

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Head of Corporate Organisation	Report Number: M11
To: Council	Date of meeting: 24 April 2012

POLLING PLACES REVIEW: ALDHAM, BOXTED AND GREAT CORNARD

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To report the results of consultation with electors etc. and to seek final approval of proposals for the alteration of polling places.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Boxted and Hartest Village Institute at The Green, Hartest, be designated as the polling place for Boxted.
- 2.2 That the Parish Room, Aldham Churchyard, Church Lane, Aldham be designated as the polling place for Aldham.
- 2.3 That the Stevenson Centre, Great Cornard continue to be designated as the polling place for Great Cornard North ward in respect of the election of a Police and Crime Commissioner on 15 November 2012.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 Ceasing to provide a separate polling station for Boxted would reduce expenditure on staff and premises by approximately £500. The continued provision of a polling station for Aldham and the continued use of The Stevenson Centre at Great Cornard are financially neutral in their effect.

4. Risk Management

- 4.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Corporate / Significant Business Risk No. 4 - Capacity. Key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Polling stations do not meet minimum standards or reasonable needs of electors	Low	Marginal	The Council continues to consult widely and keep the provision under review

5. Consultations

- 5.1 Consultations have been undertaken with electors in Aldham and Boxted. The original proposals were subject to statutory consultations with elected representatives and Parish Councils.

6. Equality Analysis

- 6.1 The purpose of requiring that polling places be kept under review is to ensure that all electors continue to have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in all the circumstances and that, in so far as is practicable, the polling places are accessible to those who are disabled. In carrying out a review of polling places the Council must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons and an equality analysis has been completed.

7. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

- 7.1 None

8. Key Information

- 8.1 On 6 December 2011 the Council completed a statutory review of polling places. Following that review it was decided that, subject to consideration of any objections that might be received, the separate polling places for Aldham and Boxted should be removed and that voters in those parishes should vote instead at the Aldham and Elmsett Village Hall (located in The Street, Elmsett) and the Boxted and Hartest Village Institute (located at The Green, Hartest) respectively. It was also decided, in accordance with Great Cornard Parish Council's wishes, that an additional polling place should be designated for Great Cornard North ward at Pot Kiln Primary School.
- 8.2 All electors in Aldham and Boxted were individually consulted on the proposals by mail. No objections were received to the proposal for Boxted: Two responses were received, neither of which opposed the change. The proposal had already been supported by the Boxted Parish Meeting.
- 8.3 In Aldham, however, five responses were received from electors, only one of which supported the proposed change of polling place. Of the four that raised objections, one was generally opposed to the polling facilities for electors of Aldham being located outside the parish; two were from electors residing at the edges of the parish and were more specific concerning the additional distance that they would need to travel if the polling station were to be located at the Aldham and Elmsett Village Hall; and the remaining representation was from an elector who lives close to the existing polling station location. Aldham Parish Council, which had been formally consulted during the conduct of the review, then proposed an alternative solution that would have the effect of retaining the polling station in the parish.
- 8.4 The Parish Council's suggestion was that an investigation be made of the suitability of the "Parish Room" next to Aldham Churchyard as a possible polling station. It is not currently fully accessible for users of wheelchairs, but the persons responsible for the premises have undertaken to provide the necessary ramp for the entrance. Subject to that adaptation being carried out, although the room is fairly small, it would be sufficient to accommodate the staff and the polling compartments and it would be much better than the caravan that constitutes the current polling station. It is understood that the Parish Council has "advertised" the Parish Room as a possible alternative without adverse comment. Under the circumstances, it is suggested that the Parish Room be designated as the new polling place for Aldham.

8.5 So far as Great Cornard is concerned, designation of Pot Kiln School as one of two polling places for Great Cornard North ward was based in part on the anticipated completion of access improvements, involving the construction of a separate access to the school from Poplar Road. It is understood that there is now uncertainty as to whether the works will be completed by November when the Police and Crime Commissioner elections are due to be held. Further, the Chairman of the school's Governing Body has written objecting to the use of the school as a polling station on health and safety grounds and indicating that the access from Poplar Road is for staff only. Objection is also made on account of the disruption that would result for the school from its use as a polling station. In view of the importance – and difficulty – of securing adequate premises for use as polling stations, the law specifically provides that a Returning Officer may require that funded schools make their facilities available for the purposes of taking the poll. However, in view of the new uncertainty concerning the status of the access improvements, it may be prudent to designate the school as a polling place only after the completion of those works and, in the meantime, to continue the current voting arrangements in the North ward of Great Cornard. This would mean that The Stevenson Centre would be designated as the polling station for all voters in the North Ward in respect of the Police and Crime Commissioner elections to be held in November 2012.

9. Appendices

9.1 None

10. Background Documents

1. Undated letter from Ms C France, Boxted;
2. Undated letter from Mr G E Manning, Boxted;
3. Letter dated 6 January 2012 from Mr P Austin, Aldham;
4. Undated letter from Mr J Bray, Aldham;
5. Undated letter from Ms S Cornell, Aldham;
6. Undated letter from Mrs S. Emptage, Aldham;
7. Email dated 8 January 2012 from Mr W. Crockatt, Aldham;
8. Letter dated 14 February, 2012 from Mr K O'Connell, Chairman of Pot Kiln School Governing Body

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