

Review of East Dorset Polling Districts and Polling Stations

1. PURPOSE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of Report:	To approve a scheme of polling districts and polling places for the East Dorset District Council administrative area
Recommendations:	It is RECOMMENDED that: the schedule of polling districts and polling places as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to this report be approved for implementation for the May 2015 elections.
Lead Members:	Councillor Barbara Manuel (Lead Member for Communities) Councillor Paul Bennett (Lead Member for Performance)
Wards:	All Wards
Contact Officer:	Richard Jones, Democratic Services and Elections Manager

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The Council has a duty under the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 to carry out a review of polling arrangements by 31 January 2015.
- 2.2. By way of explanation, a polling district is a geographical sub-division of an electoral area such as a parliamentary constituency, a county electoral division or a district ward, whereas a polling place is the area in which the Returning Officer selects the polling station (e.g. a geographical area or a building).
- 2.3. The review of polling districts and polling places commenced on 22 October 2014. Notice of the review was published at the Council Offices and on the Council's web site together with direct engagement with District and County Councillors; Parish Councils; Local Political Groups and Residents' Associations.
- 2.4. The schedule of polling districts at Appendix 1 to this report, highlights the changes required following The East Dorset (Electoral Changes) Order 2014, and are based upon the requirements of the Community Governance Review Final Recommendations. If any changes are made to the Community Governance Review consequential alterations may be required to the polling districts.
- 2.5. In light of the anticipated turnout for the 7 May 2015 elections which will include Parliamentary, District/Borough and contested parish elections, it is recommended that minimal changes to the existing voting arrangements are made for these elections. A formal survey will be undertaken of each polling station during these elections by visiting Polling Station Inspectors to assess vehicular, pedestrian and disabled access, on-street and off-street parking arrangements, adequacy for hosting double stations and the adequacy of the

station for staff. Photographs will also be requested of the visiting inspectors so that an informed review can be undertaken for future elections.

- 2.6. A summary of the responses is provided below and where applicable the recommended action or change. A full schedule of the proposed polling stations for East Dorset is set out in Appendix 2 to this report.

3. Representations

- 3.1. At the conclusion of the consultation on 19 November 2014, a total of 7 responses had been received. A general response was received from the Christchurch Constituency Agent asking that all stations are clearly signposted and accessible.

Shapwick

- 3.2. Electors in Shapwick have previously voted at a portable building located within the village by the Old School Nursery. This polling station was closed in 2013 as the use of a temporary station in this location was cost prohibitive.
- 3.3. Since the closure the parish council, and a number of parishioners, have requested that an alternative location be found in the village. In response to this formal consultation, Pamphill and Shapwick Parish Council have advised that the landlord of the Anchor Public House and the vicar of St Bartholomew's Church can provide adequate space to be used as a polling station for Shapwick. The Church doesn't currently have toilet facilities but a grant for improvements has been received which will be used to provide inside facilities. The landlord of the Anchor has offered to provide a room separate from the public drinking area. Both locations provide for disabled access.
- 3.4. In light of the local support to vote within the village, it would seem appropriate to use the Anchor Public House as the Polling Station for elections in May 2015. There will need to be a strict no alcohol policy within the polling station itself. Longer term it may be more appropriate to use St Bartholomew's Church when the improvement works have been completed.

Verwood

- 3.5. Verwood Town Council has expressed concern that access and egress of the Verwood Guide Hall in Manor Road and the lack of parking will cause issues for electors using this station, suggesting the use of local schools as an alternative. Electors are familiar with this site, which has been used for many years and whilst the use of schools is a possibility, suitable space is often not available due to examinations in progress during summer months or the inability to secure an area which prevents unauthorised access to young children.
- 3.6. The number of electors voting at this station has also been reduced due to the boundary changes.
- 3.7. No change is therefore recommended.

Ferndown

- 3.8. Representations have been received from District Councillor G W Russell and District and Town Councillor S M Lugg on behalf of the Conservative Ferndown Branch.

- 3.9. Councillor Russell confirmed that he was content with the arrangements for Hampreston and Longham. Councillor Lugg confirmed the suitability of Ferndown United Reform Church Hall, Ferndown Village Hall, St Mary's Church Hall and Heatherlands Centre. However, combining Ferndown Village Hall with St Mary's Church Hall was considered to be a suitable option.
- 3.10. As stated in the consultation document, combining these two stations would require a triple station at St Mary's Church Hall, which may be confusing to electors but more importantly increases the risk of cross-contamination of ballot papers. It is recommended that no change be made for 2015 elections.

Corfe Mullen

- 3.11. Springdale Road Car Park is the only location within East Dorset where a portable building is used for polling. An alternative site towards the southern end of the village would be ideal. As an alternative, combining Corfe Mullen South and Corfe Mullen Central was suggested as a possible option but this would require a triple station at the Village Hall.
- 3.12. Corfe Mullen Parish Council responded to the consultation suggesting that combining all electors from Corfe Mullen Central and Corfe Mullen South would be too large for the venue and suggested a re-distribution of electors to equalise the split include Corfe Mullen North.
- 3.13. This will be worthy of consideration for future, however, to avoid confusion at 7 May 2015 elections, it is recommended that the use of a portable building at Springdale Road Car Park be continued and a review be undertaken for future elections.

4. IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Plan & Council Objectives

- 4.1. Performance – PER2 Ensure Council resources are used efficiently and effectively.

Legal

- 4.2. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Environmental

- 4.3. The provision of polling stations located close and central to electors will result in fewer vehicular journeys.

Financial and Risk

- 4.4. The provision of an additional polling station in Shapwick will have a cost implication of approximately £500.

Equalities

- 4.5. Polling stations are assessed for their accessibility and a further survey will be undertaken during the May 2015 elections to identify any further improvements.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1. Members are asked to support the schedule of polling districts and polling stations for the May 2015 Elections.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Schedule of Polling Districts for East Dorset

Appendix 2 – Schedule of Polling Stations for East Dorset.

Background Papers:

Responses to the consultation from those listed in Section 3 of this report.