



Crawley Borough Council

Report to Governance Committee 20 January 2015

Polling Arrangements

Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services LDS/096

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report considers the polling arrangements for the General Election in May 2015 for Ifield, Broadfield North, Broadfield South and Maidenbower Wards.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee confirms:

That the polling places for Broadfield North Ward are
LBA – The Scout Hut, Seymour Road
LBB – The Broadfield Community Centre

That the polling places for Broadfield South Ward are
LCA – The Broadfield Community Centre
LCB – The Adventure Playground Creaseys Drive

- 2.2 That Committee considers whether the polling places for Ifield LFA and LFB should be combined at the Ifield Drive Community Centre.
- 2.3 That the Committee confirms that the polling arrangements for Maidenbower Ward remain unchanged.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 To ensure the best polling scheme for the May 2015 General Election.

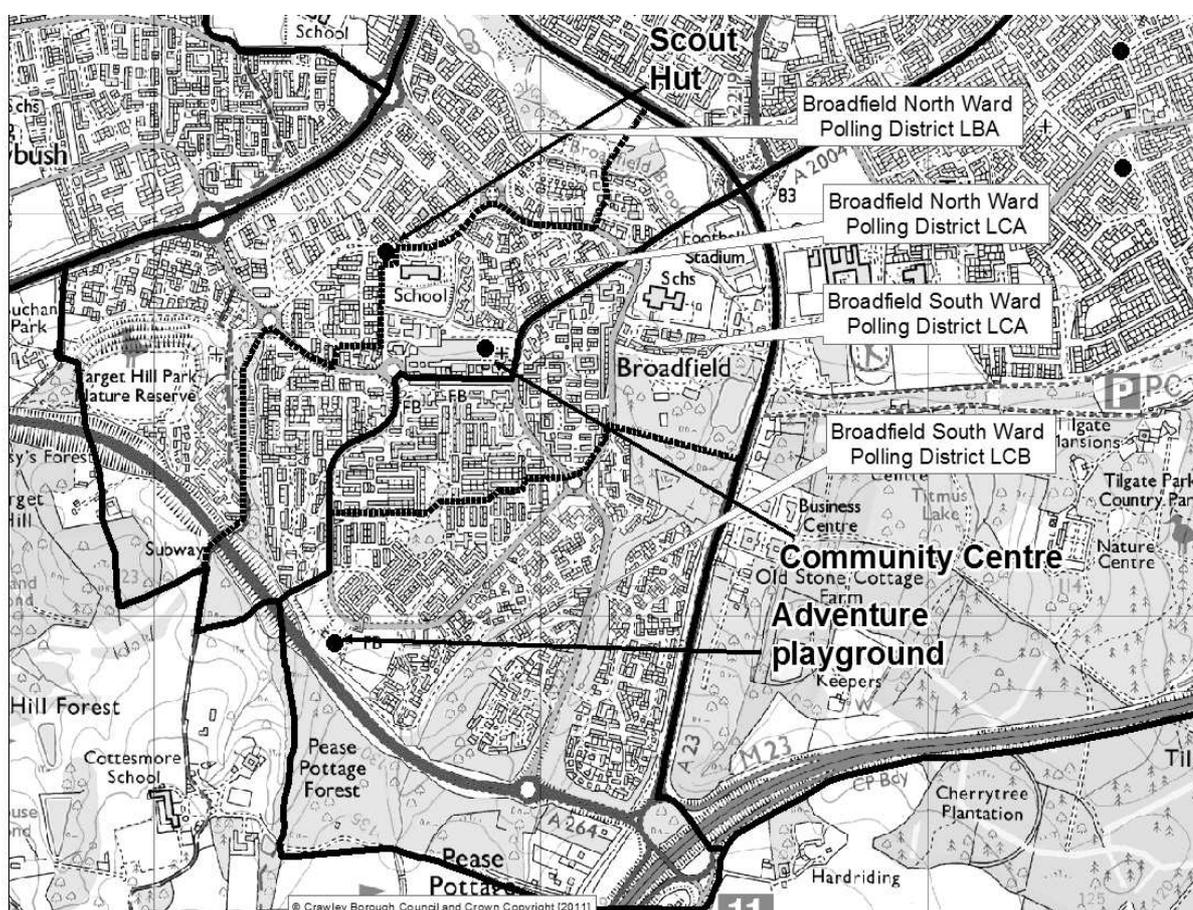
4. Background

- 4.1 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. When designating polling districts the authority must seek to ensure that all electors in the constituency have reasonable facilities for voting and, as far as practicable, that the polling places are accessible to all electors.

4.2 At its meeting held on 29th September the General Purposes Committee considered a report on the operation of the polling scheme at the European and Local Elections in May 2014. The current scheme had a full review in 2013 but following the May election the Committee considered whether changes should be made in advance of the elections in 2015. The Committee agreed to receive a further report on arrangements in the following wards.

5. Broadfield North and Broadfield South Wards

5.1 At the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 29th September it was agreed that the Broadfield North and Broadfield South wards should both be divided into two polling districts as shown on the map below. The current polling arrangements had polling for the two wards at Broadfield Community centre. The Committee was concerned that this would not provide adequate accommodation at the May 2015 General elections where higher levels are turnout are expected. Queues had developed at the Community Centre at the 2010 general election additional polling places would help to avoid this happening again.



5.2 Potential additional polling places for the two wards – the Scout Hut on Seymour Road in Broadfield North and the adventure playground building on Creaseys Drive in Broadfield South had been identified. The Electoral Services Manager had expressed concern about the access at the Adventure playground and a site visit was arranged with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, the ward Members, the Council's Access Officer and the Electoral Services Manager.

