

Crawley Borough Council

	Report No: LDS/15	B
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Report to General Purposes Committee

1 February 2010

Polling Arrangements For 2010

1. Key Points

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory duty under the Representation of the People Act 1983 to divide the borough into polling districts, to designate a polling place for each district and to keep both polling districts and polling places under review.
- 1.2 This report considers issues that have arisen since the last polling district review and makes some recommendations for polling in advance of the General Election and Borough Council Elections. A review of the whole borough will be undertaken in 2011.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the committee approve the following changes to the scheme of polling places:
 - (a) **Bewbush (LA) – change from Bewbush Children and Family Centre, Dorsten Place to Bewbush Primary School, Dorsten Place until the new Bewbush Community Centre is available.**
 - (b) **Northgate (LIA) – change from Northgate Primary School, Green Lane to Northgate Community Centre, Barnfield Road.**
 - (c) **Pound Hill South and Worth (LKB) – change from Pupil Referral Unit, Turners Hill Road to St Edward the Confessor Church Hall, Hillcrest Close.**

Ann-Maria Brown
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

3. Background

- 3.1 A complete review of polling arrangements in the borough was carried out by the Committee in 2007 and the results of that review were approved by the Council at its meeting held on 31st October 2007. Under the provisions of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 the next complete review is due in 2011 which will be the subject of a report to the Committee at its first meeting in 2011.
- 3.2 There are some issues that the Returning Officer recommends Members to consider before the General Election is held in the light of experience from the elections in 2009.
- 3.3 When considering the location of polling places and the creation of polling districts, the legislation requires that consideration is given to ensuring that all the electors in the constituency have reasonable facilities for voting as far as practicable and the polling places for which we are responsible are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled. Other considerations that need to be taken into account are:
- parking provision
 - whether the internal size and layout of the premises is sufficient for the number of voters allotted to the polling station(s)
 - lighting and heating
 - proximity to public transport
 - cost (where there is a choice between similar premises).

4. Bewbush Ward

- 4.1 Polling for the whole of Bewbush Ward has taken place at the Bewbush Community Centre in 2007 and 2008. For some years prior to 2007 the ward was split into three polling districts, with voting at three different locations. This arrangement was found to cause confusion amongst voters.
- 4.2 With the demolition of the Community Centre as part of the Bewbush regeneration project, polling for the 2009 County Council and European Elections took place at the Bewbush Children and Family Centre adjacent to Bewbush Primary School.
- 4.3 The Children and Family Centre proved ideal in terms of location because it is next to the demolished Community Centre. It was found to be just about satisfactory in size for the 2009 elections. However, the size of the hall would not be adequate for the higher turnout expected at a General Election.
- 4.4 The replacement Community Centre will not be available in time for the General Election. The temporary replacement offered by the Council for Community Centre bookings is the Breezehurst Pavilion, Breezehurst Drive and whilst this has a room of sufficient size, it is located on the 1st floor and is further away from the parade and is therefore not as suitable for polling.
- 4.5 It is therefore recommended that polling takes place at Bewbush Primary School as shown in the map at Appendix A until the replacement Community

Centre is available. The Headteacher of Bewbush Primary School has been consulted and positively welcomes the use of the Primary School as a polling place.

5. Northgate Ward

- 5.1 For many years polling for Northgate ward has taken place at Northgate Primary School in Green Lane which has proved to be a satisfactory location. At the Northgate by-election held on 15th October 2009 the Northgate Community Centre was used to avoid the need for the school to be closed on polling day.
- 5.2 The use of the Community Centre was a success, with no complaints received about the change of the location. The Community Centre is a more central and visible location being opposite the parade, and its use would avoid the need for the Primary School to close on polling day. The Community Centre does offer less parking than at the Primary School which would be more of an issue with the increased turnout at a general election.
- 5.3 On balance it is recommended that future polling for the Northgate ward takes place at the Northgate Community Centre as shown at Appendix B.

