

## REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE - WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2020

### PART I - DELEGATED

#### 5. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES (CED)

##### 1 Summary

- 1.1 To receive details following the consultation on Polling Districts and Polling Places within the Three Rivers District.

##### 2 Details

- 2.1 This report of the Returning Officer sets out proposed changes to polling districts and polling places following a consultation process carried out in accordance with the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

##### 3 Background

- 3.1 A public notice was published on 1 October 2019 detailing the arrangements for the statutory review of polling districts and places. The review ran until 31 October 2019 inviting representations and comments from electors, elected representatives, local politicians as well as organisations who have an interest and expertise in regards to access of premises for people with disabilities.

- 3.2 Copies of the notice were sent to:

- All District Councillors
- County Councillors for the area
- Parish Councils
- Disability Groups
- Political Parties
- Returning Officers (shared parliamentary boundary areas)

Along with messages on our social media channels.

- 3.3 The notification sought comments on the existing Polling Districts & Places and asked for suggestions for possible alternative proposals.

- 3.4 In December 2013, Council delegated to Regulatory Services Committee the approval of Polling Districts and Polling Places in respect of the District and Parish Wards. (Minute RG20/13 and CL59/13 [Regulatory Services] refer).

- 3.5 Members may recall the previous review of 2017 resulting in polling district changes in the following wards: Oxhey Hall & Hayling, Chorleywood South & Maple Cross, Leavesden, Abbots Langley & Bedmond and South Oxhey.

- 3.6 A Polling District is the area created by the division of Wards within which a Polling Place can be determined which is convenient for voters.

- 3.7 The Polling Place is the building in which Polling Stations will be situated by the Returning Officer. The Polling Station is the room or building in which the voting takes place. The Polling Place must be accessible to all voters.

##### 4 Outcome of the Consultation

- 4.1 Representations, comments and proposals were received and published on the council's website on 1 November 2019 (see Appendix A).

<http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/elections>

## 5 Proposed Changes

- 5.1 The response from the Returning Officer detailing the final proposals was published on the council's website on 4 November 2019 (see Appendix B).

<http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/elections>

- 5.2 Following the publication of the Returning Officer's report on the 4 November 2019 there have been no further comments or submissions on the recommendations put forward by the deadline of 25 November.2019.

- 5.3 From the six submissions made the following change is recommended by the Returning Officer for Regulatory Committee to approve:

**South Oxhey Ward:** that new dwellings under construction in the South Oxhey Initiative as detailed in Appendix C to the north of the marked boundary line (47, 127 & 145) are moved into polling district DCDA, and therefore voters will vote at All Saint's Church Hall as opposed to Polling District DCD served by Watford Parish Hall.

The numbers of voters estimated to vote at these polling stations at future elections is as follows:

Polling District	Polling Station	Approx. No. of Voters
DCDA	All Saint's Church Hall, Gosforth Lane, WD19 7AX	2,600
DCD	Watford Parish Hall, Oxhey Drive, WD19 7SB	2,300

The Returning Officer is in agreement with the Labour Group proposal which will reduce number of electors already using the Parish Hall with All Saint's Church being a more convenient location for the new voters.

## 6 Financial, Equal Opportunities, Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Communications & Website, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

- 6.1 None specific.

## 7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 section 18D requires that local authorities designate the polling places within their Parliamentary constituencies. Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, Returning Officers have the right to use certain public buildings for use as polling stations at elections.

- 7.2 Section 18B (4) of the RPA 1983 states that in conducting a review of polling places the authority must:

- a) Seek to ensure that all electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.

- b) Seek to ensure that, so far as is reasonable 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.

7.3 In addition the polling place for a polling district must be within the area of the district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area either wholly or partly outside of the polling district.

7.4 It should be noted that voters can appeal any decision of the council to the Electoral Commission who may direct any local authority to make alterations to any review outcome that they deem necessary.

7.5 The changes to Polling Districts and Places will take effect with the publication of the revised Register of Electors on 1 March 2020, and take immediate effect for all elections commencing with the district council and Police & Crime Commissioner polls taking place on Thursday 7 May 2020, and for every four years thereafter until the next review date.

## **8 Recommendation**

8.1 That the Committee consider the proposed change set out in this report in relation to South Oxhey Ward Polling Districts and agree to the proposal as recommended by the Returning Officer.

Report prepared by: Michael Summerville, Electoral Services Manager.