5.3 The Access Officer has stated that the Adventure Playground would be adequate access for a polling station and made the following comments:

- 2 accessible parking bays right outside the venue
- Two entrances (one with ramped access), and one with stepped access up a short ramp (although the ramped access is steep for a short part of it, staff can push people up this short section if needed). The side ramp would not be suitable for scooter users, and scooter users should be encouraged to park, and walk up. Disabled people who cannot walk at all, are unlikely to use scooters, and would use a power chair, which has a smaller wheelbase, and should be able to navigate the side ramp
- If access via the front is difficult, access can provide access via rear entrance if needed
- Useful to have staff on site to support people in and out of venue, and to be aware that they may be expected to support people into the venue
- A simple sign can be erected to point out the side ramp with wording such as "easier access this way via ramp".

5.4 The Access Officer also stated that the Scout Hut at Seymour Road overall would offer suitable accommodation although there is a shortage of parking the ground in front of the building. The adjacent Seymour Road Primary School has agreed that their car park can be used for voters during the busy evening period which will provide a large number of additional spaces at the peak time.

5.5 The Electoral Services Manager has inspected the interior of the building which offers good accommodation. The Access Officer comments:

- Although there are two bus stops very close by, access to the front of the scout hut is not great. The ground is uneven and up a slight slope.
- The side entrance is overgrown with foliage, and the path next to the gate makes it look like it is not used regularly.
- If this site is used, ensuring there is clear access to the front door is required, either via the side gate or via the main gate
- Making the space in front of the scout hut, just for disabled blue badge holders would make it less congested, although the ground surface is uneven. There is also a considerable lip at the front entrance, which would need a small access ramp to aid access in to the venue.
- The inside of the venue was not seen, so it is currently unclear whether once someone is past the lip, there is level access in the venue make front car park only for disabled people
- Useful to have staff on site to support people in and out, and to be aware that they may be expected to support people into the venue

