



Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

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Interim Polling District Review

Report by:

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Purpose

To outline the current polling arrangements within the local authority area and recommend where changes will be required further to the recent Community Governance Review (CGR) to ensure that the arrangements are legally compliant and effective.

Recommendations

The amendments outlined within this report to be approved and implemented on publication of the full register for future elections, including the reallocation of polling district codes for administrative purposes.

1. Background or Introduction

- 1.1. A polling district and polling place review seeks to establish the best voting arrangements for electors within the local authority area. The statutory requirements of polling districts are set out as follows:

Each parish must be a separate polling district, unless special circumstances apply, and each polling district must have its own polling place. However, this

does not apply if the size (or other circumstances) of a polling district means that the location of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electors.

- 1.2. A full review of the suitability of polling places and polling districts was completed in 2019, in which, various polling district and polling place changes were implemented. The arrangements agreed in this review remain appropriate in most circumstances, other than where the CGR has imposed boundary changes.
- 1.3. During the consultation the public and local representatives were invited to comment on polling arrangements unrelated to the CGR for consideration e.g. polling place venues, no issues were raised. The next opportunity for further comments to be submitted will be the full polling district and polling place review scheduled for 2023/2024.
- 1.4. The details of this review were sent directly to local councillors, councils, community organisations and charities and was advertised on our website, CityLife and social media pages to engage with the public.
- 1.5. [A map of the proposed changes can be viewed via this link.](#)

2. Boundary amendments that are a legal requirement

- 2.1. It is a legislative requirement that each parish should be a separate polling district, if possible. As the recent CGR has reviewed and reorganised some parish boundaries within the City of Chelmsford it is therefore necessary that the polling district boundaries are realigned to reflect this. Proposals A through F in the final recommendations published by the Acting Returning Officer (appendix 2) all relate to this requirement.
- 2.2. The areas in question are the new Chelmsford Garden Community Council area and the small number of properties moving between Great Baddow Parish Council and the unparished area.
- 2.3. During the consultation a local councillor did express concerns that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) would not process the consequential amendments as requested. Since publication of the initial recommendations these amendments have been approved and the necessary order is being made. The only other response received, from a member of the public, supported the recommendation.

3. Boundary amendments that may improve the voting experience

- 3.1. Proposal G concerns Writtle, which is currently divided into Writtle North and Writtle South polling districts which reflected the parish ward boundaries. Due to the location on the polling venues within this area, some electors were required to travel further to their polling place, and in some cases even pass another polling place in order to cast their vote. As the parish wards have now

been removed, there are no longer any restrictions as to where the polling district boundaries are drawn so it is recommended that they are changed to allow electors to vote at their nearest venue.

- 3.2. Proposal H details the creation of a new polling district in Runwell to accommodate the new parish ward that was created during the CGR, St Luke's. The polling district would share the boundary and name with the parish ward and the polling place would be assigned as the Sports and Social Club. This would prevent confusion at local elections where electors within the same polling place would be required to be issued with different ballot papers.
- 3.3. The final proposal, proposal I, combines the current polling districts Broomfield East and Belsteads and names the new polling district Belsteads. Under the previous community governance arrangements these areas were in different parishes but as they will now be in the same parish, both have a low electorate and currently share a polling place, it is recommended that they become one.
- 3.4. There was only one response received in relation to these proposals, from a member of the public, who was in support of them.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. Further to the recent CGR, an interim polling district review was required to ensure that all of the polling arrangements are compliant and effective. This interim review has sought to resolve this and consider if there were any other improvements that may be made ahead of the next official review.
- 4.2. It is requested that the committee considers the proposals outlined above and makes a decision on the recommendations independently.

List of appendices:

Appendix A – Acting Returning Officers final recommendations

Appendix B – Full list of organisations/individuals invited to comment and consultation responses

Background papers:

Electoral Commission guidance on polling place and polling district reviews

Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: None

Financial: None

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030: None

Personnel: None

Risk Management: None

Equality and Diversity:

Relevant age, disability and accessibility requirements have been considered in undertaking this review. No changes proposed or existing arrangements will adversely or disproportionately impact on any protected groups.