### **Data Quality**

Data sources:

Civica Xpress election management system

Data checked by:

David Hill, Interim Chief Executive and Returning Officer

Data rating:

<b>1</b>	<b>Poor</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Sufficient</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>x</b>

### **Background Papers**

Guidance from the Electoral Commission.

### **APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix A: Schedule of representations, comments and proposals on Polling District and Place review (6 received).

Appendix B: Returning Officer's report and proposals.

Appendix C: Map detailing proposed changes to South Oxhey Ward, Polling Districts DCD and DCDA.

## **Appendix A - Polling District & Places Review 2019**

The following comments and observations have been received by the Acting Returning Officer by the deadline of 31 October 2019, in regards to the review of parliamentary polling districts and polling places:

1. Would it be possible for the Rickmansworth end of Chorleywood north to poll at the Baptist Church Rickmansworth which is within walking distance rather than Christ Church?

### ***Received from a Rickmansworth Town Councillor***

2. On 2nd May 2019 Polling Station TRDC6 and TRDC 7 in the Carpenders Park Community Hall, Station Footpath, Gibbs Couch, WD19 5EG catered for 4,050 electors and Polling Station TRDC5 at Woodhall Primary School in Woodhall Lane, South Oxhey, WD19 6QX catered for 1,289 electors. As far as I know there was not a problem in terms of convenient location or size of either Polling Station. However, going forward this could change for the reasons given below.

Possible closure of Carpenders Park Community Hall:

The representative of the Carpenders Park Community Hall Association, publicly stated in an article to Carpenders Park residents that the Community Hall would close next year unless residents volunteer to help run it. The representative's previous appeals for help have failed and I think they feels that they have no option but to close the hall. If this happens, will St Meryl School, in The Mead, Carpenders Park, WD19 5BT become the Polling Station as was the case before the Community Hall was built (I think) in the 1980s?

TRDC new Area Plan:

If some of the sites under TRDC's references PSS47, CFS11, CFS12, CFS14, CFS69, PCS2 and PSCFS11 are approved by the Planning Committee for housing development, it will call into question the adequacy of the current two Polling Stations and the need for additional Polling Stations to cater for the substantial increase in electors in Polling Districts DCH and DCG.

### ***Received from a voter in Carpenders Park Ward***

3. I am not clear from your Facebook message how to respond to the consultation. However I am using this opportunity to express my views that polling stations should not be based in schools if it means the school will be closed for the day. It is an unacceptable and avoidable waste of a day's education.

Arnett Hills school is used every election. Over a 6 year period how many days have those pupils missed? There are places like the community centre and William Penn sport centre that should be used instead

### ***Received from a voter in Rickmansworth Town Ward***

4. I wish to record my objection to the use of a second polling station within the Oxhey Hall Polling area! It is a total waste of time, resource and consequently money!! The original Polling Station at the Community Centre is more than adequate!

***Received from a voter in Oxhey Hall & Hayling Ward***

5. My local district is DCH. I am happy that the current polling station in the Carpenders Park Community Hall is accessible and meets the purpose.

***Received from a voter in Carpenders Park Ward***

6. Herewith are the comments of the Labour Group.

The main issue for this the Labour Group is the new dwellings under construction in South Oxhey as part of the South Oxhey Initiative and the need to future-proof polling district and polling station arrangements to take this new development into account. You will recall that on the last occasion a new polling district (DCDA) was created at the Labour Group's suggestion to reduce the number of elections using the Parish Hall in Oxhey Drive as the polling station for two reasons: 1 – the number of electors required to use the Parish Hall would increase as a result of the first phase of the redevelopment (which has now happened) and 2 – it was frankly very odd for voters to have to pass a perfectly good polling station (All Saints Church) to vote in Oxhey Drive.

Accordingly a map, which you have had sight of previously, is appended which again seeks to forestall difficulties caused by excess numbers using the Parish Hall in Oxhey Drive. The polling district line needs to be re-drawn as per that shown in yellow. At the last review, only roads were moved i.e. Ainsdale Road, Fairfield Avenue, Ferryhills Close Gosforth Lane, Lincoln Drive Matlock Crescent and Otley Way. The boundary, was not, to our knowledge, remapped. Accordingly, a boundary will also need to be shown between the blocks of flats in Ainsdale Road; Padgate House, Lalsham House and Lindrick House and Offerton House, Oxhey Drive.