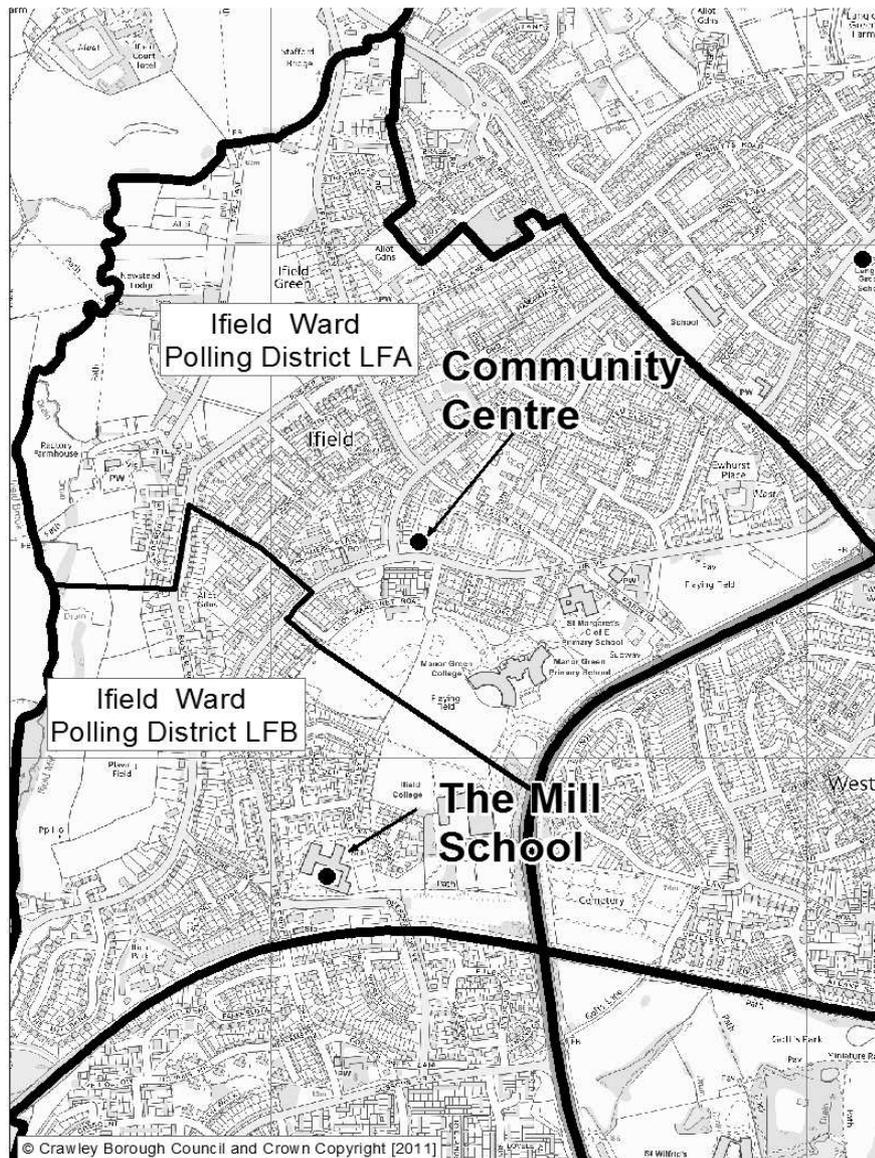
5.6 It is therefore recommended that the Scout Hut, in Seymour Road be the polling place for polling district LBA and that the Adventure Playground in Creaseys Drive be the polling place for polling district LCB. This results in the following distribution of electors:

Polling District	Polling Place	Total Electorate	Postal Voters
Broadfield North			
LBA	Scout Hut	3141	422
LBB	Community Centre	1496	574
Broadfield South			
LCA	Community Centre	1767	212
LBB	Adventure Playground	2733	406

6. Ifield Ward

6.1 Ifield Ward has been split into three polling districts for several years

Polling District	Polling Place	Total Electorate	Postal Voters
LFA	Ifield Drive Community Centre	3040	508
LFB	The Mill School	1364	287
LFC	Wybourne Community Centre	2279	254



6.2 The eastern part of the ward is served by two polling stations – the Mill School and the Ifield Drive Community Centre. The Community Centre is large enough to accommodate polling for this part of the ward. Although polling has generally operated satisfactorily with the three venues there have been reports that the two polling stations in Ifield East have caused some voter confusion. Combining polling districts LFA and LFB would have the benefit of making it clearer which polling place voters in Ifield East should attend, although making a change can also cause voter confusion.

