

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

15 June 2022

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 DRAFT PROPOSALS FOR REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

Following receipt of the final recommendations for the warding arrangements, from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, a Polling District & Polling Place review, needs to be undertaken to implement the changes to the warding arrangements and ensure the Polling Districts lie within the Parish, Ward and Constituency boundaries.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Following the report to General Purposes Committee on 22nd March, (attached **Annexe 1**, timetable amended slightly), informing the Committee that a Polling District/Place/Station review would need to be undertaken, this report details the proposals for the new structure of the Polling Districts, Places and Stations under the new warding arrangements and the commencement of the Consultation period.

1.2 Proposed Polling Districts/Places

1.2.1 At **Annexe 2** is a list of the existing wards and the Polling Districts and Polling Places that are within each Polling District.

1.2.2 At **Annexe 3** is a list of the new wards and the proposed Polling Districts and Polling Places that are within each Polling District.

1.2.3 At **Annexe 4** are the existing Wards map

1.2.4 At **Annexe 5** are the new Wards maps.

1.2.5 At **Annexe 6** are the existing Polling Districts/Places map

1.2.6 At **Annexe 7** are the proposed Polling Districts and Polling Places map. For clarity, the red lines are the new ward boundaries, the blue lines are the proposed polling district boundaries, and the green lines are parish boundaries.

1.2.7 At **Annexe 8** is the Polling District/Place Timetable

1.2.8 The main changes are as follows: -

- Polling District boundary between Walderslade and Aylesford North & North Downs moved out to match the new ward boundary.
- Polling District boundary between Aylesford North & North Downs and Aylesford South & Ditton moved slightly to match the new ward boundary.
- We have created a new Polling District within Snodland West and Holborough lakes ward, called Holborough Lakes with the new Polling Place/station situated at the Holborough Lakes Village Hall.
- We have created a new polling district within Tonbridge between Hildenborough and Judd. This Polling District has been created as the ward and Parish boundaries are not co-terminus. The Polling District will not have a Polling Place/Station we will use the Stocks Green CP Polling Place/Station. For clarity when there is a ward election for Hildenborough ward, residents in this Polling District will be able to vote, if there is a Parish election for Hildenborough the residents of this Polling District will not be able to vote as they sit outside the Parish.
- The other Polling Districts within Tonbridge have been moved to match the new Ward boundaries for each ward.
- The names of some of the Polling Districts have been changed to reflect the new ward names.
- The Polling Districts have all been recoded as well.

1.3 Consultation

1.3.1 All of the attached documents will be shared with electors, councillors, parish councils and various other organisations within the Borough, as part of the consultation.

1.3.2 The consultation will run from 27th June for 8 weeks. The consultation will be uploaded on the TMBC web site and people will have the opportunity to add their comments and ideas.

1.3.3 All Polling Places will be reviewed during July/August 2022, to ensure their continued suitability.

1.3.4 At the end of the consultation, all the ideas will be looked at and the proposals amended where necessary.

1.3.5 The final recommendations will be brought to General Purpose Committee on 12th September and then ratified at Council following that 25 October 2022.

- 1.3.6 All changes will be uploaded to the Elections system during December and January, with an updated register being published on 1st February 2023, ready for the Local elections in May 2023.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 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 and following a Local Government Boundary Review, where warding arrangements are changed.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 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 reputational damage to the Council.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 The requirements of 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.
- 1.6.2 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.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 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 are being 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.

1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 To approve the draft proposals for the purpose of going out to consultation.
- 1.8.2 To endorse the consultation proposals.

Background papers:

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Annexe 1

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Chief Executive