

Agenda



Listening Learning Leading

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Date: 21 October 2019

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A MEETING OF THE

Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee

WILL BE HELD ON TUESDAY 29 OCTOBER 2019 AT 6.30 PM

MEETING ROOM 1, 135 EASTERN AVENUE, MILTON PARK, MILTON, ABINGDON, OXFORDSHIRE, OX14 4SB

Members of the Committee:

David Bartholomew
Peter Dragonetti

Maggie Filipova-Rivers
Mocky Khan

Lynn Lloyd
David Turner

Substitutes

Anna Badcock
Pieter-Paul Barker
Sue Cooper
Sam Casey-Rerhaye

Lorraine Hillier
George Levy
Axel Macdonald
Jo Robb

Ian Snowdon
Celia Wilson

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1 Election of chairman

To elect a chairman of the committee for the remainder of the 2019/20 municipal year.

2 Appointment of vice-chairman

To appoint a vice-chairman of the committee for the remainder of the 2019/20 municipal year.

3 Apologies for absence

4 Minutes (Pages 4 - 5)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2018 - attached.

5 Declarations of interest

To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

6 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

To receive notification of any matters which the chairman determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent, and to receive any announcements from the chairman.

7 Public participation

To receive any questions or statements from members of the public that have registered to speak.

8 Report of the Returning Officer on the delivery of the May 2019 district and parish elections (Pages 6 - 11)

To consider the report of the returning officer – attached.

9 Polling district and polling places review (Pages 12 - 25)

To consider the report of the head of legal and democratic on proposals for polling districts and polling places following a periodic review required by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 - attached.

10 District wide community governance review

South Oxfordshire District Council undertook a district wide review of parish

arrangements in 2013/14 with Council agreeing changes at its meeting in July 2014. This committee undertook a number of further reviews in response to further requests from parish councils, with any agreed changes implemented prior to the 2019 elections.

A community governance review (CGR) is a review carried out by a principal council of the whole or part of its area. The aim is to look at one or more of:

- the creation, merging or abolition of parishes
- the naming of parishes
- the style of parishes (for example town, village, community)
- the electoral arrangements for parishes (for example size of parish councils, number of councillors, warding arrangements)

District council wards and county council divisions cannot be altered in a community governance order. However, a request may be made to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to carry out a review for changes to district or county boundaries as a result of a local CGR.

At its meeting on 30 October 2017 this committee agreed “that the council undertakes a community governance review every four years with changes agreed for implementation at the next scheduled parish elections”. In line with this resolution committee is invited to agree that a district wide community governance review is commenced in 2020.

RECOMMENDATION:

That officers submit a timetable for a community governance review to this committee for a review to commence in Spring 2020.

MARGARET REED

Head of Legal and Democratic

Minutes



OF A MEETING OF THE

Listening Learning Leading

Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee

HELD AT 6.30 PM ON TUESDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2018

MEETING ROOM 1, 135 EASTERN AVENUE, MILTON PARK, MILTON,
ABINGDON, OXFORDSHIRE, OX14 4SB

Present

Steve Connel (Chairman)

Charles Bailey (as substitute for Tony Harbour), Anthony Dearlove, Mocky Khan and
Ian White

Apologies:

Will Hall and Tony Harbour tendered apologies.

Officers:

Susan Baker, Steven Corrigan, Abbie Mulcairn and Margaret Reed

6 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2018 as a correct
record and agree that the Chairman signs them as such.

7 Declarations of interest

None.

8 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None.

9 Public participation

None.

10 Interim Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

The committee considered the report of the head of legal and democratic on proposals for polling districts and polling places following an interim review in preparation for the May 2019 district and parish elections.

The committee was advised that, following further communication with the Chairman of the Hagbourne Village Hall Committee, the village hall would be available as a polling place for the elections in May 2019. The issue of availability of the hall would only arise at by elections or neighbourhood plan referendums to prevent disruption to regular hall bookings.

The committee was advised that a resident of Henley had made further representations regarding the allocation of polling places in Henley particularly the use of Christ Church, which in his view was not suitable due to the use of the facility by numerous other groups, the advantage of designating Valley Road School as a polling place rather than the leisure centre which was located at the edge of Henley and the justification for the allocation of three polling places for Henley South and only two for Henley North.

The committee supported the designations as set out in the schedule of polling districts and polling places attached as appendix A to the report. In doing so members noted that cost is not a factor in the designation of polling places. The important factor is ensuring electors have suitable and accessible venues for voting.

RESOLVED: to approve the schedule of polling districts and polling places set out in Appendix A to the report of the head of legal and democratic to the meeting of the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee on 27 November 2018.

11 Request for related alterations - Community Governance Review of South Oxfordshire

The committee received a verbal update on the outcome of requests made to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to make changes to the boundaries of district wards and county divisions to reflect changes made at parish level following the community governance reviews completed in 2018 and implemented on 10 October 2018 under the South Oxfordshire District Council (Reorganisation of Community Governance) Order 2018. Officers confirmed that at its meeting on 20 November the Commission had approved all the requests. The relevant Order will come into force once for the May 2019 elections.

The committee noted and welcomed the decision of the LGBCE which provided for coterminous district ward and parish boundaries for the benefit of the electorate.

The meeting closed at 6.42pm

Chairman

Date



Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee

Report of the Returning Officer

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To: COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE AND ELECTORAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

DATE: 29 October 2019

Report of the Returning Officer on the delivery of the May 2019 district and parish elections

Recommendations:

That the committee:

(a) notes the report

(b) endorses the action points in paragraph 31 of this report

Purpose of Report

1. This is the report of the Returning Officer on the delivery of the May 2019 South Oxfordshire District Council elections and the parish council elections for the South Oxfordshire area.

