

Report to: General Purposes Committee – 2 March 2023

Director Lead: John Robinson, Chief Executive and Returning Officer

Lead Officer: Nigel Hill, Business Manager – Elections & Democratic Services, Ext. 5243

Report Summary	
Report Title	Changes to Polling Places
Purpose of Report	Ahead of the District / Parish Elections to be held on 4 May 2023, to advise the Committee of a number of required changes to polling places.
Recommendations	That: (a) the proposed change in polling places for the reasons set out in the report be approved; (b) delegated authority be given to the Returning Officer to finalise the new polling place in Southwell following consultation with the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee and local Ward Members; and (c) a general delegation be given to the Returning Officer to make any further changes which may become necessary, again following consultation with the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee and relevant Ward Members.
Reason for Recommendations	To approve the requisite changes to polling places ahead of the District / Parish elections on 4 May 2023 and to enable the Returning Officer to effect immediate changes to any other polling places which may be required.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 As Members will be aware, the last full elections held in the District were the combined County Council and Police & Crime Commissioner polls in May 2021.
- 1.2 Since that election there are a number of polling places which are unavailable for varying reasons. This report sets out, in section 2, these proposed changes.
- 1.3 The alternative venues for polling stations have all been (or will be, in the case of Southwell) assessed for accessibility for voters and facilities for polling staff. Voters affected will be advised of changes to polling stations on polling cards which will be issued in sufficient time to enable voters to request a postal vote if they did not wish to vote in person. The Council will also publicise polling station changes through social media channels.

- 1.4 The proposed changes have been shared with the local Ward Members who have all indicated their support.
- 1.5 Members may also wish to note that it is anticipated that a full review of polling places, polling districts and polling stations will be conducted later in the year.

2.0 Proposal/Options Considered

2.1 Bilsthorpe Ward

Previous Polling Place – Bilsthorpe Village Hall

Proposed Polling Place - The Green Community Centre, Bilsthorpe, NG22 8QQ

Comments: Bilsthorpe Village Hall is temporarily unavailable for 4 May 2023 due to planned refurbishment works. If considered appropriate the new polling place could be used as a long-term replacement, dependent upon the position with the village hall.

2.2 Bridge Ward

Previous Polling Place – Bishop Alexander Academy

Proposed Polling Place - Church of Promise, Winthorpe Road, Newark, NG24 2AA

Comments: Bishop Alexander Academy is unavailable for 4 May 2023 due to SAT's exam preparation and tuition taking place in the hall used for polling. This venue has also been unavailable at previous elections and by-elections. Given this, if considered appropriate the new polling place could be used as a long-term replacement.

2.3 Farndon & Fernwood Ward

Previous Polling Place – East Stoke W I Hall

Proposed Polling Place - Farndon Memorial Hall, Marsh Lane, Farndon, Newark, NG24 3SZ

Comments: East Stoke W I Hall will no longer be available as the site is undergoing redevelopment for residential use. Unfortunately, there are no other suitable premises available in the parish, so the proposal is to use Farndon Memorial Hall which is a current polling place in the neighbouring parish and has ample car parking provision.

2.4 Lowdham Ward

Previous Polling Place – Bulcote Farm Committee Room

Proposed Polling Place - 5 Corporation Cottages, Old Main Road, Bulcote, Nottingham, NG14 5GY

Comments: Bulcote Farm Committee Room is unavailable as the site owned by Severn Trent Water is being redeveloped. This venue has been problematic with access and poor facilities for staff in any event, so a change is welcomed. Bulcote Parish Council have assisted, and a parishioner has agreed to allow us to use their private property as a polling place. It is hoped this change will only be temporary as there are plans for a future community building in the parish.

2.5 **Southwell Ward (2 changes – Southwell and Hockerton)**

Previous Polling Place – Easthorpe Hall

Proposed Polling Place – to be confirmed.

Comments: Easthorpe Hall is no longer available as the site is undergoing redevelopment for residential use. Officers are exploring three possible venues as alternatives going forward. These are Sacrista Prebend Hall / The Hearty Goodfellow / The Final Whistle. To date, appointments to visit these venues to assess suitability have not been made with contact being difficult. Local Ward Members will be kept informed as to progress. Another venue which has been discounted is the Southwell ACF Centre because of ongoing issues with a gravel access which is unsuitable for wheelchair users.

Previous Polling Place – Winkburn School

Proposed Polling Place - Spread Eagle, Caunton Road, Hockerton, Southwell, NG25 0PL

Comments: The Chairman of the Parish Meeting approached the Council requesting the Village Hall in Hockerton be used as a polling place which was favourable to asking voters to travel to Winkburn. Unfortunately, the village hall does not currently have full utility services and was considered inappropriate for use as a polling place in May. However, given the request from the parish to use a venue in the parish, officers have identified a space within the Spread Eagle public house which can be used as a polling place. Although small, it is accessible and considered appropriate given the small number of voters in person.

2.6 **Trent Ward**

Previous Polling Place – Manners Sutton Primary School

Proposed Polling Place - Woolfit Room, Robin Hood Theatre, Church Lane, Averham, Newark, NG23 5RB

Comments: The Manners Sutton Primary School is now closed and no longer available for use as a polling station. Officers have secured a suitable replacement venue in the parish which could be considered as a long-term replacement.

3.0 **Implications**

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

3.1 **Financial Implications (FIN22-23/149)**

There are rental costs associated with the use of Polling Places. Additional Polling Places will result in additional costs, in rental and staffing costs. However, voters should have easy access to a polling place within their polling district as far as practicable.

The costs of the District Election are funded by the Elections Reserve with parish councils also being recharged as appropriate.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None