

Report Title:	<b>Interim Polling Place Review 2022</b>
Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	No - Part I
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Polling District and Polling Places Review Working Group
Meeting and Date:	Full Council - 22 November 2022
Responsible Officer(s):	Emma Duncan, Returning Officer and Karen Shepherd, Head of Governance
Wards affected:	Bray, Furze Platt, Pinkneys Green, Riverside, Ascot & Sunninghill, Clewer and Dedworth West, Clewer East

## **REPORT SUMMARY**

This report sets out the recommendations of the cross-party Polling District and Polling Places Review Working Group (PDPPR Working Group) and the Returning Officer for reviewing the designation of polling places for all types of elections.

The council has a duty to review polling districts and polling places to ensure that they are located in positions that are convenient and accessible to the majority of electors. The council must also seek to ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places it designates are accessible to all electors, including taking into account the accessibility needs of people with disabilities.

Following an interim review, changes are proposed to the polling places in eight polling districts in six wards (Bray, Furze Platt, Pinkneys Green, Riverside, Clewer and Dedworth West, Clewer East).

### **1. DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**RECOMMENDATION:** That full Council notes the report and:

- i) Approves the proposed amended designation of polling places in the following wards/polling districts: Bray (MBR2), Furze Platt (MFP3), Pinkneys Green (MPG2), Riverside (MRS2), Clewer and Dedworth West (WCDW2 and WCDW3) and Clewer East (WCE2 and WCE3) as detailed in Appendix B.
- ii) Notes that no changes are proposed to the designation of polling places in any other ward/polling district, including Ascot & Sunninghill (WAS3) and Clewer East (WCE1), which were included in the review as a temporary polling station was designated for elections held in May 2021, but the designated polling station is to be retained.

## 2. REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) AND OPTIONS CONSIDERED

### Options

**Table 1: Options arising from this report**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Approve the polling places proposed affecting the wards/polling districts as detailed in the report and summarised in Appendix 1.  <b>This is the recommended option</b>	The changes affect only eight polling districts in six wards (Bray, Furze Platt, Pinkneys Green, Riverside, Clewer and Dedworth West, Clewer East).
To make no changes to the designation of polling places.	The council has a duty to ensure that the most appropriate buildings are designated as polling places and are accessible to all electors.
To agree a different allocation of polling places.	The polling places for use at the local elections on 4 May 2023 must be approved as soon as possible so that preparations for the elections can commence.

- 2.1 The last full review of the Borough's polling places and polling district boundaries was conducted in 2018/19 following the conclusion of the electoral review led by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) in the same year.
- 2.2 An interim review was undertaken in late 2019/early 2020 to consider the effectiveness of the new scheme and the suitability of the designated polling places in light of electors' experiences at the May 2019 elections. Minor changes were implemented in three wards as a result.
- 2.3 In light of the covid pandemic, in March 2021 full Council approved delegated authority to allow the Returning Officer to re-designate at short notice new polling places where the existing venue was either unavailable or unsuitable before an election. For the Police and Crime Commissioner elections held in May 2021, the Returning Officer used the delegation to designate a number of temporary polling stations across the borough.
- 2.4 The report to full Council in March 2022 noted that although the delegation would remain available for use at future elections, any changes to polling places for the May 2021 elections would be temporary. All polling places in the designated polling scheme (as agreed at full Council in January 2019 and amended in February 2020) would remain and be used for all future elections after 6 May 2021.
- 2.5 Following positive experiences and feedback, it was considered appropriate that the temporary polling stations used in May 2022 be reviewed and considered for permanent designation where appropriate. A cross-party Member Working

Group was therefore established to undertake the review. The objectives of the Polling District & Polling Places Review Working Group were to:

- *Review the temporary polling places used in 2021 to determine if they should be designated as permanent for future elections, and to review any other polling places identified by the Returning Officer as requiring review at this time.*
- *Ensure full Member involvement in and support to the polling places review process so that the scheme presented to full Council in November 2022 is endorsed in readiness for the delivery of the Borough elections in May 2023.*
- *Consider options for polling station venues, taking into account recommendations made by officers and feedback and comments made by the public and any other interested parties during the public consultation.*
- *To devise a polling district and polling places scheme which best serves the interests of the electorate by considering the guidance set by the Electoral Commission for local authorities with regards to the designation of polling districts and polling places.*
- *Make a final recommendation to full Council in November 2022 on appropriate polling places which satisfies the statutory criteria set by the Electoral Commission.*

2.6 The Working Group comprised:

- Cllr Johnson                      Conservative, Chairman
- Cllr Bhangra                      Conservative
- Cllr Sharpe                        Conservative
- Cllr Werner                        Liberal Democrat
- Cllr L. Jones                      Local Independents, Vice Chairman

2.7 The Working Group was supported by the Returning Officer, Head of Governance, and the Electoral Services Team Leader.