Background

2. The council is responsible for electoral registration i.e. ensuring that people are on the electoral register and entitled to vote. The council is required to appoint an Electoral Registration Officer (ERO), currently the head of legal and democratic, who is responsible for delivering this function.
3. The council appoints a Returning Officer (RO) who is responsible for the delivery of district and parish council elections together with other polls that may take place from time to time e.g. neighbourhood plan referendums, by-elections and parish

polls. This is also currently the head of legal and democratic. The council's RO automatically becomes the Acting Returning Officer for Parliamentary elections, Local Returning Officer for European and Police and Crime Commissioner elections and Counting Officer/Local Counting Officer for referendums.

4. Once appointed, the RO is answerable to the courts rather than the council, which is an important distinction from the ERO role. However, given that most members of the public do not understand this distinction and hold the council to account for the conduct of elections, it is important that the RO keeps the council well informed about how elections have gone and retains the confidence of councillors and the committee. That is the reason for this report.

Key issues

5. The district and parish council elections are the most complex that we deliver because of the number of individual elections involved. In May 2019 elections took place for all 36 council seats in 21 wards. All South district wards were contested. These were combined with 85 parish council/parish ward elections, of which 14 were contested and 71 were uncontested. Some of these elections were run on revised boundaries or with revised arrangements following community governance reviews.
6. This report reflects on the key areas of the delivery of the elections. My overall assessment is that the elections went well.

ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

7. The electoral register was refreshed by the district-wide canvass during autumn 2018 with a new register being published on 1 December 2018. Monthly updates were issued between January and May 2019 to reflect changes notified to the council. In January 2019 we also sent a letter to all households asking them to check the information that we held and this provided an additional opportunity for electors to provide updates.
8. A small number of issues arose on polling day in relation to the accuracy of the electoral register. Where appropriate, these were corrected as clerical errors and the elector was able to vote. To our knowledge, only a very small number of electors were unable to vote as a result of electoral register errors.
9. Some political parties experienced problems with obtaining electoral register updates in the run up to the election. At times there were problems uploading information to political party portals so that updates had to be sent by email. There was also some lack of clarity in points of contact between officers and political parties and the ability to check what information had been successfully received. This is the subject of an action point for future elections.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND PROJECT SUPPORT

10. Project management and project support was provided by the programmes and assurance team and this worked well. The elections team is grateful for this support and also for the contribution made to the project by IT, the communications team, the accountants and the property and facilities teams, particularly officers responsible for the management of the count venue.

NOMINATIONS

11. The nomination period ran from 26 March until 3 April, a total of seven working days. All nominations were taken in person at Milton Park and for South Oxfordshire a total of 103 district council nominations and 572 parish council nominations were received. Positive feedback was received from agents about the nominations process.
12. Although there were some particularly busy times during the nomination period with agents and candidates having to wait longer than they would have wished to, it is unlikely that receiving nominations over a greater number of working days would have alleviated this. Rather it would have tied up scarce resources for a longer period whilst achieving the same outcome. We did not offer an appointments system as doing so was challenging to manage in 2015. We will nevertheless revisit the pros and cons for each approach between now and May 2023.
13. The main challenge for all involved in the nominations process was the new nomination form which was published nationally close to the elections and was unfamiliar to many candidates and agents leading to many errors that needed to be corrected requiring more than one visit to the office.
14. A number of parishes were unfamiliar with or did not understand the nominations process despite the fact that guidance was issued to all parish clerks in advance and some only submitted nominations after recirculation of guidance on the process and individual contact.

POSTAL VOTES

15. Postal vote despatch was timely and accurate and there were no notable problems. Despatch took place in Swindon rather than any further afield which proved helpful in enabling council staff to oversee the process on several occasions.

POLLING DAY

16. Polling day itself ran smoothly. All polling stations opened on time and with no serious concerns. Polling station inspectors were on hand to help resolve the usual operational issues. There were no unacceptable queues at polling stations.
17. Most polling stations are suitable for our needs and few issues arose in relation to their suitability. We seek to avoid the use of schools but at times that cannot be avoided. The polling districts and polling places review report also on this agenda highlights the polling stations that present challenges. Particular care is needed where elections for different district wards and different parish wards take place in the same room. In such cases a clear boundary between stations must be provided and care taken to ensure the correct signage.
18. As always, recruiting experienced presiding officers for polling stations proved difficult with the need to replace staff who had to pull out at short notice. Nevertheless all stations were staffed on the day in accordance with the Electoral Commission guidance and we are grateful to all internal and external polling

station staff. The elections team is working with the HR team to explore additional ways of recruiting polling station and count staff.

19. The elections office coped well with the volume of enquiries received on polling day from presiding officers, agents and voters. Candidate and polling station information was made available on the website and this was accessed 4121 times between 5 April and 2 May. Polling station information was also made available through the Democracy Club (“yourvotematters”) and this was searched 2953 times.

