

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

COUNCIL

5 DECEMBER 2007

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE ACTING AS RETURNING OFFICER

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Legislation requires that all relevant local authorities hold a review on their polling districts and polling places by 31 December 2007.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Council accept the proposals as outlined in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 That the Returning Officer be granted delegated powers to make changes to polling districts, polling places and polling stations in between formal reviews.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 The Council is required by legislation to produce a review of polling districts and polling places by 31 December 2007 and every four years thereafter.
- 3.2 Officers have completed a review of all the current polling districts, places and stations. There are two proposals to amend existing polling stations.
- 3.3 From time to time polling stations cannot be used for some legitimate reason and it is recommended that the Council grant delegated powers to the Returning Officer to allow changes to polling districts, places and stations. The full review every four years would still need to be ratified by the Council.
- 3.4 It is recommended that the Council accept the proposals included in Appendix 1.

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Section 1

Background

Section 16 in respect of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a number of changes to the Representation of the People Act 1983 in which reviews of polling districts and polling places must be undertaken.

By 31 December 2007 every relevant authority must have undertaken and completed a review of all the polling districts and polling places in its area except in the circumstances where a polling district or polling place is created in 2007 (when in such circumstances the first review of the polling district or polling place must be completed before the end of the period of four years starting with the date on which the designation is made).

Following the first review, the relevant authority must then complete a further review of every polling district and polling place before the end of the period of four years starting with the completion of the previous review. In effect, this means that by 31 December 2011 every relevant authority must have undertaken two full reviews of the electoral arrangements in its area.

Letters requesting comments were sent to all District Council Members and Disability Groups. A press release was made and information on the review was posted on the Council's website for consultation and for anyone to make representations.

The Acting Returning Officer for the Cannock Chase Constituency was happy with the current arrangements.

Section 2

Details of Matters to be Considered

To consider the proposals of additional polling stations.

Section 3

Contributions to CHASE

The Council is required by legislation to review its polling districts and polling places and a contribution will be made to the safer and stronger communities block in respect of equality and diversity and community engagement in providing easier access for electors to polling stations.

Section 4

Section 17 Implications

There are no identified implications in respect of Section 17 (Crime Prevention) arising from this report.

Section 5

Human Rights Act Implications

This is a statutory review that the District Council must complete by 31 December 2007 and as such there are no Human Rights Act implications arising directly from this report.

It is acknowledged that physical access to certain polling stations is by steps. Whenever possible ramps will be provided, which should assist those with access difficulties and those electors in wheelchairs. Unfortunately, portacabins do not (for health and safety reasons) have this facility and in such circumstances that an elector cannot manage the steps the Presiding Officer can attend to the electors outside the polling station.

Section 6

Data Protection Act Implications

There are no identified implications in respect of the Data Protection Act arising from this report.

Section 7

Risk Management Implications

The review includes accessibility issues thus providing a better, safer environment for the electors of the District. As part of the polling station arrangements risk matters are taken into account.

Section 8

Legal Implications

The Electoral Administration Act 2006, section 16 deals with the need to review polling places and provides:-

(1) For section 18 of the 1983 Act (polling districts and places at parliamentary elections) substitute –
18C Review of polling districts and places

(1) Each relevant authority must complete a review under sections 18A and 18B of all of the polling districts and polling places in its area before the end of the period of 12 months starting with the date on which section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 comes into force.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply in the case of a polling district or polling place (as the case may be) which is designated for the first time during that period.

(3) In such a case, the first review of the polling district or polling place must be completed before the end of the period of four years starting with the date on which that designation is made.

(4) The authority must complete a further review of each polling district and polling place in its area before the end of the period of four years starting with the completion of the previous such review.

(5) Subsections (1) to (4) do not prevent a relevant authority carrying out at any time a review of a particular polling district or polling place.

Section 9

Financial Implications

Within this report there are two changes to the current election arrangements due to better locations being identified for voters. The changes proposed are:-

- Moving some electors in Western Springs South Ward (WS1) from the Methodist School Room to the Rugeley Rose Theatre and
- Moving some electors in Cannock West Ward (CW2) from Maple Crescent to a polling station nearer Cannock Town Centre (potentially Cannock Park off Park Road).

The estimated cost of moving some electors in Western Springs South Ward from the Methodist School room to the Rugeley Rose Theatre is £365. This is made up of the cost of a Presiding Officer (£210) and Poll Clerk (£155) who will be required for the additional voting turnover. As the Rugeley Rose Theatre is currently used as a polling station there are no anticipated additional energy costs etc. to setting up another polling booth.

The estimated cost of moving some electors of Cannock West Ward from Maple Crescent to a polling station nearer Cannock Town Centre is £1,615. This is made up of the following:-

Portable Polling Station	£800
Portable Loo	£100
Electricity Supply (1 day)	£300
Transport	£50
Presiding Officer	£210
Poll Clerk	£155
Total	£1,615

If the polling station was located in Cannock Park off Park Road there is already an electricity pillar available. However, if the polling station could not be located at Park Road or could not be 'linked' to the current supply within Cannock Park there may be an additional cost of £1,000 to supply an additional electricity pillar. This would increase the estimated cost to £2,615. Further consent will be required from the Trustees of Cannock Park, CISWO and Charity Commission to implement this change.

Therefore the total cost of relocating some Ward voters to a better location is £1,980 (or £2,980 dependant on the electricity pillar). This cost can be met from the existing Elections budget, however, utilising the elections budget in this way may jeopardise other elections work.

Section 10

Human Resource Implications

There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

Section 11

Conclusions

That the recommendations detailed in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 be approved.

Background Papers

Annexes

Annex 1:

	<p>geographically known to many residents and is not convenient.</p>	<p>the portable polling station situated in Maple Crescent.</p> <p>Roads to be moved:-</p> <p>Ivy Close Newhall Street High Green Court Queen Street Victoria Street Manor Avenue High Green Park Road Dartmouth Road Lloyd Street Beech Tree Lane St. Luke's Close Oak Woods (effectively moving approx. 650 electors)</p>
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