6. Pound Hill South and Worth Ward

- 6.1 Pound Hill South and Worth is divided into 2 polling districts with the boundary along the Balcombe Road. Polling for the eastern polling district has been held at both the Pupil Referral Unit, Turners Hill Road and latterly at the Barnwood Hotel, Balcombe Road. With the demolition of the Barnwood Hotel and the unavailability of the Pupil Referral Unit for the June 2009 elections, polling was held at the St Edward the Confessor Church Hall in Hillcrest Close as shown on the map at Appendix C.
- 6.2 Although the church hall is slightly outside the polling district it offers much better accessibility, internal accommodation and layout than the Pupil Referral Unit. There are no other suitable buildings in the area.

It is therefore recommended that future polling is held at the St Edward the Confessor Church Hall.

7. Other Issues

- 7.1 The Returning Officer has also considered issues raised in the following wards, but is not recommending any further changes at this stage:

West Green Ward

- 7.2 Comments were received at the last election from two members of the public about West Green Primary School being closed on polling day. The Returning Officer has investigated possible alternatives including the Community Centre controlled by West Sussex County Council. The Returning Officer does not

consider that access to the building is adequate particularly from the car parks.

- 7.3 The final report of the Election Processes Scrutiny Panel made reference to the distance from the car park to the school and Members requested that consideration be given to the alternative entrance from Town Barn Road being used and the car park to the back of the school being made available. The Returning Officer has visited the site and does not consider that this would offer an improved route. For any voters having difficulty with the walk between the car park and the polling station a wheel chair was provided at the elections in June 2009 and it is proposed that the same facility is made available at future elections.
- 7.4 In general the school offers good polling facilities for voters and there are no buildings in the vicinity that would offer improved facilities and therefore the Returning Officer does not recommend any changes in this ward.

Three Bridges Ward

- 7.5 Members have expressed concern about the facilities for voters in the eastern part of the ward which is served by the Montefiore Institute in Hazelwick Road. Access to the hall at the front is via steps and the alternative entrance via a ramp is narrow and means that disabled voters have to access the hall by the kitchen.
- 7.6 The hall otherwise offers good facilities and has been used for very many years. There are no Borough elections scheduled for Three Bridges this year and in view of the uncertainty of the date of the General Election, the Returning Officer recommends that possibilities for a change of venue with improved disabled access are investigated as part of the 2011 review and any changes trialled at the 2011 Borough Elections.

8. Ward Members' Views

- 8.1 The views of ward members will be reported to the meeting.

9. Staffing, Equalities, Financial and Legal Implications/Powers

- 9.1 The creation or removal of polling districts and additional polling places has financial implications in the cost of staffing polling stations, delivery and collection of equipment and hire of premises.
- 9.2 The Council has a statutory duty under the Representation of the People Act 1983 to divide the borough into polling districts, to designate a polling place for each district and to keep both polling districts and polling places under review, providing reasonable access to polling stations for all including those with disabilities.
- 9.3 An equality impact assessment for the service is currently being undertaken. In general, the aim of the service is to ensure that all electors have as reasonable facilities for voting as are practical and that polling places are

accessible to all electors including disabled people. This has been considered in producing these proposals.

10. Risk Implications

10.1 None.

11. Links to the Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Plan

11.1 The proposals contained in this report relate to the following key areas of the Sustainable Community Strategy

Community Cohesion	y	Community Safety	
Young People and Children		Health and Well Being	
Older People		The Environment	
The Local Economy		Social Inclusion	y

The following key principles are applicable:-

(i)	Working together	y
(ii)	Dignity, respect and opportunities for all	y
(iii)	Involving People	y
(iv)	Making it last	y

The report relates to the following areas in which the Council operates to enhance the town and the quality of life of local people:-

(i)	<u>Our Communities:</u> (ensuring they are safe, healthy, cohesive and enjoyable)	y
(ii)	<u>Our Environment:</u> (ensuring that it is attractive, clean, protected and sustainable)	
(iii)	<u>Our Economy:</u> (ensuring it is thriving, vibrant and prosperous)	
(iv)	<u>Our Council:</u> (ensuring it is engaging, transparent, business-like with a social conscience, cost-effective and a place-shaping community leader)	y

