

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

23 June 2014

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Council

1 REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

To note the recommendation of the Electoral Review Working Group in respect of the review of Polling Districts and Polling Places in the Borough, and to agree to the final proposals to be submitted to Council for approval.

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Members will be aware that the Electoral Review Working Group (ERWG) met on 18 March 2014 (**Annex 1**) to determine the final recommendations to this General Purposes Committee regarding the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places.
- 1.1.2 That review commenced in October 2013, and included a public consultation that concluded in January 2014. Members of the ERWG discussed the responses to that consultation, and agreed that the proposals put before them be endorsed and put before this Committee for recommendation to Council.
- 1.1.3 The final recommendations are set out in **Annex 2**. These are the same as that presented to ERWG, save for a slight formatting correction.
- 1.1.4 I therefore recommend that the final proposals, as set out at **Annex 2** and previously agreed by the Electoral Review Working Group, be agreed by this Committee for recommendation to Council on 15 July 2014. The appropriate changes made to the Register effective 1 December 2014.

1.2 Legal Implications

- 1.2.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended) requires borough councils to undertake reviews of polling districts and polling places at least every four years. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The next compulsory review must now be started and completed between 1 October 2013 and 31 January 2015 (inclusive).

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.3.1 The cost of this review will be met from existing budgets. Failure to correctly undertake this review could impose considerable financial penalties on the (Acting) Returning Officers due to problems at elections; this would trigger a series of events bringing cost and embarrassment to the Council.

1.4 Risk Assessment

- 1.4.1 The requirements of our electors are essential, and a failure to correctly undertake this review could result in disenfranchising electors, or making it more difficult for them to vote.
- 1.4.2 Any failure in the process or consideration of comments made during the consultation stage could result in the Electoral Commission over-ruling the decisions of the Council.

1.5 Equality Assessment

- 1.5.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.
- 1.5.2 The selection of polling places takes into account the needs of electors with disabilities and, as far as is reasonably practicable, efforts are made to ensure all eligible electors are able to access polling stations. Risk assessments of all polling places have been undertaken, and this includes a series of access questions. Presiding Officers at polling stations also provide feed-back on accessibility of polling stations at elections. The review of polling places has identified some changes that will help improve accessibility to venues (by using better-located venues) and into polling stations (by using venues with better accessibility).

1.6 Recommendations

- 1.6.1 It is recommended that Members approve the final proposals set out in this paper for agreement by Council.

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