

Agenda Item No: 13 **Report No:** 160/16
Report Title: Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2016
Report To: Council **Date:** 7 December 2016
Ward(s) Affected: All
Report By: Catherine Knight, Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services
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Purpose of Report:

- 1 The Council has a statutory duty to undertake a review of polling districts and polling places. This Report considers the outcome of the consultation process and makes recommendations to Council in order to complete the review for Lewes District.

Officer Recommendation(s):

- 1 To consider the results of the consultation process;
 - 2 To approve the Returning Officer's proposals for Polling Places as set out in paragraph 15 and Appendix A of this Report; and
 - 3 To approve the Returning Officer's proposals for Polling Districts as set out in Appendix B of this Report, and as shown on the maps and table accompanying the consultation document.
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Reason for Recommendations

- 1 To enable the Council to complete the polling review in accordance with the statutory requirements.

Information

- 2 The Council must regularly review the division of its area into polling districts and the places where electors are asked to vote. The last full review of the whole District was undertaken in 2014, and they should then be conducted at intervals approximately every 4 years.
- 3 However, a further full review is now required following the conclusion of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) electoral review of Lewes District. This review made changes to our District wards and

created a number of new parish wards, which resulted in the need to alter some of our polling districts accordingly.

- 4 The relevant legislation can be found in the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 and in Schedule A1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983. Guidance is also published by the Electoral Commission.

Definitions

- 5 A **parliamentary constituency** cannot be changed by the review. It is the division of the constituency into polling districts and places that is the subject of the review. Only the part of Lewes constituency that lies within Lewes District is being reviewed by this Council. The area of the constituency that lies outside the District is being reviewed separately by Wealden District Council.
- 6 A **polling district** is the area created by the division of a constituency or ward into smaller parts, within which a polling place can be selected which is convenient to the electors.
- 7 A **polling place** is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the Returning Officer.
- 8 A **polling station** is the actual area where the process of voting takes place and must be located within the polling place designated for the particular polling district.

The review process

- 9 As part of the review process the Council must:
 - Seek to ensure that all electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
 - Seek to ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places are accessible to those who are disabled, and
 - When considering or reviewing the designation of a polling place, have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.

Key factors such as location, accessibility, size of venue, parking, availability and suitable facilities must be considered by the Returning Officer as part of the review.

- 10 The consultation period ran from 30 September 2016 to 3 November 2016. Notice of the review was published and displayed in public places across the District. Information about the review was made available on the Council's website.
- 11 Any elector in the whole of the Lewes constituency (whether they live in the District or not) could make representations to the Council and were asked to suggest alternative polling districts/places to those proposed where appropriate and to give reasons for the alternative.

- 12 As well as being available on request, the consultation document was sent to the local Member of Parliament, District and County Councillors, Town & Parish Councils, local political parties and the Returning Officer for Brighton & Hove City Council polling areas.
- 13 It was also sent to persons who have particular expertise in relation to access and disability issues including:
- Age UK – Lewes Area
 - Scope – Lewes Area
 - Lewes Area Access Group
 - Federation of Disabled People.
- 14 Information gathered following the elections held since 2014 was also considered as part of the review including feedback from voters, polling staff, polling station inspectors and Elections staff.

Results of consultation process

- 15 Comments received and the Returning Officer's proposals are as follows:
- 15.1 **Chailey, Barcombe and Hamsey Ward** – no changes proposed to polling districts or places and no comments received.
- 15.2 **Ditchling and Westmeston Ward** - no changes proposed to polling districts or places and no comments received.
- 15.3 **East Saltdean and Telscombe Cliffs Ward** - no changes proposed to polling districts or places and no comments received.
- 15.4 **Kingston Ward** – no changes proposed to polling districts or places and no comments received.
- 15.5 **Lewes Bridge Ward** - no changes proposed to polling districts or places and no comments received.
- 15.6 **Lewes Castle Ward** – changes proposed to polling districts, no change to polling places. The LGBCE has changed the ward boundary so that Christie Road, Clare Road, Ferrers Road, Fitzjohns Road, Gundreda Road and Mildmay Road are now part of Lewes Priory ward. The LGBCE also decided that the District ward be split to create two Parish wards, Lewes Castle and Lewes Central. The boundary line for these two wards runs down the River Ouse. Therefore it is proposed that the two new Parish wards form the basis of polling districts LGA and LGB for this District Ward.
- It is recommended that the amended polling districts LGA, LGB and LGC be designated, as illustrated on the Lewes town map in Appendix B of this Report.**
- 15.7 **Lewes Priory Ward** - changes proposed to polling districts and to polling places. As outlined above, the LGBCE has moved the ward boundary so that Christie Road, Clare Road, Ferrers Road, Fitzjohns

Road, Gundreda Road and Mildmay Road are now included as part of Lewes Priory ward. These streets will become part of polling district LHA.