THE COUNTS

20. All district and parish council counts took place in the sports hall at the White Horse leisure and tennis centre in Abingdon. A count venue manager worked with relevant officers and contractors to deal with the logistics relating to the venue and the equipment needed to undertake the counts.
21. The ballot box drop off at the leisure centre worked very smoothly but this system does require some presiding officers to travel considerable distances to the leisure centre and then home after a very long day. For future elections we are therefore exploring the possibility of some more local drop off points.
22. The district council counts took place overnight after the close of poll. In advance the RO had predicted that the verification (checking the number of votes in each ballot box against the presiding officer’s ballot paper account) would be completed by 2am and that the district council counts would be completed by 8am. Each of these stages ran over by about half an hour respectively. This was caused in part by IT and printing issues which slowed down the completion of the last postal vote opening session and slowed down the production and throughput of results. Staff were also using the software count module for the first time and were less familiar with it than they will be with more experience. Steps will be taken to overcome these issues at future elections. Nonetheless the RO is very confident in the accuracy of the results which is a higher priority than speed.
23. Parish council counts took place on the Friday starting at noon. All these counts took place in Abingdon as the RO did not favour devolved counts at other locations which would have introduced unacceptable risks.
24. There are pros and cons of carrying out an overnight count rather than say a Friday daytime count for the district council elections and a Saturday count for the parish council elections. The options will be re-examined for the 2023 elections.
25. For multi-member district wards and for parish/parish and town wards, we trialled the use of “kangaroo boards”- boards with plastic pouches and summary sheets which enabled multiple votes on ballot papers to be counted. This worked well and proved to be more efficient than using “grass skirts” - sheets on which ballot papers are stuck and then counted – and more transparent than using tally sheets marked by count assistants which are harder for candidates and agents to observe.
26. At all counts we tend to receive criticism that there are times when count staff were sitting doing nothing. Whilst there are always opportunities to improve processes and efficiency, these comments often flow from a lack of understanding of the count process. Particularly in wards where more than one councillor is being

elected there is a significant amount of checking that has to take place before the RO can announce a result. It is undesirable for the team that have undertaken that count to start a new one in case an issue arises that requires a recount. In this respect we operate no differently than other ROs throughout the country. We are grateful to all staff who took part in the counts.

POST COUNT ISSUES

27. Although for candidates and agents the announcement of the results pretty much ends the electoral process, for the elections team there is still much to do. Staff have to be paid, polling stations have to be paid for and parish councils have to be invoiced for their share of election costs – whether contested or uncontested. There are also returns required by the Electoral Commission. The internal audit team is currently undertaking an audit of the elections. The costs of the elections are covered in the financial implications section below.

Financial Implications

28. The 2018/19 budget included £50,000 for costs expected to be incurred before 31 March 2019 (of which £32,000 was carried forward into 2019/20 because of the timing of the despatch of poll cards) and the 2019/20 budget included £115,000 for costs expected to be incurred after 1 April 2019, making a total budget of £165,000. These budgets are net of recharges to parish councils.

29. The accounts are still being finalised but the approximate costs of running the district and parish council elections is £248,000 less income of £54,000 meaning that the district council elections cost around £194,000 to run, resulting in an overspend of around £29,000 which has been reported in budget monitoring. The reasons for this were additional consultancy costs to cover a key vacant post that had been advertised three times (July 2018, September 2018 and November 2018) before the elections but not filled, additional printing and postage costs and some costs attributable to the count. There were also other minor overspends.

Conclusion

30. Overall the elections ran smoothly, with generally positive feedback from candidates and agents, staff involved and the media. As always, some learning points have arisen and key action points are covered in this report. In addition to these, the elections team has a more detailed action plan in response to feedback from the team itself, from the project team and from polling station and count staff. Some of these have already been actioned.

31. Key action points going forward are:

- for future elections publish a list of dates for the publication of electoral register updates, share this with candidates, agents and political parties and clarify processes and named contact points for the transmission of electoral register data
- decide whether to run an appointments system for nominations in 2023
- explore additional ways of recruiting polling station and count staff

- improve boundaries and signage where it is not possible to avoid running different elections in the same room
- explore the possibility of providing more local ballot box drop off points
- consider whether to have an overnight count or daytime counts in 2023
- explore ways of avoiding bottle necks that slow down the production, checking and announcement of results at the counts

Background Papers

None

Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee



Report of head of legal and democratic

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To: Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee

DATE: 29 October 2019

Polling District and Polling Places Review

Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. notes the consultation responses and the officer comments set out in appendix A;
2. notes the Acting Returning Officer's comments in appendix B;
3. approves the schedule of polling districts and polling places set out in Appendix C to this report; and
4. authorises the head of legal and democratic, acting in her capacity as the council's returning officer, to make changes to polling districts and polling places where circumstances dictate that this is desirable, having first consulted with members of the committee and the local councillor(s).

Purpose of Report

1. This report sets out proposals for polling districts and polling places following a periodic review required by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.

Strategic Objectives

2. The report does not specifically relate to any of the council's strategic objectives, but agreement of the recommendations (amended if the committee sees fit) will ensure compliance with the law.

Background

3. In accordance with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, the Council has a duty to undertake a review of parliamentary polling districts and polling places, which it must complete by the 31 January 2020. Subsequent reviews must be undertaken at least once every five years. The last such review in South Oxfordshire was undertaken in October 2014. The results of the polling districts and polling places review were agreed by this committee at its meeting on 26 January 2015. The council undertook an interim review with this committee agreeing recommendations at its meeting on 27 November 2018 prior to the district and parish elections in May 2019 to ensure arrangements reflected the outcome of recent community governance reviews agreed by this committee, reflected in the South Oxfordshire District Council (Reorganisation of Community Governance) Order 2018, and to ensure electors continue to have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
4. The current polling arrangements within South Oxfordshire are predominantly satisfactory as has been shown at elections conducted in recent years (the 2015 elections, the European Referendum, Police and Crime Commissioner elections in 2016 and the Oxfordshire County Council and Parliamentary elections in 2017) and very recently at the district and parish elections in May 2019, to be practicable. At the local and parliamentary elections in 2015 there were issues with queues at the polling place at Willowbrook Leisure Centre in polling district RBA. This committee, at its meeting on 20 October 2016, supported the proposal to subdivide polling district RBA in Didcot, implemented for the PCC and EU Referendum in early 2016, with Ladygrove Community Centre and Willowbrook Leisure Centre designated as the polling places. All polling stations were visited during the May elections and comments received have been taken into consideration as part of the review.

