

Report to:	Full Council
Date:	23 November 2020
Title:	Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2020
Report of:	Head of Elections
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of report:	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):	<p>(1) To consider the results of the consultation process;</p> <p>(2) To approve the Returning Officer’s proposals for Polling Places and Polling Districts as set out in Appendix 1</p> <p>(3) That the Electoral, Local Land Charges and Print Services Manager, on behalf of the Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer, be authorised to implement the Council’s decisions in respect of the review.</p>
Reasons for recommendations:	To fulfil the Council’s statutory duty in respect of conducting a Polling District and Polling Place Review.
Contact Officer(s):	<p>Name: Tracey Pannett</p> <p>Post title: Head of Elections</p> <p>E-mail: Tracey.Pannett@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk</p> <p>Telephone number: 01323 415074</p>

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council must regularly review the division of its area into polling districts and the places where electors are asked to vote. A full review of the whole district must be undertaken at intervals of not less than 4 years.
- 1.2 The relevant legislation can be found in section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006, The Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006. Guidance is also published by the Electoral Commission.
- 1.3 This matter is brought before Full Council as decisions on matters in respect of polling district boundaries and polling places may not be dealt with by a council’s

executive (i.e. the Cabinet) by virtue of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000.

2 Review Process

2.1 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.

2.2 The consultation period for this full review ran for 4 weeks between 9th October 2020 and 6th November 2020. The timing of the review has been determined by some changes to polling venues, wanting to rename the polling districts and to ensure that we can complete the review in advance of the publication of the new register on 1st December 2020. Public notice of the review was published and information about the review made available on the Council's website. Any elector in the whole of the Lewes and Brighton Kemptown constituencies (whether they live in the District or not) were entitled to make representations.

2.3 As well as being supplied on request, the consultation document was sent to the local Member of Parliament, District, Town and Parish, County Councillors and local political parties. It was also sent to Age UK East Sussex and Lewes Area Access Group.

3 Definitions

3.1 **"Parliamentary constituency"**. This 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.

"Polling district". The area created by the division of a constituency or ward into smaller parts, within which a polling place can be determined which is convenient to the electors.

"Polling place". The building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the Returning Officer.

"Polling station". The actual area where the process of voting takes place. This must be located within the polling place and designated for the particular polling district. This function is the responsibility of the Returning Officer.

4 The proposals and comments received.

4.1 The consultation document sets out details of current polling districts and polling places together with details of the proposed changes. Appendix 1 includes the full text of all comments received.

4.2 The following summarises the proposals and comments received together with any necessary observations on the comments and final recommendations:

All Wards – To designate the whole of each of the wards as the polling place. To enable us, if we lose a polling station at any time, to look at the next best suitable venue to serve the voters in the area internally and where there is only one choice, not to have to conduct a public consultation at short notice.

Recommendation: That the Returning Officer's proposal be approved.

Renaming of the Polling Districts – To make it clearer where the polling districts are located by using the first and second letters of the town or village and third letter indicating an alpha order (A-Z). The current naming convention has all polling districts starting with L and it is not clear where they are located within the district.

Recommendation: That the Returning Officer's proposal be approved.

Seaford Central Ward – To change Polling Station Venue used by LQA and LQB1 (the new SCA and SCC) voters from the Clinton Centre which was not available to us for an election in 2019 to St Thomas More Church, Sutton Road, Seaford which we used as the replacement in 2019. This venue is located within the polling district. It comfortably accommodates two polling stations and has a car park, on street parking, disabled access and suitable internal and external lighting.

Recommendation: That the Returning Officer's proposal be approved.

Seaford North Ward - Due to no longer using Cradle Hill School for LSB voters and having to use a portacabin in 2019. We would like to propose that we divide this polling district into two with a boundary running up Lexden Road. (See Appendix B – map showing the new proposed boundary.) This would enable us to use The Chapel Rooms, Saint Peter Church, Belgrave Road and The Cabin, Raymond Close Seaford as Polling Stations.

Recommendation: That the Returning Officer's proposal be approved.

5 **Comments Received:**

5.1 We received the following comments during the consultation period:

- a) 'Telephone call from Cllr Lynda Duhigg, following the publication of the Polling Place review on the Council website. She wanted to draw to our attention that the Anzac room at the Meridian Centre Peacehaven, was being considered for planning and development in the next 2 years, effectively putting it out of use for potentially quite a period of time.

