

TITLE OF REPORT: REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS IN HITCHIN

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to assist the Committee to review the polling districts within the area of the Hitchin Area Committee.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision but has been referred to in the Forward Plan to assist public awareness of the review

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A Polling District is a geographical area within a ward containing electors. Each polling district forms a section of the electoral register and is given distinctive letters to distinguish it from other polling districts. Each polling district should form a convenient area for the purpose of polling. Responsibility for defining polling districts is delegated to Area Committees. The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a duty to review all polling districts every four years. The last review was completed in 2007. The Act also requires the review of “polling places”. It should be noted that, in this authority, polling places are defined as geographical areas coterminous with polling districts.

- 3.2 By defining the polling districts and places in this way the Council enables the Returning Officer (RO) to carry out his personal responsibility to site polling stations unhindered. The location of polling stations must also be reviewed in accordance with the same Act. Such a review is underway and the views of each individual Member of the Council has been sought together with known political agents and political parties operating in the NHDC area. In addition, the RO would welcome any views which may emerge during the debate about polling districts.

4. ISSUES

- 4.1 The proposed polling districts for the whole area of the Committee are listed at Appendix A
- 4.2 The Committee should note that no amendments to the polling districts in the area are proposed. The Committee should also note that the RO does not intend to relocate any of the present polling stations in the area (see Appendix B).
- 4.3 The attention of the Committee is drawn to the map displayed at the meeting which defines the polling districts

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Provisions within the Electoral Administration Act 2006 require each local authority to undertake a complete review of the polling arrangements within the Council's area by no later than December 2007 and thereafter at four yearly intervals

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The views of: each Member of the Council; political parties; known political agents operating in the area; voluntary organisations concerned with access issues; neighbouring RO's and the general public have been sought.

7. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no financial implications.
- 7.2 Failure to determine a polling district scheme at this time will mean that the Returning Officer may be unable to set up elections and allocate polling stations in a timely manner for the first ordinary day of elections on 5 May in 2011.

8. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 By maintaining the current practice of ensuring polling places are coterminous with polling districts the RO may act without delay in relocating a polling station where access and other issues arise.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That the Committee agrees to establish polling districts as described in Appendix A, for a further four year period.
- 9.2 That the Committee notes the polling stations listed in Appendix B.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To enable the Council to review, alter and/or re-establish the polling districts within the NHDC area as necessary.

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix A - Proposed Polling Districts.
- 11.2 Appendix B – Proposed Polling Stations.

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