



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY, PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE**

**to
COUNCIL
22 FEBRUARY 2023**

DISTRICT AND PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS – 4 MAY 2023 – POLLING STATIONS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To delegate authority to the Council's Returning Officer to decide on an alternative polling station at the forthcoming elections in May 2023, in the event of any designated venues not being available for use.
- 1.2 To request approval for change of location for polling stations in Heybridge (East), Maldon (East) and Mayland.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That for the elections being held on 4 May 2023, the Council delegates authority to the Returning Officer to decide on suitable alternative venues, should any designated polling stations become unavailable.
- (ii) To approve the changes as detailed in paragraphs 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 below.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Council has a duty under the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) to designate Polling Places for each Polling District.
- 3.2 The Council also has a duty under Schedule A1 to the RPA 1983 to review polling places every five years and the last review took place in 2019. The next one is due to be completed by January 2025.
- 3.3 For the May 2021 elections Heybridge Swifts Football Club was used instead of Heybridge County Primary School, as the school could not accommodate us at that time and Maldon Stadium was used instead of the Dance Studio at Blackwater Leisure Centre as the venue provided more space needed at that time.
- 3.4 You will recall that we used a different Polling Place for the Essex County Council elections, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner election, as well as the Heybridge (East) by-election, since the school could not accommodate us on Polling day. We approached Heybridge Swifts Football Club and they agreed that we could use their Club House. The accommodation is better placed in terms of location and being able to set up two Polling Stations, instead of just one, because of the space. No complaints were received relating to the change of Polling Station. It will be useful to have the extra space, to assist with the new regulations regarding the need for Voters to show a form of ID before they can be given a ballot paper.

- 3.5 With regard to the Maldon (East) Polling Station, we agreed to use the Maldon Stadium, instead of the Dance Studio at Blackwater Leisure Centre, since the Stadium had more space, more car parking and direct access, whereas the Dance Studio did not, with voters having to go around the Leisure Centre to get to the Polling Station at the back. The other alternative was for Electors to go through the main entrance, via the turnstiles and then having to navigate the through to the back. It would be useful to have the extra space, to assist with the new regulations regarding the need for Voters to show a form of ID before they can be given a ballot paper.
- 3.6 With regard to the Mayland Polling Station, this was designated as Lawling Park Hall, due to Henry Samuel Hall, undergoing renovations. These have now been completed and the proposal is to return to Henry Samuel Hall as this is within the Polling District.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 We must ensure that all electors are able to cast their vote on polling day and know as soon as possible the polling station venue, if that differs from the normal designated venue, or has been changed to a more suitable alternative going forward.

5. IMPACT ON STRATEGIC THEMES

- 5.1 None.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – We must ensure that the elections are concluded in accordance with the election timetables.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – If necessary, it is important that we provide stations which are accessible to everyone.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – We could be challenged if we do not provide a polling station for its purpose.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – A different venue may result in a different hire fee.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – No effect.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – No effect.
- (vii) **Impact on Strengthening Communities** – Ensuring those who can vote, are able to do so.

Background Papers: None.

Enquiries to: Paul Dodson, Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance and appointed Returning Officer.