2.8 The Working Group met in June and August 2022 to consider revisions to the allocation of designated polling places and agree proposals for consultation. A public consultation on the revised scheme was held between 22 August 2022 and 3 October 2022.

2.9 A notice of review was displayed in borough libraries and on the council website. The consultation was publicised via the council's usual communication channels including a press release, the residents' newsletter and on social media. The consultation was specifically promoted to a number of stakeholders, including Borough councillors, parish councils, the booking co-ordinators of affected polling station venues, and the Disability and Inclusion Forum. There were eleven formal, written representations received in relation to the polling places under review, plus a further two responses relating to polling places outside of the scope of the review. All [responses](#) were published to the council website on receipt.

- 2.10 Following the end of the consultation, the Working Group reconvened on 10 October 2022 to consider responses and unanimously agreed recommendations to put to full Council in November 2022, which are detailed below.

### **Bray – MBR2**

- 2.11 Holyport Memorial Hall had been used as a temporary polling place for the May 2021 elections. The hall was a good size and layout for a double station and offered good facilities including parking. It was also noted that the designated polling place, Holyport Primary School, did not offer parking on site and there had been access issues in the past. However, the Working Group were concerned that the location of the Holyport Memorial Hall was not ideal as it would increase the number of voters who would have to drive to the polling station in comparison to the designated polling place, Holyport Primary School.
- 2.12 Officers were asked to consider any alternative locations in the polling district including the siting of a temporary cabin. Ward councillors and the parish council were asked to submit suggestions. Unfortunately, no alternative suitable locations were identified.
- 2.13 The Working Group therefore decided to consult on retaining Holyport Primary School as the designated polling place. Three separate responses on the proposal were received including one from the Chair of Governors at Holyport Primary School. All three responses set out in detail the difficulties for both the school and voters if the school was used as a polling station and advocated the use of the Holyport Memorial Hall, which had been successfully used at the PCC elections in May 2021. Members took into consideration that the number of responses was low, but also felt that the responses were very clear and provided the most detailed feedback on any proposed station in the consultation. **The Working Group unanimously agreed to recommend to full Council that the Holyport Memorial Hall be designated as the polling place for MBR2 for all future elections.**

### **Furze Platt – MFP3**

- 2.14 Furze Platt Scout Hut had been used as a temporary polling place for the May 2021 elections. The location was close to the designated polling place, St Mary's RC Primary School, and its large hall offered improved facilities for both voters and polling station staff. The Working Group noted that at St Mary's, the only parking was on-street. A classroom was used as the polling station therefore the furniture available was not ideal. The room was cramped as most furniture was simply pushed to one side for the day. It was also difficult to display the required election notices on classroom walls.
- 2.15 The Working Group therefore decided to consult on designating Furze Platt Scout Hut as the polling place. No responses to the consultation were received in relation to the proposal. **The Working Group unanimously agreed to recommend to full Council that Furze Platt Scout Hut be designated as the polling place for MFP3 for all future elections.**

### **Pinkneys Green – MPG2**

A temporary cabin at Blenheim Free Church had been used as a temporary polling place for the May 2021 elections. A temporary cabin had been used due

to covid concerns, but the venue had confirmed that for future elections the main hall could be used. The location was close to the designated polling place, Pinkneys Green Youth and Community Centre, which was no longer available. The hall space had been subdivided as it was now a family contact centre with security access.

- 2.17 The Working Group therefore decided to consult on designating Blenheim Free Church as the polling place. Four responses had been received in relation to the proposal; all in support. **The Working Group unanimously agreed to recommend to full Council that Blenheim Free Church be designated as the polling place for MPG2 for all future elections.**

#### **Riverside – MRS2**

- 2.18 A temporary cabin on the forecourt of JC Lewis (Maidenhead) Ltd had been used as a temporary polling place for the May 2021 elections but the owners no longer wished to make the site available. The designated polling place, Mill House Family Centre, was no longer a council owned property. As neither location was available for future elections, officers were asked to consider all potential locations in the polling district including the siting of a temporary cabin.
- 2.19 Officers explored all options including those suggested by Members at the first Working Group meeting and put forward by ward councillors, but determined that none were suitable. The only site in the polling district identified to locate a temporary cabin was the council-owned Boulters Lock car park. It was noted that the car park had a height restriction but this could be temporarily lifted to enable a temporary cabin to be placed on site.
- 2.20 The Working Group therefore decided to consult on designating Boulters Lock car park as the polling place. Two consultation responses had been received; both had raised the issue of voters having to pay to park. Officers confirmed that as this was a council-owned car park, charges could be waived for polling day. One response raised a concern about space for voters to queue in bad weather. Officers confirmed that the size of mobile units used was always based on the electorate and would enable some space for queuing inside. **The Working Group unanimously agreed to recommend to full Council that Boulters Lock car park be designated as the polling place for MRS2 for all future elections.**