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

Consultees:

None

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

None

Interim Polling District Review 2022 – Acting Returning Officers final recommendations

A polling district and polling place review seeks to establish the best voting arrangements for electors within the local authority area. The statutory requirements of a review are set out as follows:

Each parish must be a separate polling district, unless special circumstances apply, and each polling district must have its own polling place. However, this does not apply if the size (or other circumstances) of a polling district means that the location of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electors.

In addition, each polling place must:

- be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they can reach the polling station
- be within the district, unless it's necessary to place it wholly or partly outside the district (for example, if there are no accessible polling place in the district)

We also have to comply with certain access requirements. As part of the review, we must seek to ensure that:

- all electors have reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
- every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled, so far as is reasonable and practicable

A full review of the suitability of polling places and polling districts was completed in 2019, in which, various polling district and polling place changes were implemented. The arrangements agreed in this review remain appropriate in most circumstances. The only areas in which I, The Acting Returning Officer identifies that further changes are required relate to a recent community governance review (CGR) and the parish boundary changes that it imposed.

Therefore, I recommend that polling districts and polling places within the following wards remain unchanged:

- Chelmer Village and Beaulieu park
- Galleywood
- Goat Hall
- Great Baddow West
- Marconi
- Moulsham Lodge
- Patching Hall
- St Andrews
- The Lawns
- Trinity
- Waterhouse Farm
- Bichknare and East and West Hanningfield
- Little Baddow, Danbury and Sandon
- South Hanningfield, Stock and Margaretting

- South Woodham – Chetwood and Collingwood
- South Woodham – Elmwood and Woodville
- Chelmsford Rural West

The following recommendations are made in order to ensure that the polling districts within Chelmsford meet the requirement of each parish being a separate polling district:

Proposal A

Polling District affected: Boreham North and Belsteads

City ward: Boreham and The Leighs and Broomfield and the Walthams

Total polling district electorate:

Boreham North: 1,050

Proposed polling district electorate:

Boreham North: 1,034

Boreham North-West: 16

Proposed changes:

The CGR created a new community council called Chelmsford Garden Community to represent a new housing development that sat across multiple existing parish boundaries. The new parish boundary extends into the north-western area of Boreham North polling district.

Therefore, this polling district must be divided to reflect that each parish is a separate polling district. The area currently within Boreham North polling district that will be part of the new council will form a new polling district called Boreham North-West with the polling district code SAD.

Most of the land in this area is agricultural and the main residential area is George Wicks way. This street is easily accessible from the main road and only a short distance from the current polling place for the neighbouring polling district, Belsteads (Essex barn, Channels Golf Club).

With this in mind, the polling place for the new polling district could also be located within this venue, with additional staffing and resource provisions at local elections to minimise the risk of error and elector confusion.

It is my intention to raise this boundary issue with the local government boundary commission in their next review of Chelmsford City Council wards and suggest that this area become part of the Broomfield and the Walthams ward. The arrangements shall be kept under review until this is possible.

Proposal B

Polling District affected: Broomfield North and Little Waltham

City ward: Broomfield and the Walthams

Total polling district electorate:

Broomfield North: 1,467

Little Waltham: 997

Proposed polling district electorate:

Broomfield North: 1,528

Little Waltham: 936*

Proposed changes:

The new houses built around Petty Croft were split between Broomfield and Little Waltham parishes. It was decided during the CGR that these residents would be better served if the

whole area was contained within one parish, Broomfield. Subsequently, I propose that the properties in this area (south of Woodhouse Lane) are reallocated to the Broomfield North polling district.

The polling place for Broomfield North, inclusive of these new properties would remain at Chelmer Valley High School. The school is a well-located venue for polling and can continue to operate for students throughout the day.

The remaining part of Little Waltham polling district will retain the name Little Waltham and the polling place will remain located at the Little Waltham Memorial Hall.

*These electorate figures reflect only the changes related to this proposal. There are other proposals that if adopted would alter the figures further.

Proposal C

Polling District affected: Little Waltham and Belsteads

City ward: Broomfield and the Walthams

Total polling district electorate:

Little Waltham: 997

Belsteads: 421

Proposed polling district electorate:

Little Waltham: 968*

Belsteads: 450*

Proposed changes:

The CGR created a new community council called Chelmsford Garden Community to represent a new housing development that sat across multiple existing parish boundaries. The new parish boundary extends as far South as Wheelers Hill and Cranham road and East of Essex Regiment Way within the Little Waltham polling district.

