

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**COUNCIL MEETING****23rd FEBRUARY 2011****Review of Polling Districts and Places**

OPEN	
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:	-
CORPORATE PLAN AIM:	A Well Run and Responsive Council
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Anne Hingley
DIRECTOR:	Ian Miller, Chief Executive ian.miller@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
CONTACT OFFICER:	Penny Williams Democratic Services Manager Penelope.williams@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
APPENDICES:	Appendix A – Consultation Document Appendix B – Consultation Replies Appendix C – Schedule of Polling Places with comments. <i>(Appendices are available electronically)</i>

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To recommend to Council the outcome of the consultation on a review of polling districts and places within Wyre Forest.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Chief Executive recommends to Council:

- 2.1 To consider the responses to the consultation; and**
- 2.2 To decide that the changes to the polling places as set out in paragraph 4.3 be made.**
- 2.3 To note that a further review of polling places will be undertaken later in 2011, in particular to address the issues mentioned in paragraph 3.4.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a duty on all local authorities in Great Britain to review their polling districts and polling places once every four years. The last such review in Wyre Forest was undertaken in 2007 and the results were agreed by Council on 28 November 2007.
- 3.2 Following the Elections held May 2010 comments were received from members of the public, elected members and the Acting Returning Officer on the adequacy of some of the premises used as polling stations.

- 3.3 Consultation with the public and key stakeholders commenced on 8th November 2010 and concluded on 5th January 2011. A copy of the consultation document is attached as Appendix 1. This was carried out via the website and the Hub and Libraries. Full copies of the comments received during this period are contained within Appendix 2 (available electronically) and a summary of them is in Appendix 3 attached to this report.
- 3.4 The issues covered by this review were considered by the Transformation Board on 1st February. The Board supported the changes proposed in paragraph 4.3 below and identified the following issues which would require a further review of polling places later in 2011:
- The Sure Start Centre, Radford Avenue (BR/D) will close when St George’s Primary School is completed in 2012. An alternative location will be required for 2012 onwards;
 - Proposals being considered by the county council may see the Youth Centre at Stourport relocated to the High School site. If this is confirmed, again an alternative location will be required;
 - The future of the Walshes Community Centre is being reviewed and again there is a possibility that it will cease to be available.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The review has identified that some polling stations were not suitable, particularly in terms of poor or no access for disabled people. Others polling stations have low numbers of voters which makes them disproportionately expensive.
- 4.2 The review can also take account of known future changes, for example in terms of buildings that will cease to be capable of being used as polling stations in the near future and new buildings that are due to become available.
- 4.3 Detailed below is a summary of the changes that are proposed following the formal consultation process:

Polling Place	Proposed change
Methodist Church Areley Kings, Stourport	Move to Village Hall, Areley Kings
Walshes Community Centre, Linden Avenue Stourport	No change
The Old School, Areley Common, Stourport	Move to Village Hall, Areley Kings
Arley Sports and Social Club, Arley	Move to Shatterford Village Hall
Broome Village Hall	Move to Blakedown Village Hall
Churchill Village Hall	Ditto

The Institute, Rushock	Move to Chaddesley Corbett Village Hall
Stone Parish Rooms	Ditto
Cookley Sebright Primary School	Move to new village hall, Lea Lane, Cookley
Franch Community Primary School, Chestnut Grove, Kidderminster	Move to Community Church, Chestnut Grove, Kidderminster
Cairndhu Drive (Mobile) Kidderminster	Move to TA Centre, Birmingham Road, Kidderminster
Youth House, Bromsgrove Street, Kidderminster	Move to Fred Bennett Centre, George Street, Kidderminster
Scout Headquarters, Lickhill Road, Stourport	Move to Stourport Community Centre, Lickhill Road, Stourport
Church Hall, Baptist Church, Minster Road, Stourport	Move to Youth Centre, Windermere Way, Stourport
Stourminster School, Comberton Road, Kidderminster	Move to St Chad's Church Hall, Comberton, Kidderminster
The Y Centre, Dowles Road, Kidderminster	Move to Holy Innocents Community Centre, Sutton Park Road, Kidderminster
Trimpley Village Hall, Trimpley	Move to Wribbenhall Parish Rooms, Kidderminster Road, Bewdley

- 4.4 Where the new location is further away, a change of polling place may affect people's propensity to vote for a variety of reasons. Following the Council's decision about what changes to implement, steps will be taken to raise awareness of the availability of postal votes on demand so that electors are reminded of the options available to them to participate in the democratic process.

5. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 A review of the polling places within the district offers an opportunity to rationalise and reduce costs without making the process of voting unduly difficult for the electorate.
- 5.2 It is estimated that implementation of the proposed changes will realise savings of approximately £6000.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Section 18B(4)(e) of the Representation of People Act 1983 states the polling place for a polling district must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station.
- 6.2 A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub division of a constituency, ward or division into smaller parts.
- 6.3 The Electoral Commission uses the following definitions:
- A polling place is defined as the building or area in which a polling station will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer.
 - A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the local authority, polling stations are chosen by the (Acting) Returning Officer for the election.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The recommendations will enable the Council to meet its requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act and subsequent legislation by ensuring that access to polling stations meets the needs of all electors.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 There are no significant risk management issues identified with this report.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Council has undertaken comprehensive consultation with key stakeholders and the recommendations above were supported at the Transformation Board Meeting at its meeting on 1st February 2011.

10. CONSULTEES

- 10.1 The Public, Elected members, Parish Councils, Political parties, The Acting Returning Officer, and the Transformation Board.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Reports to Transformation Board 5th October, 2nd November and 1st February 2011.
11.2 The Electoral Administration Act 2000