Terminology

5. **Polling District:** a geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency or ward into smaller parts within which a polling place can be located which is convenient to electors. By and large each parish is a polling district in its own right and has its own polling place or places. Exceptions are where parishes are sub-divided into electoral wards or split between district wards which necessitates the creation of additional polling districts.
6. **Polling place:** the building(s) within each polling district that will house polling stations.
7. **Polling stations:** the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. The number of polling stations within each polling place is a matter for the returning officer and is not covered in this report.

Requirements of the review

8. Local authorities must comply with the following legislative requirements when designating polling districts and polling places:
 - Each parish in England must be a separate polling district

- The council must designate a polling place for each polling district
- The polling place must be an area in the polling district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the polling district (for example, if no accessible polling place can be identified)
- The polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station
- That so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place is accessible to electors who are disabled

The review

8. Council gave notice of this review on 15 July 2019. Notice of the review was published on the council's website and given to the Acting Returning Officer (ARO), parish councils, district councillors and members of parliament. The review was also publicised via a press release and social media.

Consultation responses

9. The council received a number of responses before the deadline of 27 September which are set out in appendix A attached to this report with officer comments. The Acting Returning Officer for Henley was consulted, and her comments are attached at appendix B and referred to below.

Key issues

10. In her comments the ARO asked the council to endeavour not to use schools that are required to close if used as a polling station. As set out in appendix A, the council currently uses the Youth Centre at Lord William's School which does not require the closure of the school. Culham School has closed with pupils now attending the primary school in Clifton Hampden. Officers are seeking an assurance that the building will be available as a polling place.
11. The ARO requested the council review the designation of polling places in Henley-on-Thames, particularly the designation of Henley Leisure Centre. The leisure centre currently serves electors in both the south and north wards of Henley-on-Thames and was designated in 2015 because it is more convenient for voters in that part of Henley. Whilst officers have investigated other options there are currently no suitable venues. The only alternative is for voters to travel considerably further to the other designated polling places.
12. Officers propose that the council continues to designate The Fox and Hounds Public House as a polling place for electors in Pyrton, Shirburn and Watlington. Due to the rural nature of the area the venue provides a convenient location for a number of electors. Whilst the ARO requested officers investigate the continued designation of this polling place she is supportive of the continued designation of the public house as a polling place.
13. In her comments the ARO suggests no polling place is shared by two district wards, unless special circumstances apply, such as the lack of a suitable building

for polling stations in the adjoining areas, to avoid potential confusion for voters. Where this is not avoidable or is considered to offer geographical convenience to voters, she recommends the use of separate rooms or a physical boundary should be considered. The election team welcome this suggestion and will ensure a clear physical barrier is provided in such circumstances.

14. Officers are also currently identifying alternative polling places for those designated in appendix C should any become unavailable for a particular election.

Financial Implications

13. There is a modest cost associated with running a polling place. Often this cost is shared amongst a number of parties because the polling place hosts multiple elections at the same time. At national elections the cost is reimbursed to the council. Cost, however, should not be a consideration in determining how many polling places to designate.

Legal Implications

14. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires the council to complete its review of polling districts and polling places by 31 January 2020. Decisions made in respect of the proposals in this report will fulfil this requirement.

Risks

15. There are no discernable risks associated with the proposals set out in this report

Conclusion

16. The council has a legal requirement to complete a review of polling districts and polling places by the end of January 2020. Decisions taken in respect of this report will fulfil that requirement.

Background Papers

Polling District and Polling Places Review report to the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee on 26 January 2015.

Interim review of Polling Districts and Polling Places report to the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee on 27 November 2018

Reference	Polling Place	Feedback on existing polling stations	Officer response
S8	Dorchester Village Hall, 7 Queen Street, Dorchester, OX10 7HR	"I confirm that Dorchester Parish Council is very happy with the current polling arrangements in the Village Hall in Queen Street."	
S9	Drayton St Leonard Village Hall, Ford Lane, Drayton St Leonard, OX10 7AT	"Just to say that arrangements at Drayton St Leonard Polling Station seemed to me satisfactory in every way, and the staff were both friendly and helpful. I have not heard of any complaint."	
S18	Sydenham Old School Room, Brookstones, Sydenham OX39 4LY	"[I] would like to confirm that the location of the polling station at the Old School Rooms in Sydenham is ideal for me and all residents. In addition I would like to comment that your staff and the organisation have been excellent in recent elections."	
S40	Henley Leisure Centre, Gillotts Lane, Henley on Thames, RG9 1PA	"I live at xxxx, Henley-on-Thames which is at the Henley Town end of Deanfield Road but my Polling Station is much further away at the Leisure Centre at Gillotts School. I used to be able to use the Town Hall Polling Station which is within easy walking distance from my house rather than having to go nearly a mile to the Leisure Centre. I have previously asked if I could return to using the Town Hall but received no response. Can the Polling Station for me be returned to the Town hall to save the need to travel so far?"	The Leisure Centre was designated as a polling station for part of the North Ward of Henley-on-Thames Town Council as it provided a more convenient location than the town hall for the majority of residents. The Leisure Centre is located at the edge of the ward outside the polling district. However, the only alternative is Valley Road Primary School which would need to close if used as a polling station.