Therefore, this polling district must be divided to reflect that each parish is a separate polling district. The area that falls within these roads currently within Little Waltham district will be merged with Belsteads polling district.

Belsteads polling district will continue to be served by Essex Barns, Channels Golf Club for polling. This is a large polling place and will be able to accommodate continued growth in the area.

The remaining part of Little Waltham polling district will retain the name Little Waltham and the polling place will remain located at the Little Waltham Memorial Hall.

*These electorate figures reflect only the changes related to this proposal. There are other proposals that if adopted would alter the figures further.

Proposal D

Polling District affected: Armistice and Nabbots Farm

City ward: Springfield North

Total polling district electorate:

Armistice: 1,167

Nabbots Farm: 3,281

Proposed polling district electorate:

Armistice: 1,156

Nabbots Farm: 3,292

Proposed changes:

The CGR created a new community council called Chelmsford Garden Community to represent a new housing development that sat across multiple existing parish boundaries. The new parish boundary extends as far as Essex Regiment Way within the Armistice polling district.

Therefore, this polling district must be divided to reflect that each parish is a separate polling district. The area to the west of Essex Regiment Way that falls within Armistice district will therefore be merged with Nabbots Farm polling district. The polling place for Nabbots Farm will remain Springfield Primary School, hosting 2 polling stations. The school remains open to pupils during polling.

It was not deemed necessary for this area to form a new polling district as there are currently only 4 residential properties in the area and no suitable polling place venues. Should this area be developed in the future then the creation of a new polling district will be considered at future reviews.

Proposal E

Polling District affected: Baddow Road and Goldlay

City ward: Great Baddow East and Moulsham and Central

Total polling district electorate:

Baddow road: 2,374

Goldlay: 2,736

Proposed polling district electorate:

Baddow road: 2,361

Goldlay: 2,749

Proposed changes:

As part of the CGR it was identified that Regal Close, despite being in Great Baddow parish was only accessible from the currently unparished city centre (Moulsham and Central ward). It was therefore decided that the street would be removed from Great Baddow parish. To ensure that the parish and polling district boundaries are coterminous, the street must also move polling districts, from Baddow Road to Goldlay.

The polling place for Goldlay will remain Life Church. This venue is accessible and well suited to serve an electorate in a highly populated area and would not be affected by a small increase in electorate.

There is also an area of land that is currently used as a private parking area that has been moved from the unparished area to be included in Great Baddow Parish, therefore it should be removed from the Goldlay polling district to be included in Baddow Road. There are no properties in this area, therefore this would not affect any electors.

It should be noted that based on the current city ward boundaries, electors in this property would be voting in a different ward to the rest of the electors in the polling place at a city council election. We are in consultation with The Local Government Boundary Commission to arrange a minor boundary change to resolve this ahead of the 2023 elections.

Proposal F

Polling District affected: Beehive Lane and Mildmay

City ward: Great Baddow West and Goat Hall

Total polling district electorate:

Beehive Lane: 2,320

Mildmay: 2,895

Proposed polling district electorate:

Beehive Lane: 2,318

Mildmay: 2,897

Proposed changes:

As part of the CGR it was identified that 30 Petrel way, despite being in Great Baddow parish was only accessible from the currently unparished city centre (Goat Hall ward). It was therefore decided that the property would be removed from Great Baddow parish. To ensure that the parish and polling district boundaries are coterminous, the property must also move polling districts, from Beehive Lane to Mildmay.

As this change only results in an increase in electorate of 2 there is no requirement for the polling place for Mildmay to be relocated from Mildmay Junior School which serves the area well.

It should be noted that based on the current city ward boundaries, electors in this property would be voting in a different ward to the rest of the electors in the polling place at a city council election. We are in consultation with The Local Government Boundary Commission to arrange a minor boundary change to resolve this ahead of the 2023 elections.