#### **Ascot & Sunninghill – WAS3**

- 2.21 Sunninghill Comrades Club had been used as a temporary polling place for the May 2021 elections but was no longer available. The designated polling place, Ascot District Day Centre, was available.
- 2.22 The Working Group therefore decided to consult on retaining Ascot District Day Centre as the designated polling place. No responses to the consultation were received in relation to the proposal. **The Working Group unanimously agreed to recommend to full Council that Ascot District Day Centre be retained as the polling place for WAS3.**

#### **Clewer & Dedworth West – WCDW2 and WCDW3**

- 2.23 Windsor Fire Station had been used as a temporary polling place for the May 2021 elections. The location was ideal but as the doors needed to remain open due to the size of the venue it could be draughty, and in addition, furniture had

to be brought in. The designated polling place, Windsor Gospel Hall, was no longer available.

2.24 Officers were asked to consider any alternative locations in the polling district including the siting of a temporary cabin. Ward councillors and the parish council were asked to submit suggestions. Unfortunately, no alternative suitable locations were identified.

2.25 The Working Group therefore decided to consult on designating Windsor Fire Station as the polling place. Officers would consider what adjustments could be made to ensure the needs of both polling station staff and electors were met, given the feedback received when the venue had been used in May 2021. No responses to the consultation had been received in relation to the proposal. **The Working Group unanimously agreed to recommend to full Council that Windsor Fire Station be designated as the polling place for WCDW2 and WCDW3 for all future elections.**

#### **Clewer East – WCE1**

2.26 Clewer Memorial Pavilion Hall had been used as a temporary polling place for the May 2021 elections but was not ideally located as it was outside the polling district. The designated polling place, Clewer Green First School, was in a better location and was available. Officers were aware that access for pupils had changed since the pandemic and would work with the school to ensure both pupils and voters could access the site appropriately.

2.27 The Working Group therefore decided to consult on retaining Clewer Green First School as the designated polling place. One consultation response had been received, in support of the proposal. **The Working Group unanimously agreed to recommend to full Council that Clewer Green First School be retained as the polling place for WCE1.**

#### **Clewer East – WCE2**

2.28 Central Windsor Scout HQ had been used as a temporary polling place for the May 2021 elections. The location was close to the designated polling place, and offered a larger hall with ramp access, a small car park and on-road parking. The designated polling place, Kipling Court, was an older persons' care home that presented access and security issues.

2.29 The Working Group therefore decided to consult on designating Central Windsor Scout HQ as the polling place. Two consultation responses had been received, both in support of the proposal. **The Working Group unanimously agreed to recommend to full Council that Central Windsor Scout HQ be designated as the polling place for WCE2 for all future elections.**

#### **Clewer East – WCE3**

2.30 Grenadier Guards Club had been used as a temporary polling place for the May 2021 elections. The venue was more centrally located than the designated polling place. It offered a large area with a hallway, kitchen, toilet facilities and car parking. The designated polling place, Clewer Youth & Community Centre, was no longer available.

2.31 The Working Group therefore decided to consult on designating Grenadier Guards Club as the polling place. One consultation response had been

received, in support of the proposal. **The Working Group unanimously agreed to recommend to full Council that Grenadier Guards Club be designated as the polling place for WCE3 for all future elections.**

### 3. KEY IMPLICATIONS

3.1

**Table 2: Key Implications**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Unmet</b>	<b>Met</b>	<b>Exceeded</b>	<b>Significantly Exceeded</b>	<b>Date of delivery</b>
Electors are able to cast their vote in a place that is convenient and accessible.	Appropriate polling places are not approved, and electors are unable to cast their vote in a place that is convenient and accessible.	Appropriate polling places are approved to enable electors to cast their vote in a place that is convenient and accessible.	n/a	n/a	May 2023

### 4. FINANCIAL DETAILS / VALUE FOR MONEY

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations, although it is anticipated that the overall costs associated with booking venues may be higher than in previous years, due to the use of private venues which may choose to increase hire rates in the current economic situation, and the use of an additional mobile unit in Riverside. The budget setting process for 2023/24 will consider the costs of elections including the options in this paper.