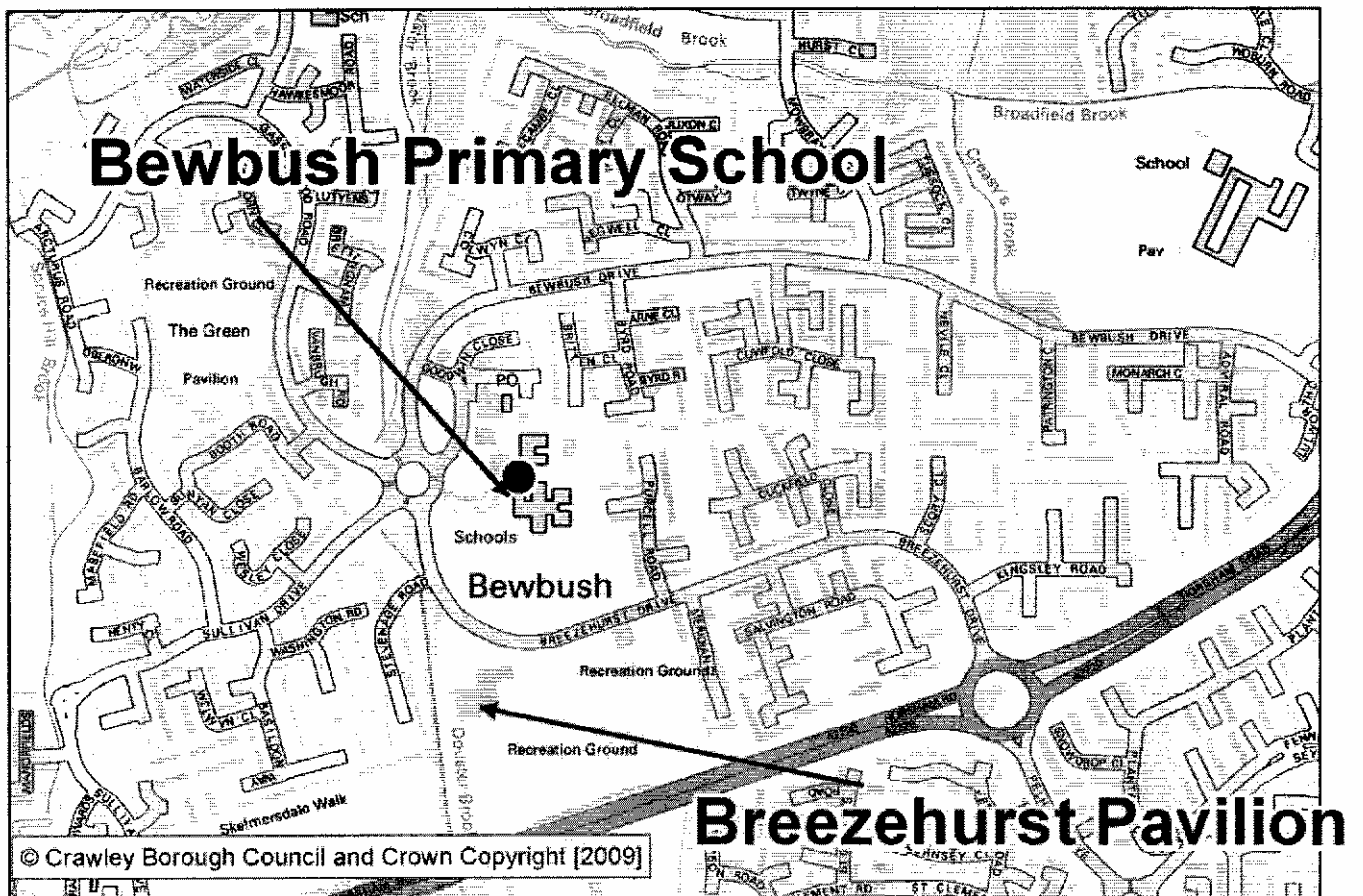
12. Reasons for the Recommendation

12.1 To seek the Committee's views on the allocation of polling places.

13. Background Papers

Representation of the People Act 1983
Electoral Administration Act 2006
Report to General Purposes Committee 1st October 2007

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Southern Part of Northgate Ward