Comments were received from Cllr Ruth O'Keeffe requesting that consideration be given to the use of the reception area of Southover House as a polling venue for the East Sussex County Council elections in May 2017, instead of the Projectile Hall, Lewes Leisure Centre which was located on the very edge of the polling district. Officers investigated the possibility of using Southover House but found that, as the main reception would need to remain open to the public and in order to ensure the secrecy of the vote, a false wall would be required to completely seal off the west side of the reception area. In turn, voters would be entering via a fire escape door rather than through the main entrance so a ramp to enable wheelchair access would need to be constructed. Both these constructions would incur a cost to the Council for the sake of only one election, as it is intended to return to the more suitable venue of Southover Grange for all elections after 2017. There were also concerns regarding the lack of available parking and the difficulty with congestion outside of Southover House, without our adding any additional vehicles.

Therefore, Lewes Leisure Centre is considered to be the most suitable venue currently available for the May 2017 elections and it is proposed to continue its use until such time as the renovation work on Southover Grange has been completed. This is scheduled for completion at the end of March 2017. However, if the renovation work is completed earlier, then we would look to use Southover Grange for the elections in May 2017 and thereafter.

It is recommended that the amended polling districts LHA and LHC be designated, as illustrated on the Lewes town map in Appendix B of this Report.

It is recommended that the Projectile Hall, Lewes Leisure Centre, Mountfield Road be designated as the polling place for polling district LHC for the scheduled elections in May 2017, unless the renovation works at Southover Grange are completed ahead of schedule. If this happens, then it is proposed that Southover Grange, Southover High Street be designated as the polling place instead.

- 15.8 Newhaven North Ward** – changes proposed to polling districts and to polling places. The LGBCE has altered the warding of Newhaven to divide it east to west to form the two new District wards of Newhaven North and Newhaven South. It has been necessary to make adjustments to the polling districts to fit with the new boundaries of the District and Town Council wards.

Comments were received from Newhaven Town Council confirming that the Town Council had no objections to the proposals for polling districts and polling venues in this ward.

It is recommended that the amended polling districts LIA and LIC be designated, as illustrated on the Newhaven town map in Appendix B of this Report.

- 15.9 Newhaven South Ward** - changes proposed to polling districts and to polling places. The LGBCE has altered the warding of Newhaven to divide it east to west to form the two new District wards of Newhaven North and Newhaven South. It has been necessary to make adjustments to the polling districts to fit with the new boundaries of the District and Town Council wards.

Comments were received from Newhaven Town Council confirming that the Town Council had no objections to the proposals for polling districts and polling venues in this ward.

It is proposed that the Air Cadet Hut, Transit Road be used as the new polling place for polling district LJB. Previously electors have voted at the East Side Social Centre, Norton Terrace which has poor disabled access. The Air Cadets Hut has a permanent wheelchair ramp, ample parking and limited disruption will be caused to users as the hall is empty during the day. The Cadets have confirmed that they will be able to easily vacate in the evenings with notice.

It is recommended that the amended polling districts LJA, LJB and LJC be designated, as illustrated on the Newhaven town map in Appendix B of this Report.

It is recommended that the Air Cadets Hut, Transit Road be designated as the polling place for polling district LJB.

- 15.10 Newick Ward** – no changes proposed to polling district or place and no comments received.

- 15.11 Ouse Valley and Ringmer Ward** - no changes proposed to polling districts or places and no comments received.

- 15.12 Peacehaven East Ward** – changes proposed to polling district, no changes to polling places and no comments received. The LGBCE has altered the boundary of this ward to follow the line of the newly created Peacehaven Central Town Council ward to the west. It has been necessary to make adjustments to polling district LMB by moving the area to the west of Bolney Avenue to accommodate this.

It is recommended that the amended polling district LMB be designated, as illustrated on the East Saltdean/Telscombe Cliffs/Peacehaven town map in Appendix B of this Report.

- 15.13 Peacehaven North Ward** – changes proposed to polling districts, no changes to polling places and no comments received. The LGBCE has altered the boundary of this ward to follow the line of the newly created Peacehaven Central Town Council ward which includes the area between Glynn Road to the north and Firle Road to the south. It has been necessary to make a slight adjustment to polling district LNA and

to create polling district LNB to fit with the newly created Town Council ward.

It is recommended that the amended polling districts LNA and LNB be designated, as illustrated on the East Saltdean/Telscombe Cliffs/Peacehaven town map in Appendix B of this Report.

- 15.14 Peacehaven West Ward** – changes proposed to polling districts, no changes to polling places and no comments received. The LGBCE has altered the boundary of this ward to follow the line of the newly created Peacehaven Town Council Central ward and the altered West ward. It has been necessary to make a slight adjustment to polling districts LOA and LOC to fit with these new boundaries.

It is recommended that the amended polling districts LOA and LOC be designated, as illustrated on the East Saltdean/Telscombe Cliffs/Peacehaven town map in Appendix B of this Report.

- 15.15 Plumpton, Streat, East Chiltington and St John (Without) Ward** – no changes proposed to polling districts or places and no comments received.