S49	Culham Parochial Primary School, High Street, Culham, OX14 4NB	<p>(a) Newspaper report that school maybe closing September 2019.</p> <p>(b) "Culham School is the most suitable public building in Culham for the polling station. However as the County Council is currently consulting to close the school the future of the building is uncertain though it is hoped the building remains available to the public. The polling station was moved to Clifton Hampden Village hall a couple of years ago and this was extremely unpopular with residents especially as it is difficult to reach from Culham unless you have your own transport. The church (the only other public building in the village) could be considered as a venue though whilst it does have a toilet its other limitations may make it unsuitable. I would be more than happy to answer any questions about the views of the Parish Council and the suitability of the church as I do have experience of working for you as a Presiding Officer. Questions regarding the future of the school building would need to be directed to the Oxford Diocese as they own the building but my understanding is that any potential election before Christmas would be ok as although not in use the school has not officially been closed - the Parish Council are still currently using it as a meeting place."</p>	The Church has been investigated but is not currently suitable as a venue due to access issues and a lack of facilities for polling station staff. Officers are seeking an assurance regarding the availability of the school as a venue going forward. In the past voters have voted in Clifton Hampden.
S51	Nuneham Courtenay Village Hall, Nuneham Courtenay, OX44 9NX	(a) "The Council considered this consultation at its meeting last night and instructed me to write to you urging that Nuneham Courtenay Village Hall continue to be the polling place for this parish. The Council knows of no better place within the parish where polling could take place. Recent alterations which this Council has funded now mean the Village Hall has a good ramp towards the parking at the rear and an adapted toilet so the Council believes it does constitute an accessible polling station."	
S52	Sandford on Thames Village Hall, Henley Road, Sandford on Thames, OX4 4YN	(a) "I am in favour of retaining Sandford on Thames as a Polling station."	
S61	Thame Snooker Club, 1a Saint Andrew Court, Wellington Street, Thame OX9 3WT	<p>"The polling station for Thame North used to be at Barley Hill School but has now moved to Thame Snooker Club. This is much less convenient for residents of the Lee Park area of Thame as there is no direct footpath and it is therefore much further to walk. I would like the polling station to be moved back to the school at least for electors in the Lee Park area."</p> <p>"Some brief comments from Thame Town Council following discussion at 6/8/19 Council meeting: a) The use of the Snooker Club instead of Barley Hill School worked well. Though there were two related observations:i) One Member had seen a disabled voter delayed (waiting for the ramp to be deployed) – but another said that she was impressed by the disabled accessii) Some concern at the further distance to travel for many voters – and had that had an impact on turnout?"</p>	The use of Barley Hill School ceased at the request of the school due to disruption to the school, parents and pupils. Officers have sought alternative venues following a request from the school not to designate it as a polling station. The snooker club has good facilities and parking.
S62	Thame Snooker Club, 1a Saint Andrew Court, Wellington Street, Thame OX9 3WT	as above	

S63	Thame Girl Guide HQ, Southern Road, Thame, OX9 2EE	<p>(a) "Over many years I have worked at several different locations, John Hampden School, Thame, Barley Hill School Thame and Chinnor school. For a number of years now I have worked at the Guide Headquarters Thame and I would say this is one of the best situated Polling stations. It is on the level with double doors which can be opened easily if required. There is enough car parking which seems to meet the needs of those who come by car. It seems to be quite central for the catchment area and I have never heard anyone make a complaint re the premises. I hope this one remains a location as I feel it meets all the needs."</p> <p>(b) "My Polling district is LNA3 and Polling Station is the Guide HQ on the Rec in Southern Road Thame and is very satisfactory. However so many dwellings have been built in the Town Council South Ward that the balance between North and South is no longer right and some of the South Ward should be transferred to the North Ward."</p>	The issue of a revision of the town council ward boundaries will be the subject of a community governance review.
S64	Youth Centre, Lord Williams`s School, Towersey Road, Thame OX9 3NW		School does not close as the youth centre is separate. Now used for 3/4 elections and beginning to settle following a few teething problems. No alternatives have been found in the area.
S65	Youth Centre, Lord Williams`s School, Towersey Road, Thame OX9 3NW		
S68	Russells Water Village Hall, Russells Water, RG9 6ES	<p>(a) "Regarding comments as to the use of The Village Hall at Russells Water as a Polling Station. We have found that the access to the Hall is excellent for old or disabled people and the two people who usually man the station are polite and efficient. We hope that this venue will be retained."</p> <p>(b) "Swyncombe is happy to use the polling station at Russells Water."</p>	
S70	Fox & Hounds Public House, Christmas Common, OX49 5HL	"Watlington Parish Council think this is a very important polling station for Christmas Common and would like to see it kept as a polling station at all costs. The local residents would be very unhappy if this situation were to change."	Provides a significantly more convenient location for electors (including a number from neighbouring parishes of Pyrton and Shirburn.
S86	Cholsey Pavilion, Station Road, Cholsey OX10 9PT	"I think the location of Cholsey Polling Station in the Pavilion in the centre of the village is perfect as I am able to walk there and back easily from home."	
S87	Cholsey Cricket Pavilion, Fair Mile, Reading Road, Cholsey OX10 9HH	<p>(a) "I live at xxxx, Cholsey Meadows and therefore my polling station is the Cricket Pavilion on that site. This is perfect for me and I would not wish to see any change."</p> <p>(b) "Cholsey Parish Council believe that both Polling Stations within the village are good locations for elections with good access for residents. However there does seem to be some confusion from some residents as to which polling station they should be using."</p>	

S99	Northbourne Centre, Church Street, Didcot, OX11 8DG	<p>(a) "The Northbourne Polling Centre being an old disused church is in need of complete renovation for more community use. As such it is being wasted whilst being in such a good community site, with parking."</p> <p>(b) "For polling purposes the Northbourne Centre is very well placed and especially for those who can walk there without having to drive. Therefore in time of global warming, it is well placed. As stated, it desperately needs renovation."</p>	The issue of renovation is a matter for the management of the Northbourne Centre.
S104	Northbourne Centre, Church Street, Didcot, OX11 8DG	As above	
S105	Long Wittenham Village Hall, High Street, Long Wittenham, OX14 4QH	"The Polling Station in Long Wittenham is in the ideal (central) location within the village and has full toilet / disabled facilities. It does not need to be relocated. "	

SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2019

COMMENTS FROM THE ACTING RETURNING OFFICER

This sets out the Acting Returning Officer's (ARO) submission to the above review.

