

## **COUNCIL**

**DATE OF MEETING: 24 November 2022**

**TITLE OF REPORT: POLLING DISTRICT AND POLLING PLACE REVIEW – HOOK AND YATELEY WEST**

**Report of: Chief Executive and Returning Officer**

**Cabinet Portfolio: Corporate**

**Key Decision: No**

**Confidentiality: Non Exempt**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The report sets out a proposal to create two new polling districts in the Hook Ward, with a new polling place being allocated.
2. The report also sets out details of the proposed new polling place for the Yateley West Ward.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- A. The Hook ward be split into three polling districts: Rotherwick, Hook East and Hook West.
- B. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Bramshill Scout Lodge, Monteagle Lane be designated as the polling place for the Tudor and Vigo (YT) polling district.

### **BACKGROUND**

3. The Council is responsible for the designation of polling districts and polling places within the District. Issues have arisen in two district wards, which require a permanent resolution.
4. In Hook, there are two polling districts - Rotherwick and Hook. There are around 6,900 electors in the Hook polling district, with a designated polling place of the Elizabeth Hall.
5. There are three polling stations within the Elizabeth Hall, and the electorate allocated to each polling station is at the upper end of the Electoral Commission's current recommended electorate allocation per polling station.
6. Any changes made to the polling district arrangements will not affect the current parish arrangements in Hook.
7. In Yateley, St Swithun's church have advised that they are no longer available to be the designated polling place for the Tudor and Vigo (YT) polling district.
8. There is no suitable venue within the polling district itself, so other venues in neighbouring polling districts have been investigated.

### **MAIN ISSUES**

#### **Hook**

9. The Electoral Commission guidance currently states that the maximum electorate allocated to a polling place should be 2,500, but that ideally it should not be over 2,000 electors.
10. With the introduction of Voter ID from May 2023, it is also likely that the Electoral Commission will reduce the electorate allocations per polling station.

11. The electorate in the Hook polling district is currently just over 6,900 electors, which equates to approximately 2,300 electors for each polling station. Although some of these electors will vote by post, with the likelihood that the overall electorate figures will continue to grow, the existing arrangements are not sustainable for one polling place. Therefore, splitting the electorate between two venues would be appropriate.
12. Hook Community Centre is an ideal venue for use as a polling place and is accessible for electors, particularly on the eastern side of Hook. There is sufficient space to facilitate two polling stations. This will result in four polling stations being used across the two polling places.
13. By dividing the existing Hook polling district into two, and using an additional polling station, the polling arrangements for Hook will be more sustainable as the electorate increases. There will be
14. The proposed split within the existing Hook polling districts is set out at Appendix 1 and 2.

### **Yateley**

15. With St Swithun's no longer available, alternative venues were sought, that would be ideally within the polling district as well as accessible for electors.
16. Unfortunately, there are no suitable venues within the Tudor and Vigo polling district, therefore venues outside the polling district were sought.
17. The 3rd Bramshill Scout Lodge on Monteagle Lane is a suitable venue, just outside the polling district and is accessible for electors with sufficient parking onsite. A map setting out the location of the proposed new polling place is set out at Appendix 2.

## **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

18. There are no reasonable alternative options.

## **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or The Hart Vision 2040**

19. These arrangements will ensure electors in Yateley and Hook have suitable access to polling places.

### **Service Plan**

- Is the proposal identified in the Service Plan? No
- Is the proposal being funded from current budgets? Yes
- Have staffing resources already been identified and set aside for this proposal? Additional staff will be required to run the additional Hook East polling station on polling day. These will be recruited in line with normal election staffing recruitment practices.

### **Legal and Constitutional Issues**

20. The Council has authority to designate polling district and polling places within the District.
21. The changes to the boundaries to the Hook polling district will not impact on electoral boundaries for any other bodies, such as Hook Parish Council or Hampshire County Council.

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

22. There will be additional hire costs and associated polling station staffing costs in the new Hook East ward. This will be in the region of £1,000.
23. These additional costs will have to be met for District Council elections by Hart District Council. At other elections/referenda, these costs will be re-claimed.
24. No overall additional polling place costs will be incurred for the changes to the Yateley arrangements.

### **Risk Management**

25. Splitting the existing Hook polling district will ensure the voting arrangements for all voters in this area are fit for purpose and also meet the electorate/polling station staff ratios set out by the Electoral Commission.
26. These arrangements will ensure that more electors in Yateley have access to suitable polling station facilities within their polling district.

### **EQUALITIES**

27. No equalities issues are anticipated relating to these proposed changes.

### **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

28. The introduction of an additional polling place in Hook will reduce the requirement for many voters to drive to their polling station.

### **ACTION**

29. The new polling districts will be created, to be included in the revised register published on 1 December 2022.
30. The new polling places will be confirmed and information published to advise of changes prior to poll cards being issued for the May 2023 elections.

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### **Appendices**

Map of Proposed Hook Polling Districts and Proposed Polling Places

Map of Tudor and Vigo Polling District and Proposed Polling Place

### **Background Papers:**

None.