

POLLING STATION – ‘MINI-REVIEW’

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor M Bullivant, Portfolio Holder, Corporate Management
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Wards Affected	Beacon Ward and Waseley Ward
Ward Councillors consulted	Yes
Key Decision	

1. Purpose of Report

The report seeks the Committee’s approval of amendments to Polling Station arrangements for Elections / Referenda / Polls which take place from November 2012 onwards and related matters.

2. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- 2.1 for the reasons stated in the report below, the following changes be made to the existing Polling Station, with immediate effect in respect of Rubery Youth Centre, Rubery (Beacon Ward) Polling District (BEA) and Rubery South (Waseley Ward) Polling District (WAB), the new Polling Station be the Royal British Legion premises at 64 New Road, Rubery.**

3. KEY ISSUES**Financial Implications**

- 3.1 There are some minor financial implications for the Council which arise directly from this report, at this time, but which can be contained within existing budgets.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 Power to designate Polling Places rests with the Council and decisions about the situation of Polling Stations within Polling Places are for the Returning Officer. Compliance with statutory requirements is required, principally under the Representation of the People Acts and Regulations and the Disability Discrimination Act.
- 3.3 Statutory elements of the Council’s Constitution under the Local Government Act 2000, place authority to determine revised Polling Places with the Council’s Electoral Matters Committee.

Service / Operational Implications

3.4 "Relevant authorities" must:

"a) seek to ensure that all the electors in the Constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances"; and

"b) seek to ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons".

If it is necessary to use a place where the access is not ideal, then every reasonable adjustment must be undertaken to provide access for all electors."

3.5 Officers continue to attempt to identify polling station locations which improve both general accessibility and access for people with disabilities, but regret that this is not always possible to achieve, mainly because:

- a) available buildings are not in the ownership or under the control of the Council; and/or
- b) there are no suitable premises available within the Polling District or Ward.

3.6 This "mini review" has been triggered by factors beyond the Council's control which affect the Polling Station in question.

Key Issues

Rubery Youth Centre, New Road, Rubery

3.7 As a result of a current Worcestershire County Council review of the Youth Service provision, there is uncertainty about the future of the Rubery Youth Centre and its availability for use as a Polling Station for the Rubery (Beacon Ward) Polling District (BEA) and Rubery South (Waseley Ward) Polling District (WAA) at future elections.

3.8 Officers have identified a suitable alternative at the Royal British Legion premises at 64 New Road, Rubery. There is a large room suitable for use as a polling station which has a separate access directly from the rear car park area off Whetty Lane.

3.9 There is a small step to the door entrance into the room which will require a temporary shallow ramp to be put into place at an election.

- 3.10 Relevant Council Political Group representatives and the Returning Officer have been consulted.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.11 The Council's Customer / Equalities policies do cross-relate, particularly in relation to Access issues.
- 3.12 Accessibility for members of minority or disadvantaged groups is a key issue in the selection of suitable polling stations. Where possible Polling Station selection should give due regard to increasing turnout.
- 3.13 Any changes agreed must be likely to be sustainable for a reasonable number of years. Frequent changes of Polling Station are not helpful for electors / confidence in electoral systems.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Any new Polling Station has to be reliably available for the foreseeable future in order to maximise public knowledge of, and confidence in, the Council's electoral procedures.
- 4.2 Choice of Polling Place / Polling Station should not give rise to significant grounds of complaint which might put election results at risk of challenge.
- 4.3 In terms of Environmental risks, it is preferable that Polling Station location can help minimise unnecessary additional journeys by car / motorised vehicles. :

5. APPENDICES

- A. Plan – Revised Polling Station Location - The Royal British Legion premises, 64 New Road, Rubery

6. Background Papers

Previously published Polling Stations Review reports / Minutes
Relevant Statutory provisions

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Appendix A

The Royal British Legion



DATE TIME
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