The ARO is responsible for the conduct of the elections for one Parliamentary Constituency which covers part of South Oxfordshire District Council – namely Henley. The boundary of this constituency extends to also cover part of Cherwell District Council. Part of South Oxfordshire District Council is within the Wantage constituency which is the responsibility of the ARO for Vale of White Horse District Council.

The following comments concentrate solely on the polling districts and polling places which are located within South Oxfordshire District Council.

The council undertook an interim review in 2018 in preparation for the district and parish council elections in May 2019. There have been very few adverse comments from voters, political parties or polling station staff about the polling places used. Consequently, I am content with the current designations, which on the whole have been in place for the District, County, Police and Crime Commissioner, Parliamentary and European elections in the past four years. In general terms, all the buildings used as polling stations are considered to be fit for purpose, accessible to the majority of the electorate which the venue serves, and accessible for those with a disability.

Because of recent community governance reviews the council has adjusted some parish boundaries and proposed, and received consent, to make related alterations to district ward and county division boundaries. These changes have resulted in changes to some polling districts to reflect the changes at parish level.

The table available on the [council's website](#) sets out the name of each polling district and the polling place used. It also shows where a polling place is outside a polling district. As stated, I am content with the current arrangements but do have a few observations set out below:

- Where possible I suggest that the council should identify an alternative polling place for that designated in case it is not available for a particular election.
- Attempts are made not to use schools for polling places as, understandably, head teachers and parents do not welcome either the disruption of closing the whole school for a day or the security issues if a room is used as a polling place and the remainder of the school remains open. As part of the 2018 interim review the council designated the Thame Snooker Club to replace Barley Hill School. The council currently designates the Youth Centre at Lord Williams Schools as a polling place for polling district LNA4 and Culham Parochial Primary School for polling district LLA. I would urge the council to seek an alternative venue if possible.

- The council should revisit the designation of polling places in Henley-on-Thames in light of comments received from Henley Town Council during the 2018 review and concerns that the Henley Leisure Centre is not suitable as a polling place in terms of a convenient location and accessibility issues within the venue.
- The Fox and Hounds Public House is a split polling place serving voters in Pyrton, Shirburn and Watlington parishes. I ask the council to investigate the continued designation of this venue as a polling place having regard to the availability of alternative polling places within the respective parishes.
- I suggest no polling place is shared by two district wards, unless special circumstances apply, such as the lack of a suitable building for polling stations in the adjoining areas, to avoid potential confusion for voters. Where this is not avoidable, or is considered to offer geographical convenience to voters, the use of separate rooms or a physical boundary should be considered.

I will continue to monitor developments in respect of the major residential developments in South Oxfordshire and make recommendations to change polling districts and polling places as required.

I reserve the right to make further comments after the close of the public consultation period.

Margaret Reed

Acting Returning Officer for the Henley Parliamentary Constituency

6 August 2019

Polling District Reference	Parish/ParishWard/Polling District	District Ward	Proposed Polling Places	Comments
LHA	Adwell	Haseley Brook	Lewknor Parish Hall, High Street, Lewknor	Polling place is in adjacent parish
LDA	Aston Rowant	Chinnor	Kingston Blount Village Hall, Bakers Piece, Kingston Blount	
RAA	Aston Tirrold	Cholsey	Aston Upthorpe Village Hall, Aston Upthorpe	Polling place is in adjacent parish
RAB	Aston Upthorpe	Cholsey	Aston Upthorpe Village Hall, Aston Upthorpe	
LEA	Beckley And Stowood	Forest Hill & Holton	Beckley & Stowood Village Hall Woodperry Road, Beckley	
LAA	Benson	Benson & Crowmarsh	Benson Parish Hall, Sunnyside, Benson	
LBA	Berinsfield	Berinsfield	Berinsfield Church Hall, Wimblestraw Road, Berinsfield	
LCA	Berrick Salome	Chalgrove	Berrick and Roke Village Hall, Cow Pool, Berrick Salome	
LMA	Binfield Heath	Sonning Common	Shiplake Scout Hut, Shiplake Row	
LPA	Bix and Assendon	Woodcote and Rotherfield	Bix & Assendon Village Hall, Bix Common, Henley-on-Thames	
LCB	Brightwell Baldwin	Chalgrove	Brightwell Baldwin Village Hall, Brightwell Baldwin.	
RAC1	Brightwell-cum-Sotwell No.1 (Village)	Cholsey	Stewart Hall, West End, Brightwell Cum Sotwell	
RAC2	Brightwell-cum-Sotwell No.2(Shillingford)	Cholsey	Shillingford Mobile Home Park, Shillingford Hill	
LOA	Britwell Salome	Watlington	Britwell Salome Village Hall, Britwell Salome	
LCC	Chalgrove	Chalgrove	Chalgrove Village Hall, Baronhurst Drive, Chalgrove	
LPB	Checkendon	Woodcote and Rotherfield	Checkendon Village Hall, Main Street Checkendon	
LDB	Chinnor	Chinnor	Chinnor Village Hall, Church Road, Chinnor	
RAD1	Cholsey No.1	Cholsey	Cholsey Pavilion, Station Road, Cholsey	
RAD2	Cholsey No.2	Cholsey	Cholsey Cricket Pavilion, Fair Mile, Reading Road, Cholsey	
LLF	Clifton Hampden	Sandford and the Wittenhams	Clifton Hampden Village Hall, Abingdon Road	
LDC	Crowell	Chinnor	Kingston Blount Village Hall, Baker Piece, Kingston Blount	Polling place is in adjacent parish
LAB1	Crowmarsh No.1 (Crowmarsh Gifford)	Benson and Crowmarsh	Crowmarsh Gifford Village Hall ,6 Benson Lane, Crowmarsh Gifford	
LAB2	Crowmarsh No.2 (Crowmarsh North Stoke)	Benson and Crowmarsh	North Stoke Village Hall, The Street, North Stoke	
LFA1	Cuddesdon No.1 (Denton)	Garsington & Horspath	Cuddesdon Village Hall, High Street, Cuddesdon	Polling place in Cuddesdon
LFA2	Cuddesdon No. 2	Garsington & Horspath	Cuddesdon Village Hall, High Street, Cuddesdon	
LLA	Culham	Sandford and the Wittenhams	Culham Parochial Primary School, High Street, Culham	
LOB	Cuxham with Easington	Watlington	Cuxham Village Hall, Cuxham	
RBB	Didcot No.1 (Millbrook)	Didcot North East	Fleet Meadow Community Hall, Sandringham Road, Didcot	
RBA1	Didcot No.2 (Ladygrove)	Didcot North East	Ladygrove Community Centre, Tamar Way Didcot	
RBA2	Didcot No.2 (Ladygrove)	Didcot North East	Willowbrook Leisure Centre, Bowater, Didcot.	
RCA3	Didcot No.3 (Orchard)	Didcot South	Northbourne Centre Church Centre, Church Street, Didcot	Polling place in adjacent parish ward
RCA1	Didcot No.4 (Northbourne)	Didcot South	Barns Close Community Centre, Barns Close,	
RCA2	Didcot No.5 (Park)	Didcot South	Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot	
RDA1	Didcot No.6 (All Saints)	Didcot West	Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot	Polling place in adjacent parish ward

