

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Maxine O' Mahony - Executive Director Strategy and Governance and Returning Officer.

To: Council – 23rd January 2020

Author: Rory Ringer – Democratic Services Manager

Subject: Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2019

Purpose: To agree the recommendations following the review of Polling Districts and Polling Places within the Breckland Council area.

Recommendation(s):

- 1) To adopt the Polling Districts and Polling Places as listed in Appendix 1 to this report, which include the following changes: -
 - i. The creation of a new Polling District SA2/1 Parish of Carbrooke (West), allowing for an additional Polling Station in the West of the Parish on the Carbrooke/Watton border (Appendix 2) as and when a suitable venue becomes available.
 - ii. The creation of a new Polling District TBU3 Parish of Thetford Burrell (West), allowing for the residents of St Martin's Way Canon Walk, Jubilee Close and Saxon Bank to vote at the Meet Up Café, St Martins Way, Thetford. (Appendix 3).
 - iii. The creation of a new Polling District TBU4 Parish of Thetford Burrell (East) allowing for the residents of the St Michaels Road/Nuntery Drive area to vote at St Michaels Close Community Room, Thetford (Appendix 3).
- 2) To note that, by law, the location of Polling Stations is the responsibility of the Returning Officer and to note the locations determined by the Returning Officer as listed in Appendix 1 to this report, which includes the following changes: -
 - i. To relocate the Polling Station for Polling District DEN1 Parish of Dereham Neatherd (East) from the Dereham Cricket Club to the Dereham Football Club.
 - ii. To relocate the Polling Station for Polling District HE2 Parish of Horningtoft from Horningtoft Manor Room to Whissonsett Village Hall.
 - iii. To relocate the Polling Station for Polling District AL6 Parish of Merton from Mobile Polling Station- Merton to Thompson Community Centre
 - iv. To relocate the Polling Station for Polling Districts HE5 Weasenham All Saints, HE6 Weasenham St Peter and HE7 Wellingham from Mobile Polling Station- Weasenham St Peter to Rougham Village Hall
 - v. The creation of a new Polling Station for Polling District TBU4 Thetford Burrell (East) at St Michaels Close Community Room, St Michaels Close, Thetford.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a requirement for local authorities to undertake a review of their Parliamentary polling districts and polling places every 4 years. The last review of the Breckland area was completed in the autumn of 2014. Subsequent amendments to this legislation by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 now means that all local authorities must undertake a review every 5 years, and the current round of reviews must be completed by 31st January 2020.
- 1.2 A 'Polling District' is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency for the purposes of a UK Parliamentary Election, and is the responsibility of the Council to designate.
- 1.3 A 'Polling Place' is the area in which polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer and is the responsibility of the Council to designate.
- 1.4 A 'Polling Station' is the area within the Polling Place where voting takes place, and are the responsibility of the Returning Officer to designate.
- 1.5 The Breckland review commenced on 1st August with the publication of the Notice of review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2019. Notices were placed on the Council's website and at the Council offices along with press releases inviting electors to submit comments.
- 1.6 Guidance produced by the Electoral Commission sets out the process for a review, and this has been followed.
- 1.7 As part of the review process (Acting) Returning Officers are required to make representations to the local authority on the existing polling stations and the polling stations that would likely be used on the proposed arrangements. These were also published on 1st August and a consultation on these proposals ran until 11th September 2019.
- 1.8 In carrying out this review, the Council has sought to ensure that: -
- All the electors in the area have reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
 - So far as is reasonable and practicable, every polling place is accessible to electors who have a disability and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of those with a disability.
 - The polling place is within the area of the polling district, unless circumstances make it necessary to designate somewhere else.
- 1.9 Interested parties consulted as part of this review were:
- Local (Acting) Returning Officers
 - Members of Parliament
 - Norfolk County Councillors covering the Breckland area
 - Breckland District Councillors
 - Town and Parish Councils via Parish Clerks
 - Political Parties (who have stood at recent elections)
 - Disability Access Groups

1.10 During the consultation 25 submissions were received, and these are summarised in Appendix 1, together with the Returning Officers comments.

2.0 **OPTIONS**

2.1 To approve the Polling Districts and Polling Places as listed in Appendix 1.

2.2 To approve alternative arrangements.

3.0 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

3.1 To comply with the legislative requirements of the Electoral Administration Act 2006, Section 16 in implementing the findings of the statutory review and consultation process.

4.0 **EXPECTED BENEFITS**

4.1 Compliance with legislative requirements

5.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

In preparing this report, the report author has considered the likely implications of the decision - particularly in terms of Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues; Constitutional & Legal; Contracts; Corporate Priorities; Crime & Disorder; Data Protection; Equality & Diversity/Human Rights; Financial; Health & Wellbeing; Reputation; Risk Management; Safeguarding; Staffing; Stakeholders/Consultation/Timescales; Other. Where the report author considers that there may be implications under one or more of these headings, these are identified below.

5.1 **Equality and Diversity / Human Rights**

5.1.1 As part of the review the Returning Officer has sought to ensure that all the electors in the area have reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. Also, to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, every polling place is accessible to electors who have a disability and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of those with a disability.

5.2 **Financial**

5.2.1 No additional financial resources as the number of polling Stations remains unchanged.

5.3 **Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales**

5.3.1 These are set out in the body of the report.

6.0 **WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED**

6.1 All

7.0 **ACRONYMS**

7.1 None

Background Papers: - None

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Key Decision: No

Exempt Decision: No

This report refers to a Mandatory Service

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix 1 Consultation Responses and Proposed Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations.
Appendix 2 Map of Proposed Polling District SA2/1 Carbrooke (West),
Appendix 3 Map of Proposed Polling Districts TBU3 Thetford Burrell (West) and TBU4 Thetford Burrell (East)