### 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 In making recommendations for the designation of suitable polling places, Members and officers have acted in accordance with all relevant legislation, principally the Representation of the Peoples Act, the Electoral Administration Act and the Equalities Act.

## 6. RISK MANAGEMENT

### 6.1

**Table 3: Impact of risk and mitigation**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Level of uncontrolled risk</b>	<b>Controls</b>	<b>Level of controlled risk</b>
Failure to correctly carry out a review of polling places could result in a legal challenge.	Medium	Ensure that the review is undertaken in line with published guidance.	Low

## 7. POTENTIAL IMPACTS

7.1 Equalities. An Equality Impact Assessment is available as Appendix A.

7.2 Climate change/sustainability. No impacts identified.

7.3 Data Protection/GDPR. No impacts identified.

## 8. CONSULTATION

8.1 A public consultation on the revised scheme was held between 22 August 2022 and 3 October 2022.

8.2 A notice of review was displayed in borough libraries and on the council website. The consultation was publicised via the council's usual communication channels including a press release, the residents' newsletter and on social media. The consultation was specifically promoted to a number of stakeholders, including Borough councillors, parish councils, the booking co-ordinators of affected polling station venues, and the Disability and Inclusion Forum.

8.3 The cross-party Polling District and Polling Places Review Working Group has taken into account all responses received during the consultation in formulating the recommendations to full Council.

## 9. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 The full implementation stages are set out in table 4.

**Table 4: Implementation timetable**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Details</b>
22 November 2022	Full Council approves the revised polling places schedule as recommended unanimously by the cross-party Working Group.
Ongoing	The revised polling district and polling places schedule takes effect for all future elections; the next scheduled elections being the local elections on 4 May 2023.



## 10. APPENDICES

10.1 This report is supported by two appendices:

- Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix B – Polling District and Polling Places Schedule 2022 – *proposed amendments highlighted*

## 11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

11.1 This report is supported by three background documents:

- Polling District and Polling Places Review Working Group – Terms of Reference
- Summary notes from Polling District and Polling Places Review Working Group meetings (June-October 2022)
- [Responses to the public consultation](#)

## 12. CONSULTATION

Name of consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Mandatory: Statutory Officers (or deputies)</i>			
Adele Taylor	Executive Director of Resources/S151 Officer	24/10/22	27/10/22
Emma Duncan	Director of Law, Strategy & Public Health/ Monitoring Officer	14/10/22	21/10/22
<i>Deputies:</i>			
Andrew Vallance	Head of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer)	24/10/22	1/11/22
Elaine Browne	Head of Law (Deputy Monitoring Officer)	24/10/22	26/10/22
Karen Shepherd	Head of Governance (Deputy Monitoring Officer)	<i>Report Author</i>	-
<i>Mandatory: Procurement Manager (or deputy) – if report requests approval to go to tender or award a contract</i>			
Lyn Hitchinson	Procurement Manager	N/A	
<i>Mandatory: Data Protection Officer (or deputy) – if decision will result in processing of personal data; to advise on DPIA</i>			
Emma Young	Data Protection Officer	N/A	
<i>Mandatory: Equalities Officer – to advise on EqiA, or agree an EqiA is not required</i>			
Ellen McManus-Fry	Equalities & Engagement Officer	24/10/22	24/10/22
<i>Other consultees:</i>			
Wendy Allum	Electoral Services Team Leader	14/10/22	18/10/22
<i>Directors (where relevant)</i>			
Tony Reeves	Interim Chief Executive	24/10/22	

Andrew Durrant	Executive Director of Place	24/10/22	
Kevin McDaniel	Executive Director of People Services	24/10/22	
<i>Heads of Service (where relevant)</i>			
N/A			
<i>External (where relevant)</i>			
N/A			

Confirmation relevant Cabinet Member(s) consulted	Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council and Councillor Rayner, Cabinet Member for Business, Corporate & Residents Services, Culture & Heritage, & Windsor	Yes
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## REPORT HISTORY

<b>Decision type:</b>	<b>Urgency item?</b>	<b>To follow item?</b>
Council decision	No	No

Report Author: Karen Shepherd, Head of Governance, 07766 778286
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## APPENDIX A - EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### Essential information

Items to be assessed: (please mark 'x')

Strategy		Policy		Plan		Project		Service/Procedure	X
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Responsible officer	Karen Shepherd	Service area	Governance	Directorate	Law, strategy and Public Health
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<b>Stage 1: EqlA Screening (mandatory)</b>	Date created: 14/10/22	<b>Stage 2 : Full assessment (if applicable)</b>	Date created: N/A
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**Approved by Head of Service / Overseeing group/body / Project Sponsor:**

*"I am satisfied that an equality impact has been undertaken adequately."*

**Signed by (print):** K. Shepherd

**Dated:** 14/10/22

## **Guidance notes**

### **What is an EqIA and why do we need to do it?**

The Equality Act 2010 places a 'General Duty' on all public bodies to have 'due regard' to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between those with 'protected characteristics' and those without them.
- Fostering good relations between those with 'protected characteristics' and those without them.