RDA2	Didcot No.7 (All Saints)	Didcot West	Great Western Park Community Centre, Dan Reade Parade, Didcot	
RDB	Didcot No.8 (Northbourne)	Didcot South	Northbourne Centre Church Centre, Church Street, Didcot	
LBB	Dorchester	Berinsfield	Dorchester Village Hall, Queen Street, Dorchester	
LBC	Drayton St Leonard	Berinsfield	Drayton St. Leonard Village Hall, Ford Lane	
RAE	East Hagbourne	Cholsey	Hagbourne Village Hall, Main Road, East Hagbourne	
LEB	Elsfield	Forest Hill and Holton	Beckley & Stowood Village Hall Woodperry Road, Beckley	Polling place is in adjacent parish
LAC	Ewelme	Benson and Crowmarsh	Ewelme Watercress Centre, The Street Ewelme	
LMB	Eye And Dunsden	Sonning Common	Eye & Dunsden Village Hall, Dunsden Green, Reading	
LEC	Forest Hill With Shotover	Forest Hill and Holton	Forest Hill Village Hall, Main Street, Forest Hill	
LFB	Garsington	Garsington and Horspath	Garsington Village Hall, Oxford Road, Garsington	
LKA	Goring Heath	Kidmore End and Whitchurch	Goring Heath Parish Hall, Whitchurch Hill	
LGA1	Goring-on-Thames No.1	Goring	Storton Lodge, Ickniel Road, Goring	
LGA2	Goring-on-Thames No.2	Goring	Goring Village Hall ,Belleme Room, High Street, Goring	
LHB	Great Haseley	Haseley Brook	Great Haseley Village Hall, Rectory Road, Great Haseley	
LHC	Great Milton	Haseley Brook	The Pavilion, Great Milton Recreation Ground, Great Milton	
LMC	Harpsden	Sonning Common	Harpsden Hall, Harpsden	
LIA1	Henley 1 (North)	Henley-on-Thames	Henley -on-Thames Town Hall, Market Place	
LIA2	Henley 2 (North)	Henley-on-Thames	Henley Leisure Centre, Gillotts Lane, Henley-on-Thames	Polling place in adjacent parish ward
LIA3	Henley 3 (South)	Henley-on-Thames	Christ Church Centre, Reading Road, Henley-on-Thames	
LIA4	Henley 4 (South)	Henley-on-Thames	Henley Leisure Centre, Gillotts Lane, Henley-on-Thames	
LIA5	Henley 5 (South)	Henley-on-Thames	Trinity Church Hall, Harpsden Road, Henley-on-Thames	
LPC	Highmoor	Woodcote and Rotherfield	Highmoor Cross Memorial Hall, Highmoor Cross	
LED	Holton	Forest Hill & Holton	Holton Village Hall, Holton	
LFC	Horspath	Garsington & Horspath	Horspath Village Hall, Oxford Road, Horspath	
LPD	Ipsden	Woodcote & Rotherfield	Ipsden Memorial Hall, Fir Close, Ipsden	
LKB	Kidmore End	Kidmore End & Whitchurch	Kidmore End Parish room, Wood Lane, Kidmore End	
LHD	Lewknor	Haseley Brook	Lewknor Parish Hall, High Street, Lewknor	
LHE	Little Milton	Haseley Brook	Little Milton Village Hall, Thame Road, Little Milton	
REA	Little Wittenham	Sandford & the Wittenhams	Long Wittenham Village Hall, High Street, Long Whittenham	Polling place is in adjacent parish
REB	Long Wittenham	Sandford & the Wittenhams	Long Wittenham Village Hall, High Street, Long Whittenham	
LKC	Mapledurham	Kidmore End & Whitchurch	Mapledurham Parish Hall, Trench Green, Maple Durham	
LLB	Marsh Baldon	Sandford & the Wittenhams	Marsh Baldon Village Hall, The Croft, Marsh Baldon	
RAF	Moulsford	Cholsey	The Pavilion, The Recreation Field, Moulsford	
LPE	Nettlebed	Woodcote & Rotherfield	Nettlebed Village Club, High Street, Nettlebed	
LCD	Newington	Chalgrove	Berrick and Roke Village Hall, Cow Pool, Berrick Salome	Polling place is in adjacent parish
RAG	North Moreton	Cholsey	North Moreton Village Hall, Bear Lane, North Moreton	
LPF	Nuffield	Woodcote & Rotherfield	Nettlebed Village Club, High Street, Nettlebed	
LLC	Nuneham Courtenay	Sandford & the Wittenhams	Nuneham Courtenay Village Hall, Nuneham Courtenay	
LOC	Pishill With Stonor	Watlington	Russels Water Village Hall, Russels Water	
LOD1	Pyrton No.1	Watlington	Pyrton Village Hall, Pyrton	
LOD2	Pyrton No.2	Watlington	Fox & Hounds Public House, Christmas Common	

