

14 June 2019

Report of	Assistant Director Customer	Author	Sarah Cheek ☎ 282271
Title	Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places		
Wards affected	All wards of Colchester Borough Council		

**This report concerns a statutory review of
all polling district and polling places.**

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 To consider the proposed changes to polling districts and polling places following a consultation period. This decision will be passed to full council for approval.

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 In accordance with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, every council in England and Wales must undertake and complete a review of all their polling districts and polling places at least once every four years. This needs to be completed by the 1 December 2019 so any changes can be included in the new electoral register.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 There are no alternative options. This review is a statutory requirement.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 On Monday 4 March 2019 we published the notice of Polling District and Polling Place Review 2019. The last polling district and polling place review was completed in 2015, to coincide with the ward boundary changes. There will no ward boundary changes in 2019.
- 4.2 A polling place is defined as a designated area (e.g. a designated building or street) for a polling district in which polling stations are located. Although the review is of polling districts and polling places, there is such a close link to polling stations that these will be reviewed concurrently.
- 4.3 In conducting this review the council must have, as far as practicable, regard to the criteria set out in the legislation and must seek to ensure that all electors in the constituency have reasonable facilities for voting as are practical in the circumstances. Also, they must ensure that wherever possible the polling place is accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, when designating the polling station. Consideration must be given to the requirement that each polling district should have a polling place in the defined area and within the ward except in exceptional circumstances.

5. Consultation

5.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2006 requires the relevant authority to actively seek representations from:

- A) The Acting Returning Officer for the area of the Constituency the authority covers.
- B) Any persons as it thinks have expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of ability.
- C) Electors in the Borough may offer opinions on the designation of polling places.

5.2 Responses were received from the following individuals:

- Andy Wright (Braintree Returning Officer)
- Adam Scott
- Dave Harris (Councillor)
- David Lines
- Jackie MacLean (Councillor)
- Lee Scordis (Councillor)
- Lyn Barton (Councillor)
- Pauline Bacon
- Roger Buston (Councillor)
- Michelle Harris

6. Proposals

6.1 For many of the polling districts no change is required, the polling districts and stations will remain the same as it is considered the existing arrangement provide satisfactory facilities for the elector. Changes are detailed below and in the appendix.

6.2 Willows & Monkwick polling district (AB). Historically Thomas Lord Audley School was used as the polling station. However, TLA school is no longer fit for purpose as a polling station. The school are reluctant for us to use them as a polling station. The polling station has recently been situated in the gym hall, due to the availability of other rooms in the school. However, the gym hall is quite a way through the school grounds and a ramp must be supplied by the council Zone's teams for disabled access. For the European Parliamentary Election on 23 May the polling station at TLA was relocated to Abbots Community Hall. The relocation was a result of the school's refusal to allow use of the gym hall due to exams on that date. Nonetheless, the relocated polling station worked well. It is proposed therefore that the polling place be expanded to include both AB Willows & Monkwick and AL Barnhall, as well as the polling station being changed to Abbots Community Hall. Whilst Abbots Community Hall is in a different ward it is in close geographical location. In terms of accessibility it is the most suitable polling station in the area and far superior in that respect to Thomas Lord Audley.

6.3 Home Farm polling district (AR). Historically Home Farm Primary School was used as the polling station. However, Home Farm School have been increasing reluctant for us to use them as a polling station. For both elections in May of this year we had to use a portacabin on the school grounds as the school refused to facilitate use in any of the school rooms. Inevitably, use of a portacabin was less than ideal. Home Farm School as a polling station is still under review. The polling place has therefore been expanded to the whole of Prettygate Ward to allow us scope to find a more suitable polling station.

- 6.4 Trafalgar polling district (AQ). Historically Lexden Primary School was used as the polling station. However, this created several problems with some electors having to travel past another polling station to get here as well as congestion on the road leading to the school. The school were also reluctant for us to continue using them as a polling station. Therefore, the polling station was changed to make the polling station accessible to all electors. Now we are using Praiseway Church on Straight Road. However, the polling station we use will remain under review. As such, to allow wider scope, the polling place will be listed as The Wards of Lexden and Braiswick and Prettygate.
- 6.5 Shrub End polling district (BF). Alderman Blaxill School was historically used as the polling station. However, the school was demolished. We are currently using Shrub End Social Centre as the polling station. Whilst concerns were raised in the consultation, regarding parking and the fact that the social centre is not central in the heart of the polling district in the same way as the school was, this venue remains the best available polling station. St Cedd's Church was previously used however, it is unavailable as a polling station due to a weekly booking on Thursdays. Once the new school on the Alderman Blaxill site is built, we will look to use that as a polling station. The polling place has therefore been expanded to the Shrub End Ward so we have scope to change the polling station.
- 6.6 Tiptree Maypole polling district (GS). Whilst St Lukes Church is outside of the polling district. At the moment there is no polling station within the Tiptree Maypole district which is suitable.
- 6.7 West Stanway polling district (GL). The polling district is increasing in size and Copford Village Hall is no longer a suitable polling station. Stanway Village Hall is more convenient and easily accessible for the electorate.
- 6.9 Great Wigborough (GG) and Little Wigborough (GH) polling districts. Essex Wildlife Trust has been replaced by Peldon and Wigboroughs Community Hall. This building is a combined polling station with two presiding officers. One PO oversees both the Great and Little Wigborough registers, the second PO oversees the Peldon register (ES). Therefore, the one building has electors from two separate wards. However, the venue is more than adequate to accommodate with minimal risk of cross pollination – especially given that the electorate is relatively small.
- 6.10 Peldon polling district (ES). Formerly Peldon Village Hall, now the new village hall dubbed Peldon & Wigborough Community Hall. No other change.

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 Having an appropriate polling district and polling station scheme link in with our Strategic Plan aims to be efficient accessible, customer focused and always looking to improve.

8. Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 During the thirty day period of consultation, maps, current polling district and elector numbers as well as any other relevant information was available for public inspection, along with details listed on the council's website.
- 8.2 Upon conclusion of the review, any elector who is affected with a change in polling station will be contacted and the new polling location explained.
- 8.3 The final schedule of polling districts and polling places will be available for public inspection and details listed on the council's website.

9. Financial Implications

9.1 There are no financial consequences arising from this report for the Borough Council

10. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

11. Community Safety Implications

11.1 There are no community safety implications.

12. Health and Safety Implications

12.1 There are no health and safety implications associated with this decision.

13. Risk Management Implications

13.1 There are no risk management implications.

Background Papers

Appendix A Draft recommendations to polling District and Polling Places