EqIAs are a systematic way of taking equal opportunities into consideration when making a decision, and should be conducted when there is a new or reviewed strategy, policy, plan, project, service or procedure in order to determine whether there will likely be a detrimental and/or disproportionate impact on particular groups, including those within the workforce and customer/public groups. All completed EqIA Screenings are required to be publicly available on the council's website once they have been signed off by the relevant Head of Service or Strategic/Policy/Operational Group or Project Sponsor.

### **What are the “protected characteristics” under the law?**

The following are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010: age; disability (including physical, learning and mental health conditions); gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

### **What's the process for conducting an EqIA?**

The process for conducting an EqIA is set out at the end of this document. In brief, a Screening Assessment should be conducted for every new or reviewed strategy, policy, plan, project, service or procedure and the outcome of the Screening Assessment will indicate whether a Full Assessment should be undertaken.

### Openness and transparency

RBWM has a 'Specific Duty' to publish information about people affected by our policies and practices. Your completed assessment should be sent to the Strategy & Performance Team for publication to the RBWM website once it has been signed off by the relevant manager, and/or Strategic, Policy, or Operational Group. If your proposals are being made to Cabinet or any other Committee, please append a copy of your completed Screening or Full Assessment to your report.

### Enforcement

Judicial review of an authority can be taken by any person, including the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) or a group of people, with an interest, in respect of alleged failure to comply with the general equality duty. Only the EHRC can enforce the specific duties. A failure to comply with the specific duties may however be used as evidence of a failure to comply with the general duty.

## Stage 1: Screening (Mandatory)

### 1.1 What is the overall aim of your proposed strategy/policy/project etc and what are its key objectives?

Following positive experiences and feedback, it was considered appropriate that temporary polling stations used for elections held in May 2022 be reviewed and considered for permanent designation where appropriate.

1.2 What evidence is available to suggest that your proposal could have an impact on people (including staff and customers) with protected characteristics? Consider each of the protected characteristics in turn and identify whether your proposal is Relevant or Not Relevant to that characteristic. If Relevant, please assess the level of impact as either High / Medium / Low and whether the impact is Positive (i.e. contributes to promoting equality or improving relations within an equality group) or Negative (i.e. could disadvantage them). Please document your evidence for each assessment you make, including a justification of why you may have identified the proposal as “Not Relevant”.

<b>Protected characteristics</b>	<b>Relevance</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Positive/negative</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
<b>Age</b>	Relevant		Positive	<p>In reviewing its polling place scheme, the council must seek to ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places it designates are accessible to all electors, including taking into account the accessibility needs of people with disabilities</p> <p>All proposed polling stations have been assessed to ensure they are accessible to all electors. This has included officers undertaking site visits.</p> <p>The Disability and Inclusion Forum was specifically invited to submit a response to the consultation.</p> <p>No specific references to accessibility issues were made in the consultation responses received.</p>
<b>Disability</b>	Relevant		Positive	
<b>Gender re-assignment</b>	Not relevant			
<b>Marriage/civil partnership</b>	Not relevant			
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Relevant		Positive	
<b>Race</b>	Not relevant			
<b>Religion and belief</b>	Not relevant			
<b>Sex</b>	Not relevant			
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Not relevant			

**Outcome, action and public reporting**

<b>Screening Assessment Outcome</b>	<b>Yes / No / Not at this stage</b>	<b>Further Action Required / Action to be taken</b>	<b>Responsible Officer and / or Lead Strategic Group</b>	<b>Timescale for Resolution of negative impact / Delivery of positive impact</b>
<b>Was a significant level of negative impact identified?</b>	No	N/A		
<b>Does the strategy, policy, plan etc require amendment to have a positive impact?</b>	No	N/A		

If you answered **yes** to either / both of the questions above a Full Assessment is advisable and so please proceed to Stage 2. If you answered “No” or “Not at this Stage” to either / both of the questions above please consider any next steps that may be taken (e.g. monitor future impacts as part of implementation, re-screen the project at its next delivery milestone etc).