We discussed how difficult it is to find suitable alternative venues and she volunteered that the Age Concern building, Kempton House, Sutton Avenue, might be an alternative.' **This will be kept under review for the time being and we will look for a suitable alternative within the next 2 years.**

- b) Email received from Cllr Brett 'I think there will be many Seaford Residents relieved in particular that they will not have to queue at the Portacabin at The Ridings in the rain and wind again so am pleased to support the changes which seem sensible to me.'
- c) Email received from Seaford Town Council: - ' Good Afternoon, At a meeting of Seaford Town Council Full Council last night, it was resolved to respond to the LDC Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places to support this review and the proposals as they affect Seaford. Kind regards, Isabelle Moulard, Assistant Town Clerk, Seaford Town Council'.
- d) Email received from Peacehaven Town Council – 'In response to the District Council review of the division of its area into polling districts and the places, it is noted that no changes are proposed for Peacehaven. It should be highlighted that, at some point in time, the area around Community House will be undergoing development.' Best regards, Tony Allen, Town Clerk, Peacehaven Town Council, Community House, The Meridian Centre, Peacehaven, BN10 8BB
- e) Email Received from Hamsey Parish Clerk on 4th November – 'I am emailing on behalf of Hamsey parish Council in reference to the documentation received for the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places in the District of Lewes. Hamsey Parish Council have considered the proposal and agree with the proposed changes detailed in the Consultation documentation.'
Hamsey Parish Clerk
- f) Letter received from Lewes Liberal Democrats – 'Dear Madam/ Sir, I am writing on behalf of the Lewes Liberal Democrat Party in response to the LDC Polling Place Consultation. We are broadly content with the proposals and have only two technical points to make:
1. There have been problems in the past with identifying polling places in literature sent to voters. This has led to confusion about where the polling place was located and councillors receiving communications from voters unable to vote on Election Day. Specifically and most recently this occurred in the General Election in 2019 where the postcode for Seaford Head School was incorrect. Please can you make sure that you have robust procedures in place to ensure that voters get accurate information about the location of polling places and that you ensure there is no potential for ambiguity. This will be particularly important to have in place if you have to make an urgent change in a polling place just before literature is printed and sent out.
 2. In principle, changing the names of the polling districts is a good thing as the current designations do cause considerable confusion. However, the changes have important and significant knock-on effects on the computer and data systems of political parties. Unfortunately, while the change is simple, it will cause significant work which will hinder the ability of parties with fewer resources to inform voters effectively of their democratic choices.
We have an important election coming up in May. We would ask that the changes are not made until after these elections. If the change is made before then, we request that we are given at least 2 months' notice before

the change is implemented so that we can develop and put in place mitigating actions.

We are of course happy to expand on either of these points if you require further information.

Yours faithfully Simon Burall, Chair, Lewes Liberal Democrats

6 Council consideration.

- 6.1 Council is asked to consider and approve the Returning Officer's recommendations and note that the comments received were all positive to the recommended changes.

The Council is required to give reasons for its decisions in respect of the designation of both polling districts and polling places.

7 Implementation.

- 7.1 The new naming of polling districts and the split of Seaford North ward polling district will commence from the publication of the revised register on the 1st December 2020. The new polling place venues will be used at all future elections.

- 7.2 In addition, the Council must publish:

- All correspondence sent to the Returning Officer in connection with the review and all correspondence sent to any person who the Council thinks has particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.
- All representations made by any person in connection with the review;
- The minutes of any meetings held by the Council where details of the review have been considered.
- Details of the actual designations of polling districts and polling places agreed as a result of the review.
- Details of where the results of the review have been published.

8 Appeal to Electoral Commission.

- 8.1 The grounds under which the review outcome can be challenged are that the Council has failed to:

- meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency, or a body of them (i.e. the reasonable requirements of a particular area of the authority have not been satisfactorily met); or
- take sufficient account of the accessibility to disabled persons of polling stations within a designated polling place.

- 8.2 The following may make representations to the Electoral Commission namely:

- not less than 30 registered electors in the constituency
- any person who made a representation to the council when the review was being undertaken (except the Returning Officer)

- any person who is not an elector within the constituency who the Electoral Commission feel has sufficient interest in the accessibility of disabled persons;

Also the Returning Officer may make observations on any representations made to the Commission.

9 Financial appraisal

- 9.1 Police and Crime Commissioner elections and UK referendums are funded by the government. East Sussex County Council provide funding for county elections. Town and Parish elections are funded by the Town and Parish Councils. The District elections are funded by the District Council. Where there are combined elections the costs are split across the different bodies. Splitting LSB into 2 new polling districts may increase the number of polling stations by 1, but will be more cost efficient than the hiring of the current Portacabin.

(Approved by Andrew Clarke Deputy Chief Finance Officer on 26th October)

10 Legal implications

- 10.1 The content and recommendations of this report complies with the legislation detailed in paragraphs 1.2 and 1.3 above.

(Lawyer consulted 29.10.20 Legal ref: 009640-LDC-OD)

11 Risk management implications

- 11.1 We conduct this review to ensure that our polling places are suitable venues and where we are aware that a venue will no longer be available carry out visits to find new suitable venues. The risk of not accepting the recommendations, in particular, where we are aware that we will no longer be able use a current venue, is that it will prevent electors from voting and therefore disenfranchise voters.

12 Equality analysis

- 12.1 An Equality Analysis has been undertaken on these proposals. It concluded that the recommended changes could improve accessibility for electors who are disabled, have mobility issues or care for someone who does, and parent/ guardians with young children. It is acknowledged that venues cannot always have links to public transport in the immediate vicinity due to limited suitable venues.

13 Appendices

Appendix 1 – LDC Polling Place Consultation Document

14 Background papers

<https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/consultations/review-of-lewes-polling-districts-and-polling-places/>