

Committee:	Governance, Audit and Performance Committee	Date:	17 May 2018
Title:	Polling District Review		
Report Author:	Peter Snow, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager psnow@uttlesford.gov.uk Tel: 01799 510430	Item for decision:	Yes

Summary

1. An interim review of a number of specific polling districts and polling places has been conducted as agreed by the Committee on 16 November 2017. Following the publication of the review notice in January 2018, the review was extended to include two additional polling districts in the light of further representations received. Draft proposals have now been prepared for consideration and approval as set out in this report and in the more detailed Statement of Reasons attached to this report. The existing Scheme of Polling Districts and Places is also attached for added context.

Recommendations

2. Approve the revised polling scheme with effect from 29 May 2018.

Financial Implications

3. There are no direct financial implications except that any change of polling location will have an impact on the costs of administering each specific election.

Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None except for material already published.

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	Full public consultation including parish and town councils, elected representatives at all levels, and political parties
Community Safety	None other than considerations taken into account in the inspection of existing or

	potential polling locations in respect of access, parking and other facilities
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None except as detailed under community safety
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	Fritch Green and Little Dunmow; Great Dunmow North; Littlebury, Chesterford and Wenden Lofts; Saffron Walden Audley; Saffron Walden Castle; Saffron Walden Shire; and The Sampfords
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

6. The timetable for the interim review was approved by the Committee on 16 November 2017. A full process of consultation was carried out following publication of the review notice on 15 January 2018.
7. A great many representations have been received, as mentioned in the Statement of Reasons attached to this report. Inspection of all of the locations designated as polling places within the polling districts identified for review, as well as those in Great Dunmow North-West and Saffron Walden Shire North subsequently added to the review, has been undertaken, except where explained in the Statement of Reasons. Inspection has also taken place of a number of potential alternative locations.
8. The locations inspected have been evaluated against the statutory criteria and this has resulted in a number of recommendations to this meeting to designate locations for use at all elections and referendums taking place between 28 May 2018 and 30 November 2019.
9. The only scheduled set of elections during that time will be the ordinary election of all district and parish councillors in May 2019. Further unscheduled elections may take place within that timeframe as required.
10. A full statutory review of polling places and districts in Uttlesford will be required between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020. In practice, barring anything unexpected, the full review will take place after the May 2019 elections and prior to publication of the revised register of electors on 1 December 2019.

11. In considering the recommendations, members are asked to take the following factors into account:

- A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a Parliamentary Constituency. Each parish must be a separate polling district (unless in special circumstances) but where a parish includes more than one ward the polling district must not cross any ward boundary.
- A polling place is the building or area within each polling district in which polling stations are located by the Returning Officer. The polling place should always be defined as carefully as possible and should always be located within the polling district boundary as centrally as possible for the convenience of electors.
- The Council has a duty to ensure that polling places are conveniently located for all electors, and that the buildings selected are accessible for disabled electors.
- The selected buildings should be readily available for all elections, should have good facilities and be capable of division into more than one polling station where needed to assist the efficient flow of electors in voting. Therefore the size of the room or space allocated for polling is often a critical factor.
- There has been much concentration on the merits or otherwise of designating schools for polling purposes. The Returning Officer is entitled to use free of charge schools maintained by a local authority or receive funding from Parliament. When schools are used for polling, discussion takes place with the school to assess whether it is feasible for the school to remain open. Generally speaking, schools are designated only when there is no reasonable alternative but in deciding whether or not a school should be selected, the convenience of the electors should be the primary concern as that is the Council's overriding duty in setting a polling scheme.

12. Members are asked to consider the proposals set out in the Statement of Reasons attached to this report before approving a revised Scheme of Polling Districts and Polling Places.

Risk Analysis

13.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
2 – there is a risk that existing polling arrangements will not meet the	2 – decisions are needed to enable future elections to proceed safely	3 – the failure to provide adequate polling facilities would	Undertake proper evaluation of suitable polling facilities in locations where problems have been

Council's statutory obligations	and without risk of legal challenge	expose the Council/ Returning Officer to public criticism and possible legal challenge	identified and take appropriate remedial action
---------------------------------	-------------------------------------	--	---

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.