

## **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE**

**03 September 2020**

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### **Polling Place Alteration 2020**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillors K May, Leader and, G Denaro Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Service - Legal, Democratic & Property Services
Wards Affected	Barnt Green & Hopwood
Ward Councillor Consulted	Yes
Non-Key Decision	(Electoral Matters Committee has full devolved powers)

#### **1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 The report sets out a change to the polling place for polling district BHA in advance of the May Elections 2021.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **that the Committee makes Hopwood Village Hall the polling place for BHA with any stipulations it might wish to make.**

#### **3. KEY ISSUES**

##### **Financial Implications**

- 3.1 There are no envisaged changes to finance.

##### **Legal Implications**

- 3.3 a) Authority to set Polling District boundaries and to designate polling places rests with the Council (Statutory elements of the Council's Constitution under the Local Government Act 2000). Bromsgrove District Council has delegated full relevant powers to this Electoral Matters Committee.

b) Decisions about the situation of Polling Stations within designated Polling Places are for the (Acting) Returning Officer. Arrangements must comply with relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Acts and Regulations and the Equality Act 2010.

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- 3.4 "Relevant authorities" (such as Bromsgrove District Council) 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."

#### **Service / Operational Implications**

- 3.5 As a result of the polling places review held last year and the General Election held 12 December 2019 officers received a number of requests to change some polling places within the District.
- 3.6 One of the requests was to move the polling place from the Westmead Hotel back to the previous polling place of Hopwood Village Hall.
- 3.7 The Committee had decided to move the polling place from Hopwood Village Hall to Westmead Hotel as part of the 2019 review. The main reason for the move was the access issues the village hall had.
- 3.8 Members of the Hopwood Village Hall Committee have approached officers and their District Councillor asking that the Committee review their decision as building works have now resolved the main issue. At the Electoral Matters Committee meeting of 27 February 2020 it was noted that the building works would not be completed until mid-March. It was resolved that the Westmead Hotel be used for Police and Crime Commissioner election with a review taking place of using the Village Hall following the completion of the building works.
- 3.9 The PCC elections were postponed due to COVID-19 so the Westmead Hotel was not used in May. Officers visited the Village Hall and confirmed the new access path was satisfactory.
- 3.10 The District Councillor supports the return of the polling place to the village hall.
- 3.11 Officers also received a letter of support for the return to the Village Hall from the Alvechurch Parish Council.

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- 3.12 The (Acting) Returning Officer must make a submission regarding current and any proposed polling stations. He raised no objections to the polling place being returned to the Village Hall.
- 3.13 If the Village Hall is to be used as a polling place again, officers would like the Committee to consider some stipulations for the hall to be a polling place
- A guarantee that the hall could be used for polling at short notice;
  - That the hall be opened and closed for polling plus delivery and collection of polling booths

### **Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.14 The Council's policies directly cross-relate, particularly in relation to Access issues. Accessibility for members of minority or disadvantaged groups is a key issue in the selection of suitable Polling Stations.

### **4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 Any changes agreed must be likely to be sustainable for a reasonable number of years, as frequent changes of Polling Station are not helpful for electors and undermine their knowledge of, and confidence in, electoral systems.
- 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 of course preferable that choice of Polling Station location can help minimise unnecessary additional journeys by motorised vehicles.
- 4.4 In terms of Human Resources risks, the (Acting) Returning Officer must provide adequate levels and standards of staffing to secure proper polling arrangements.

### **5. APPENDICES**

None

### **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Local Government Boundary Commission for England and Electoral Commission Guidance.

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**7. KEY**

Bromsgrove Returning Officer, Mr Kevin Dicks, is designated (Acting) Returning Officer for Parliamentary Elections.

This is because formally the Returning Officer for a County Constituency such as Bromsgrove is the High Sheriff for that County, which is a purely honorific title/role.

**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

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