Ward). From this amendment the polling district boundary now needs to be amended to reflect the change in the parish boundary for Cainscross (Ebley Ward) and Stonehouse (Ryeford Ward).

- 2.9 Eastington and Stonehouse: The CGR resulted in an amendment to the Eastington boundary to transfer the area of Oldends Industrial Estate from Eastington to Stonehouse (Div 1). This does not affect any properties or electors and corrects a current boundary anomaly. From this amendment the polling district boundary now needs to be amended to reflect the change in the parish boundary.

- 2.10 Hardwicke, Haresfield and Hunts Grove: The CGR resulted in the creation of the new parish Hunts Grove. The new parish will incorporate the transfer of 389 properties from Hardwicke and 93 properties from Haresfield. From this amendment a new polling district of Hunts Grove must be created. The polling station for the new polling district is reference below.

- 2.11 Kingswood and Wotton-under-Edge polling district: An amendment to the boundary as part of the CGR has meant Wotton-under-Edge (South Ward) is being transferred into Kingswood parish with the exception of the hamlet of Wortley, Wotton Sports Foundation and adjacent land which will be absorbed into Wotton-under-Edge (Div 2). From this amendment the polling district boundary now needs to be amended to reflect the change in the parish boundary for Kingswood and Wotton-under-Edge and the existing polling district of Wotton-under-Edge (South Ward) (K5) is abolished.
- 2.12 Minchinhampton Box Ward and Nailsworth Div 1: The CGR approved the transfer of one property into Minchinhampton (Box Ward) from Nailsworth (Div 1). From this amendment the polling district boundary now needs to be amended to reflect the change in the parish boundary for Minchinhampton (Box Ward) and Nailsworth Town Council.
- 2.13 Randwick and Westrip change of polling district names: The CGR provided an opportunity to revise an error in the warding arrangements for Randwick and Westrip Parish Council that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England made when undertaking the electoral review of district boundaries in 2015. This correction requires the renaming of two polling districts in Randwick and Westrip parish to reflect the new names of the parish wards.
- 2.13.1 Cainscross (Lower Westrip Ward Div 1) is amended to Randwick (South West Ward).
- 2.13.2 Randwick (Lower Westrip Ward Div 1) is amended to Randwick (South East Ward).
- 2.14 Standish and Stonehouse polling district boundary amendment: The CGR resulted in an amendment to the Standish boundary to transfer the recreation ground between the railway lines from Standish Parish to Stonehouse (Div 1). This does not affect any properties or electors but does correct a boundary anomaly. From this amendment the polling district boundary now needs to be amended to reflect the change in the parish boundary for Standish and Stonehouse.
- 2.15 Stroud Trinity and Brimscombe and Thrupp (Div 1): The CGR approved the transfer of 47 properties into Brimscombe & Thrupp (Div1) from Stroud Trinity. From this amendment the polling district boundary now needs to be amended to reflect the change in the parish boundaries.

2.16 **Amendments to polling places and polling stations**

Alkington (BVA): The Stagecoach Inn has now closed therefore Stone Cricket Club has been proposed as the new polling station for the polling district of Alkington. Stone Cricket Club has already been used for the European Parliamentary Election in May 2019 and the General Election in December 2019. The polling station has good facilities and worked well in both elections.

Hunts Grove (HF): Hunts Grove Primary Academy, Harrier Way is recommended as a polling station for this new polling district. The polling station has a separate access to be used on polling day by electors, is centrally located within the polling district and is currently the only suitable venue to be used as a polling station within the area. It is the intention that once the Community Centre has been built that this will be used as a polling station in future.

Longney (HG): Longney Congregational Church has now closed and Longney Church (St Laurence) has been proposed as the new polling station for the Polling District of Longney. Longney Church (St Laurence) was used as a polling station in the European Elections held in May 2019 and in the General Election in December 2019 and is demonstrated to be a suitable venue.

Minchinhampton (MCC and MDD) The Hub has previously been used as a polling station but was not available in May 2019 and the Scout Hut has since been used for the European Election and General Election. The Scout Hut is suitable to be used as a double station, has adequate access and is central in the polling districts. It is therefore recommended that The Scout Hut is used as a polling station for polling district MCC and MDD.

Rodborough West Ward Div 3: It has been raised that Rodborough Tabernacle is a more appropriate polling station to Gastrells Primary School. However, it is proposed that this polling station does not change.

Gastrells Primary School is a well-established polling station within the community and has been able to successfully remain open for pupils since the venue was established as a polling station while maintaining the safety and security of the pupils. There are no suitable alternatives within the polling district of Rodborough (West Ward Div 3) and whilst both Gastrells Primary School and Rodborough Tabernacle are both outside of the polling district boundary, Gastrells Primary School is the closest venue making this the more logical choice for the polling district.

Access to the Tabernacle is down a steep narrow one track lane with no pavements for electors to safely commute to the venue compared to Gastrells Primary School, which is located on a two-way lane with safe access for electors and has adequate parking. One of the key aspects when reviewing and considering polling stations is the ARO must have regard to the accessibility to disabled persons ensuring all electors have safe and reasonable access to the polling station and Rodborough Tabernacle does adequately not fit these criteria.

Stroud Central Div 3: The Christian Community Centre has been renovated over the past year and St Lukes Therapy Centre next door has been used as an alternative in the May and December 2019 elections. Whilst St Lukes has worked relatively well as a polling station, The Christian Community Centre provides more adequate disabled access and it is therefore proposed that the Community Centre is used for this polling district in future.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The review of polling districts and polling places is a statutory requirement. The recommendations made seek to ensure that electors in the Stroud District have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and that the arrangements meet the legislative requirements.
- 3.2 The recommendations, if approved at Council and the CGR amendments are approved by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England will take effect from the 1st February 2020.