- 15.16 Seaford Central Ward** - changes proposed to polling districts, no changes to polling places and no comments received. The LGBCE has altered the boundary of this ward to follow the line of the altered Seaford Town Council Central ward and the newly created Seaford Town Council Esplanade ward to the south of the A259 and Station Approach. It has been necessary to make slight adjustments to polling districts LQA and LQB to fit with these new boundaries.

It is recommended that the amended polling districts LQA and LQB be designated, as illustrated on the Seaford town map in Appendix B of this Report.

- 15.17 Seaford East Ward** – no changes proposed to polling districts or places and no comments received.

- 15.18 Seaford North Ward** – no changes proposed to polling districts or places and no comments received.

- 15.19 Seaford South Ward** – changes proposed to polling districts, no changes to polling places and no comments received. The LGBCE has altered the boundary of this ward to follow the line of the altered Seaford Town Council South ward and the newly created Seaford Town Council Sutton ward. It has been necessary to make slight adjustments to polling districts LTA and LTB to fit with these new boundaries.

It is recommended that the amended polling districts LTA and LTB be designated, as illustrated on the Seaford town map in Appendix B of this Report.

- 15.20 Seaford West Ward** - changes proposed to polling districts, no changes to polling places and no comments received. The LGBCE has

split the Seaford West District ward to form three new Seaford Town Council wards. The newly created Seaford Town Council Bay, Bishopstone and East Blatchington wards have made it necessary to create three new polling districts. Polling districts LUA, LUB and LUC exactly follow the new Town ward boundaries.

It is recommended that the amended polling districts LUA, LUB and LUC be designated, as illustrated on the Seaford town map in Appendix B of this Report.

- 15.21 Wivelsfield Ward** – no changes proposed to polling districts or places. Comments received from Wivelsfield Town Council asking if the Wivelsfield Parish could be split into two polling districts. The Parish Council explained that there was a proportion of the Parish population living in “West Wivelsfield”, an area that sits within Burgess Hill. It was conscious that there was an expectation for residents in this area to travel to Wivelsfield Green to vote, and asked that adding a polling station in the Worlds End area of Burgess Hill be considered.

The area concerned includes 559 of the total 1718 electors in the Wivelsfield Parish. There has been no elector contact or complaints made regarding the requirement to vote at Wivelsfield Parish Hall. There is also no evidence to suggest that there is a lower turnout amongst these electors due to the requirement to travel to Wivelsfield Green. As such, it is not proposed to change the number of polling districts or polling stations provided in this ward at this time.

- 15.22 All Polling Districts** – it is proposed that, in order to improve our risk resilience planning, that the polling place for each polling district covers the polling district itself and the neighbouring polling districts. This will allow the Returning Officer to allocate an alternative building near to the polling station, in the event that the designated polling place becomes unavailable, in an emergency for example.

It is recommended that the Polling Place for each Polling District be designated as “the Polling District and neighbouring polling districts”.

Implementation

- 16** Council is asked to consider the comments received and recommended to approve the Returning Officer’s proposals for polling districts and polling places. Any changes to polling places will become effective at all elections held after this date unless otherwise stated in the Report. Any changes to polling districts will become effective at the next scheduled elections. Therefore, the new East Sussex County Council divisions and polling districts will be used at the elections on 4 May 2017. For any District, Town or Parish by-elections, the Council must use existing wards and polling districts until its scheduled elections in May 2019.
- 17** 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 A to this Report with more detailed comments noted in paragraph 15 above.

- 18 Where a change in polling place and polling station is made, residents will be notified of the change by letter well in advance of the next scheduled elections. A reminder of the change will also be included on the poll cards for those areas at the next elections.
- 19 Copies of this Report have been sent to the original consultees. Details of the results of the review will be published on the Council's website.

Financial Appraisal

- 20 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this Report. Election costs are borne by the body for whom the election is being held.

Legal Implications

- 21 None over and above those set out in the body of this Report.

Risk Management Implications

- 22 The main risk is that the Council would fail in its statutory duty to comply with the requirements of the polling review. We will avoid this by implementing the review in accordance with the legislation and within the required timeframe.

Equality Screening

- 23 I have completed the Equality Analysis screening report which is appended to this Report. Positive impacts are expected from the Polling Review as it aims to continuously improve polling venues and ensure better accessibility.

Background Papers

- 24 Electoral Commission Guidance 'Review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations': <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/electoral-administrator/polling-place-reviews>
- 25 Consultation document, representations and maps of each ward showing polling district boundaries and situation of polling places: <http://www.lewes.gov.uk/council/25569.asp>

Appendix

- 26 Appendix A – Polling Places Proposals Document

Appendix B – Maps:

- Lewes District proposed polling district boundaries, plus ward information
- Lewes - detail
- Newhaven - detail
- East Saltdean, Telscombe Cliffs & Peacehaven – detail
- Seaford – detail