

Democratic Renewal Working Party



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Title of Report:	Polling District Review	
Report No:	DRW/SE/14/001 [to be completed by Democratic Services]	
Decisions plan reference:		
Report to and date/s:	Democratic Renewal Working Party	18 November 2014
	Council	16 December 2014
Portfolio holder:	Dave Ray Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance Tel: 01359 250912 Email: david.ray@stedmundsbury.gov.uk	
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Purpose of report:	To review the designation of polling districts and polling places in the Borough of St Edmundsbury and to implement any recommendations in the publication of the new Electoral Register.	
Recommendation:	Democratic Renewal Working Party: It is RECOMMENDED that, subject to approval by full Council, the Schedule of Polling Districts is amended to reflect the creation of two new polling districts in the Risbygate Ward in Bury St Edmunds as described at 2.2 of this report.	
Key Decision: (Check the appropriate box and delete all those that do not apply.)	<i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i> Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

The key decision made as a result of this report will be published within **48 hours** and cannot be actioned until **seven working days** have elapsed. This item is included on the Decisions Plan.

Consultation:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A letter outlining the review process and a background document was circulated to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Borough Councillors - County Councillors - Parish Councils - Party Agents - Acting Returning Officers for West Suffolk and South Suffolk Constituencies A link was put on the home page of the Council's website and allowed the public to view the consultation information 	
Alternative option(s):		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires every Council to conduct a review during the 16 months beginning 1 October 2013. 	
Implications:			
Are there any financial implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are there any staffing implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are there any ICT implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are there any legal and/or policy implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are there any equality implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Risk/opportunity assessment:		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
	Low/Medium/ High*		Low/Medium/ High*
Ward(s) affected:		All Wards	
Background papers: <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>			
Documents attached:		<i>(Please list any appendices.)</i> Appendix A – Background information for consultees Appendix B – Details of representations received Appendix C – Amended Schedule of Polling Districts Appendix D – Projection of Significant Growth (10 units or more) in the next 5 years	

1. Key issues and reasons for recommendation(s)

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The last Polling District review was completed in December 2011. The most efficient and cost effective time to make any changes is when the newly updated register is published on 1 December, therefore, a report is being brought to this Working Party, to allow recommendations to be considered by full Council on 16 December 2014, in time for implementation on the new register.

1.2 The conduct of the review

1.2.1 At the beginning of August 2014 a letter outlining the review process and a background document was circulated to the following people/groups:-

- Borough Councillors;
- County Councillors for divisions in St Edmundsbury;
- Parish Councils;
- Party Agents; and
- Acting Returning Officers of the West Suffolk and South Suffolk
- constituencies;

1.2.2 A link was put on the home page of the Council's website alerting visitors to the site that the review was taking place. The link allowed people to view the consultation information.

1.2.3 Appendix A includes background information regarding the conduct of a polling district review.

1.2.4 Three representations were received which requested a change to the schedule of polling districts. The three representations are included at Appendix B.

1.2.5 The amended schedule of polling districts is included at Appendix C

1.2 Issues to consider when making recommendations

1.2.1 Appendix A outlines the considerations in detail, but in essence in making recommendations Working Party Members:-

- should seek to provide all electors with as reasonable facilities for voting as are practical; and
- have regard to accessibility when making any designations for polling places.

In addition, where areas are parished each parish should normally be a polling district in its own right unless there is a compelling reason otherwise.

1.2.2 There are two elements to the recommendations that need to be formulated for consideration by Full Council. The first is to indicate whether any changes to the boundaries of polling districts are considered necessary. The second relates to the designation of polling places and the policy the Borough Council

adopts in relation to this as, although the Borough Council has the power to designate a polling place for every polling district, it is not compelled to make a designation except in instances when electors have to vote outside of their polling district. This generally occurs where there is no venue or suitable site for a caravan or portacabin within the district, so electors vote in a neighbouring area. If no Polling Place is designated then by default the polling district is the Polling Place. The Borough Council has previously adopted the policy of only designating a Polling Place where out-of-district polling takes place as this allows for flexibility if buildings are not available, particularly in relation to unscheduled elections where bookings have to be made at short notice.

- 1.2.3 Where a proposal to create a new polling district is made, this will inevitable have financial implications. The current arrangements are for larger polling district to have one polling station for the majority of elections, increasing to two for Parliamentary elections but where a second polling district is created, this will require two polling stations to be used for all elections.

1.3 **Forecast growth**

- 1.3.1 The Planning Section of the Borough Council have provided information on the anticipated areas for significant growth within the Borough up to the end of the four year period after this review takes effect. A table listing the figures is included as Appendix D.
- 1.3.2 The development of the strategic sites designated in the Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Rural Vision 2031 documents will be reviewed annually and amendments to polling districts and polling places made where appropriate.
- 1.3.3 Where necessary the development of sites on the boundaries of polling districts will be considered as part of a community governance review. Recommendations will also be made to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England where appropriate.

2. **Additional supporting information (if required)**

2.1 **St Olaves**

- 2.1.2 The following representations have been received to split St Olaves Ward into two polling districts:
 - (a) Split the Ward into two polling districts and thereby separate the 'Howard Estate' and the Mildenhall Road Estate within their distinct identities. Allow the St Olaves voters on the Mildenhall Road Estate to vote at the polling place for the Northgate polling district.
 - (b) Split the Ward into two polling districts and use two polling stations; the Newbury Community Centre and either the Methodist Church on Northumberland Avenue or either the Christian Resource Centre and Jehovah's Kingdom Hall in Oakes Road.
- 2.1.3 Officers are not minded to recommend this proposal for the following reasons:-

- (a) Directing St Olaves electors from the Mildenhall Road Estate to vote at the polling station for Northgate Ward (Anselm Avenue Community Centre) could create confusion for electors. Also, an additional polling station would be required within Anselm Avenue Community Centre to avoid confusion regarding which Ward ballot paper to give to electors from St Olaves Ward or Northgate Ward.
- (b) Splitting the polling district and using the Northumberland Methodist Church or using either the Christian Resource Centre or Jehovah's Kingdom Hall on Oakes Road as an additional polling station would create an additional cost of approximately £700 at every election. This cost is deemed unnecessary given that the two suggested polling stations are under half a mile from the existing polling station at Newbury Community Centre

2.2 **Risbygate Part One and Part Two**

2.2.2 A representation was received to make the following amendments to the Risbygate polling districts:

- (a) Move the electors from Station Hill, Tayfen Road (part of) and Tayfen Terrace from Risbygate Part Two to Risbygate Part One.
- (b) Split Risbygate Part Two into two polling districts with the dividing line being Spring Lane and the Nature Reserve between Spring Lane and Beetons Way.

2.2.3 Officers recommend this proposal for the following reasons:-

- (a) The polling station that is regularly used for Risbygate Part One is in closer proximity to the electors home, this may increase turnout at no additional cost to the council.
- (b) The polling arrangements in the Friends Meeting House have caused disruption at past elections due to parking and space available in the building. The creation of a new polling district and polling station may increase turnout due to a polling station in closer proximity to the electors home. Also this will only be a small cost to the council as the Friends Meeting House will no longer require a dual polling station to manage a large electorate.