LPG	Rotherfield Greys	Woodcote and Rotherfield	Rotherfield Village Hall, Greys Green, Rotherfield Greys	
LPH	Rotherfield Peppard	Woodcote and Rotherfield	Peppard War Memorial Hall, Gallowstree Road, Peppard Common	
LLD	Sandford On Thames	Sandford and the Wittenhams	Sandford on Thames Village Hall, Henley Road, Sandford on Thames	
LMD	Shiplake	Sonning Common	Shiplake Memorial Hall, Memorial Avenue, Shiplake	
LOE1	Shirburn No.1	Watlington	Pyrton Village Hall, Pyrton	Polling place is in adjacent parish
LOE2	Shirburn No.2	Watlington	Fox & Hounds Public House, Christmas Common	Polling place is in adjacent parish
LME	Sonning Common	Sonning Common	Sonning Common Village Hall, Wood Lane	
RAH	South Moreton	Cholsey	North Moreton Village Hall,, Bear Lane, North Moreton	Polling place is in adjacent parish
LGB	South Stoke	Goring	South Stoke Village Hall, Cross Keys Road, South Stoke	
LHF	Stadhampton	Haseley Brook	Stadhampton Village Hall, St. John's the Baptist, The Green	
LEE	Stanton St John	Forest Hill & Holton	Stanton St. John Village Hall, Middle Road	
LPI	Stoke Row	Woodcote & Rotherfield	Stoke Row Village Hall, Main Street, Stoke Row	
LOF	Stoke Talmage	Watlington	Pyrton Village Hall, Pyrton	Polling place is in adjacent parish
LOG	Swyncombe	Watlington	Russels Water Village Hall, Russels Water	Polling place is in adjacent parish
LDD	Sydenham	Chinnor	Sydenham Old School Room, Brookstones, Sydenham	
LHG	Tetsworth	Haseley Brook	Tetsworth Memoral Hall, Main Street, Tetsworth	
LNA1	Thame 1 (North)	Thame	Thame Barns Centre, Church Road	
LNA2	Thame 2 (North)	Thame	Snooker Club, St Andrews Court, Wellington Street, Thame	
LNA3	Thame 3 (South)	Thame	Thame Girlguide HQ, Southern Road, Thame	
LNA4	Thame 4 (South)	Thame	Youth Centre, Lord Williams School, Towersey Road, Thame	
LEF	Tiddington With Albury	Forest Hill & Holton	Tiddington Village Hall, Albury View, Tiddington	
LLE	Toot Baldon	Sandford & the Wittenhams	Marsh Baldon Village Hall, The Croft, Marsh Baldon	Polling place is in Marsh Baldon
LDE	Towersey	Chinnor	Towersey Village Hall, Chinnor Road, Towersey	
RFA1	Wallingford No.1	Wallingford	2nd Wallingford Scout Group, Station Field, Wallingford	
RFA2	Wallingford No.2	Wallingford	St Marys Church, Market Place, Wallingford	
LAD	Warborough	Benson & Crowmarsh	St. Laurence Hall, The Green North Warborough	
LEG	Waterperry With Thomley	Forest Hill & Holton	Waterperry Gardens, Waterperry	
LEH	Waterstock	Forest Hill & Holton	Tiddington Village Hall, Albury View, Tiddington	Polling place is in adjacent parish
LOH1	Watlington No.1	Watlington	Watlington Parish Room Parish Office, 1 Old School Place, Gorwell	
LOH2	Watlington No.2	Watlington	Fox & Hounds Public House, Christmas Common	
RAI	West Hagbourne	Cholsey	East Hagbourne Village Hall, East Hagbourne	Polling place is in adjacent parish

LHH	Wheatfield	Haseley Brook	Tetsworth Memorial Hall, High Street, Tetsworth	Polling place is in adjacent parish
LQA	Wheatley	Wheatley	Merry Bells, High Street, Wheatley	
LKD	Whitchurch	Kidmore End & Whitchurch	Whitchurch Village Hall, Manor Road, Whitchurch on thames	
LPJ	Woodcote	Woodcote & Rotherfield	Woodcote Village Hall, Reading Road Woodcote	
LEJ	Woodeaton	Forest Hill & Holton	Beckley & Stowood Village Hall Woodperry Road, Beckley	Polling place is in adjacent parish