There are 3 other polling district boundary changes that I am proposing as a result of the CGR which are not a statutory requirement, but I believe would improve the voting experience for electors in the area once the new parish boundaries are considered:

Proposal GPolling District affected: Writtle North and Writtle SouthCity ward: WrittleTotal polling district electorate:

Writtle North: 1,387

Writtle South: 2,531

Proposed polling district electorate:

Writtle East: 1,833

Writtle West: 2,085

Proposed changes:

The polling districts within Writtle had been drawn in line with the Writtle North and Writtle South parish wards. However, the location of the only suitable venues for polling within the area meant that some electors were required to travel past another polling place in order to cast their vote.

The CGR has removed the parish wards from the parish of Writtle and as a result of this there is no longer any constraints as to how the area is divided. I propose that the area is divided into Writtle East and West polling districts to reflect the polling place locations. Writtle East will adopt the polling district code of SDA and Writtle West will be SDB.

The boundary would run down the 2 main roads (Lordship road and Margaretting road) and divide the main residential area as reflected in the map published on our website.

The current polling venues are both well suited to host polling, so can remain unchanged. The Beryl Platt centre would be best suited to serve electors in Writtle West and Writtle Village hall could serve electors in Writtle East.

Proposal H

Polling District affected: Runwell East

City ward: Rettendon and Runwell

Total polling district electorate:

Runwell East: 1,658

Proposed polling district electorate:

Runwell East: 1,030

St Luke's: 628

Proposed changes:

The CGR created a new parish ward within the parish of Runwell called St Luke's. This was as the responses to the CGR consultation reflected that residents felt that as they were geographically separate from the rest of the parish and that their views could be better represented.

With this in mind, I am proposing that we create a new polling district called St Luke's, following the boundaries of the parish ward and allocate a separate polling place with the polling district code MCD. This would ensure that electors in the area have good access to voting and that elections in the area can be administered accurately and effectively.

The Runwell Sports and Social club is well located on the entrance of the housing development to be accessible for all electors within the new polling district and has well maintained function rooms available for hire. I recommend that this venue be allocated the polling place for the area.

Proposal I

Polling District affected: Belsteads and Broomfield East

City ward: Broomfield and the Walthams

Total polling district electorate:

Belsteads: 319

Broomfield East: 644

Proposed polling district electorate:

Belsteads: 963*

Proposed changes:

The area in which we have created the new Chelmsford Garden Community Council was divided between multiple parishes before the CGR. This meant that in order to ensure each parish was a separate polling district and to administer elections easily we had smaller polling districts in the area.

As the polling districts currently known as Belsteads and Broomfield East will be in the same parish, and same parish ward as a result of the CGR I propose that we merge the 2 polling districts. Both polling districts currently have a low electorate and share a polling place (Essex Barns, Channels Golf Club) due to lack of other available venues.

The new polling district would retain the name of Belsteads and the polling place would remain at Essex Barns, Channels Golf Club.

*These electorate figures reflect only the changes related to this proposal. There are other proposals that if adopted would alter the figures further.

Parties directly invited to comment
Local Councillors
Parish/Town Councils
Local political parties (via agents)
Local MPs
Maldon District Council
Uttlesford District Council
Essex Police
Chelmsford Sanctus
Chelmsford Interact
Chelmsford Priory
Essex Community Foundation
Chelmsford Mencap

Comments received:

Local resident

Do you support the local returning officers recommendations: "Yes"

Do you wish to provide any specific feedback related to a polling district or polling place/polling station?: "No"

Is there anything else that you wish to comment on?: "No"

Local Councillor

Do you support the local returning officers recommendations: "I support them in part"

Please detail what aspects of the recommendations you do/don't support and a brief explanation as to why. e.g. I support the recommendations other than Proposal X because I think the polling station is too far away from residents in X area: " I have noted that based on the current city ward boundaries, some electors Great Baddow would be voting in a different ward to the rest of the electors in the polling place at a city council election. I have concerns that consultation with The Local Government Boundary Commission to arrange a minor boundary change to resolve this issue ahead of the 2023 elections. will not be completed in time causing confusion. These changes to the Parish Boundaries should therefore be delayed such that the polling boundaries for Parish, City, County and Parliamentary elections are changed together."

Do you wish to provide any specific feedback related to a polling district or polling place/polling station?: "No"

Is there anything else that you wish to comment on?: "No"