Thus all new voters in the homes yet to be fully constructed to the north of those completed will commence at All Saints Church and will not need to change polling stations going forward, those presently going there now are well used to the arrangements and those voters in the homes already occupied remain at the Parish Hall, Oxhey Drive causing no disruption.

We trust that the arrangements are seen as sensible, easily administrable, with merit and without partisanship.

Other than that, we believe the existing electoral arrangements are as satisfactory as they can be given the geography of Three Rivers and in the case of Oxhey Hall and Hayling Ward, were recently agreed following a public consultation organised by this council.

However, we do not consider ourselves to have a monopoly on good ideas and are receptive to other proposals that may have eluded us. However, that said, our yardstick is that any other arrangements that may be proposed should clearly and demonstrably benefit existing and potential electors. They should not be to their detriment and most certainly not for the convenience, financial or otherwise, of the Council.

***Received from a South Oxhey Ward Councillor***

The Acting Returning Officer will now consider and make comment on the proposals and his recommendations will be published here on Monday 4 November 2019.

In accordance with the timetable further comments and submissions relating to the Acting Returning Officer's recommendations can be made up until 25 November 2019.

**Dated: 1 November 2019**

**Appendix B - Report of the Returning Officer on the Polling District, Polling Place & Polling Station Review 2019**

At the conclusion of this review on 31 October 2019 the Returning Officer in consideration of the comments and submissions received, together with the experiences and lessons learned from previous polls, including council elections held on 4 May 2019 and the European Parliamentary elections held on 23 May 2019 makes the following recommendations:

1. The movement of 1,283 voters from 540 properties from the Christ Church polling station in Chorleywood North ward would risk overloading the Baptist Church hall in Rickmansworth Town ward, which already acts as a double polling station serving around 2,500 voters.

The polling station is not within the ward which contravenes electoral commission guidance and may cause issues should ballot papers from one ward be placed in the wrong ballot box inside the polling station.

In addition it would not be closer distance wise for some of the voters in this area.

There have been no previous complaints from voters in regards to the use of Christ Church as a polling station which has served the voters from Chorleywood North well for many years.

**Recommendation: To retain the existing voting arrangements for both Chorleywood North and Rickmansworth Town**

2. Carpenders Park Community Hall is a much valued polling venue and would be missed if lost due to closure. The venue has confirmed availability for the forthcoming parliamentary election on Thursday 12 December, however, if it closes at a future date then consideration will be given to using St Meryl School in The Mead as suggested as there is a lack of any other suitable venues in the area.

**Recommendation: to keep voting arrangements in DCH Polling District, Carpenders Park ward under review**

3. The Returning Officer liaises closely with County who are responsible for our schools and the schools individually throughout the year. We currently use 7 schools as polling stations across the district. In the case of Arnett Hills School which serves as a polling station for both Penn and Mill End ward and Rickmansworth Town ward then ordinarily it remains open, as we do not insist they close for the day, and so education at the school can continue.

**Recommendation: to retain the use of Arnett Hills school as a polling station.**

4. The matter of the use of a mobile polling station on the pavilion car park site in Oxhey Hall and Hayling ward has previously been discussed by the Committee at previous

reviews, and it was decided to retain the use of this facility following the unsuccessful trial of the Scout Hut close by in May 2018.

**Recommendation: to retain the use of the mobile unit at the pavilion car park site in Oxhey Hall & Hayling ward**

5. Noted that voter satisfaction remains high for Carpenter's Park Community Hall.

**Recommendation: to retain the use of Carpenter's Park Community Centre as stated in point 2 subject to any future review should the facility close**

6. Following major construction works as part of the South Oxhey initiative it makes sense to review the voting arrangements for voters in the polling districts affected, and make changes to future proof voting for new residents on completion of the proposed new dwellings. As suggested Watford Parish Hall in polling district DCD currently serves around 3,000 voters with All Saint's Church, Gosforth Lane receiving around 1,500 voters.

**Recommendation: to agree the change as suggested to allow future voters in blocks H, I, J, M & O to vote at All Saint's Church in South Oxhey ward.**

The Returning Officer is grateful to everyone who took the time to respond to this review.

Should you wish to make further comments on any aspect of the review or the Returning Officer's recommendations please can you do so by 15 November 2019.

The Acting Returning Officer will publish his final proposals on 25 November 2019.

Final recommendations will be considered by the Council's Regulatory Committee on 4 December 2019.

Dated: 4 November 2019

Appendix C – new South Oxhey development, phase 3

