

Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Author: Steven Corrigan

Telephone: 01235 540305

E-mail: [steven.corrigan@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:steven.corrigan@southandvale.gov.uk)

To: COUNCIL

DATE: 23 February 2011

**REPORT NO 106/10**

## **Review of polling districts, places and stations – interim proposals**

### **Recommendation**

1. That no changes are made to the existing polling district boundaries
2. That Council agrees the proposals described in paragraph six and appendix one
3. That Council authorises the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to implement the decisions in respect of 2 above
4. That Council notes that the review is ongoing and that a further report will be brought to Council in due course

### **Purpose of Report**

1. At its meeting on 8 December 2010 Council agreed to undertake a review of polling districts and polling places and further agreed the criteria for the review. Council is now requested to consider a number of proposed changes for implementation at the forthcoming elections in May 2011 and note that the review is still ongoing.

### **Strategic Objectives**

2. The recommendation supports the Council's strategic objective to manage its business effectively and the corporate priorities of providing value for money services that meet the needs of our residents and service users and optimise access to our services.

## Background

3. The background to the review was set out in the report to Council on 8 December 2010. In short the Council must regularly review the division of its area into polling districts and the places where electors are asked to vote. A full review of the whole district must be undertaken at intervals of not less than 4 years. The relevant legislation can be found in section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006, the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006. Guidance is also published by the Electoral Commission.
4. At the meeting Council agreed to include the relative cost of providing polling places for a very small number of electorate in the review and noted that this could result in proposals to provide one polling place serving two polling districts, where the electorate of one of those polling districts is very small.
5. Public notice of the review was published and information about the review made available on the Council's website. Parish councils and district ward councillors were consulted on the proposals.

## The proposals

6. The following summarises the initial proposals with brief reasons for these. Appendix one to this report sets out the proposals in more detail, includes a summary of comments received, observations on the comments and reasons for the proposals.

### **Ock Meadow Ward**

Change proposed for polling place at St. John Ambulance, Caldecott Road (designate Baptist Church Hall as an additional polling place for electors). The Baptist Church Hall offers a more convenient location for the residents who live north of the River Ock.

### **Chilton and Harwell Ward**

Change proposed for polling place Cockcroft Centre UKAEA (move to Chilton Village Hall and Harwell Village Hall). Cockcroft Centre is due to close

### **Longworth Ward**

Change proposed for polling place at mobile unit, Goosey (move to Denchworth). The mobile unit is not compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act and provides poor access for disabled people. It is not considered cost effective to continue to provide a polling station in Goosey.

### **Kennington Ward**

Change proposed for polling place at St Swithuns School, Kennington (move to Kennington Village Hall). The Council where possible tries to avoid using school premises as polling places.

### **Wantage**

Change proposed for polling place at Stockham Primary School (move to St Mary's Convent and the St John's Ambulance Hut, Naldertown). The Council where possible tries to avoid using school premises as polling places.

7. No other changes are proposed to any of the other polling places or any of the polling districts at this time.
8. If Council agrees the changes proposed for Goosey and Chilton officers will write to all the electors in those areas informing them of their new voting arrangements and also provide a postal vote application form.

### **Council consideration**

9. Council is asked to consider the proposals and representations received and make a final decision. The Council is required to give reasons for its decisions in respect of the designation of both polling districts and polling places. Reasons have been given in appendix one with additional reasoning noted in paragraph six above.

### **Financial Implications**

10. The council will realise a small saving as a result of the reduction in the number of staff needed if these proposals are agreed.

### **Legal Implications**

11. The Council is under a legal duty to keep its polling place arrangements under review and to follow prescribed procedures when carrying out such reviews.

### **Conclusion**

12. Council is asked to consider the proposed changes to the polling places set out in appendix one for implementation at the forthcoming elections in May. The review is ongoing and Council will receive a further report setting out details of each polling place in the district and further proposals later this year.

### **Background Papers**

Report to Council 8 December 2010