

2019 Review of polling district and polling places

Summary of representations received and considerations made

The following representations have been received as part of the 2019 review. These together with representations from the Returning Officers, comments from local ward members, and any views forthcoming from polling station staff prior to the review, have been collated for the purpose of informing this review. Investigations have been undertaken in each affected area.

District GB Freemantle ward

Current polling place:

Freemantle United Reform Church
Shirley Road
Southampton

After the consultation period for this review had concluded we were made aware that these premises had closed. After making contact with the owners it was confirmed that due to insurance restrictions, this site would no longer be available for use as a polling place.

Assessment of alternatives

Two other potential locations were identified within the polling district. Contact with the relevant owners confirmed that neither would be available for use as a polling station. The local ward members were contacted to assist in identifying other possible sites – no suggestions were forthcoming.

Ongoing investigation identified a further location at the Freemantle Community Centre in the neighbouring GA polling district. A site visit confirmed that it met the statutory requirements with regard to accessibility and was a relatively short distance from the current polling place. The views of local ward members were invited.

Councillors Shields commented that:

- the suggested alternative venue ‘...is located in another polling district area...’
- it is ‘...a fair distance (including having to cross a fairly busy Shirley Road) for many voters in GB to travel...’

Recommendation

Being the nearest available location that provides reasonable and practicable voting facilities, the Freemantle Community Centre in Randolph Street is designated as the polling place at future elections for this area of the city.

District IE in Millbrook ward

Current polling place:

Foundry Lane Primary School
Foundry Lane
Southampton

Representation of the Head-teacher

In recent years the number of children using the school has increased from 380 to 600 making it more difficult to relocate children to facilitate public access to the site. In addition, changes in legislation regrading safeguarding makes easy public access to the site difficult to arrange - for the elections in May 2019 a significant amount of fencing was required to maintain security.

No alternative locations suggested.

Assessment of alternatives

Further investigation in connection with a neighbouring polling district had identified a potential location at the Freemantle Community Centre in the adjoining GA polling district. A site visit confirmed that it met the statutory requirements with regard to accessibility. As this site had also been identified as a replacement for the Freemantle U R Church in the GB polling district, its suitability as a location for two polling stations was confirmed. The views of local ward members were invited.

Councillor S Galton commented that:

- ‘...a move to a location on the edges or outside the polling district runs the risk of losing voters’
- ‘...parking in Randolph Street it is limited and the road that accesses the polling station is narrow with restricted parking in the immediate area...’
- ‘...there are a great number of elderly residents who do walk from the Regents Park road area and we are probably doubling the distance for them’

Recommendation

In view of safeguarding issues around the continued use of the school, the Freemantle Community Centre in Randolph Street is trialled at the scheduled elections in May 2020 as the designated polling place for this area of the city.

District NF in Sholing ward

Current polling place:

Oasis Acadamy Mayfield
Ashley Crescent
Southampton

Representation of the Business & Finance Manager (Oasis Acadamy Mayfield)

With over 900 students using the site, accommodating a polling station is becoming increasingly difficult. Closing the school is not an option.

Suggested alternative location: Sholing Youth Football Club, Portsmouth Road

Assessment of alternatives

Further investigation identified that the suggested alternative is located in the Eastleigh Borough Council area.

Recommendation

This polling place remains the most appropriate site for providing voting facilities in this area of the city. Continue to use but work with the school to minimise disruption.

District OA in Swaythling ward

Current polling place:

Hardmoor Early Years Centre
Leaside Way
Southampton

Representation of the Head of Centre

Following the city council election in early May 2019 a number of health and safety issues were identified linked to public access to the site – smoking, bringing dogs on to the site, gates left open, mis-use of toilets.

As a nursery school with a high proportion of children with special needs, there were concerns for the welfare and safety of the children due to the ‘unpredictable and volatile’ nature of members of the public.

For financial reasons, closing the Centre on polling day is not a viable option.

Suggested alternative locations: St Georges School, Leaside Way; Southampton Crematorium

Assessment of alternatives

Further investigation identified that both of the suggested alternatives are located in the Eastleigh Borough Council area.

Representation of the Returning Officer

Having been made aware after the event of the issues at the city council elections on 2 May, improved security arrangements were put in place for the EPE on 23 May. In addition to security fencing to restrict public access, a security guard was provided for the duration of the poll.

Recommendation

This polling place remains the most appropriate site for providing voting facilities in this area of the city. Continue to use but work with the school to minimise disruption and maintain security of the site.