6.3 The Ward and west Sussex Division Councillors have been consulted and have commented as follows:

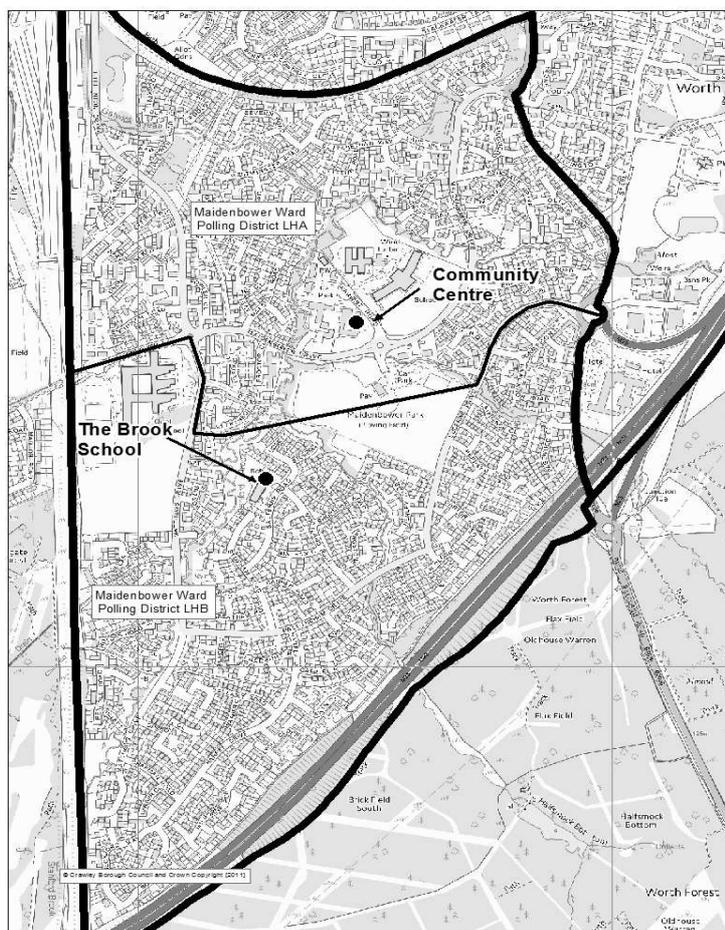
- Councillor John Stanley - In favour of combination. Concerned that the additional polling station causes confusion and the Mill school seems underused.
- Councillor Peter Smith – In favour of combination.
- Councillor Chris Oxlade – In favour of retaining existing arrangements.
- Cllr Sue Mullins – In favour of combination. The Mill School is not well used.

6.4 The Committee is therefore recommended to consider whether to combine polling for Ifield East at the Ifield Drive Community Centre with a review following the May 2015 elections. The main advantages and disadvantages of changing the existing arrangements are set out below

Advantages of combining polling districts	Disadvantages of combining the polling districts
<p>Reduces confusion about which polling place voters should attend.</p> <p>Polling place in a central location at the Ifield Drive parade</p>	<p>Reduced availability of car parking.</p> <p>Possible confusion from electors from a change in arrangements</p>

7. Maidenbower ward

7.1 Maidenbower Ward is served by two polling places as shown in below Polling District LHA is served by the Maidenbower Community Centre and LHB by The Brook School.



- 7.2 The layout of the site of The Brook School means that the school and attached nursery have to close on election day for security reasons. The Head Teacher and parents of children at the Brook School have previously objected to the use of the school due to the disruption that the closure causes at election time.
- 7.3 There are no other suitable buildings that could accommodate a polling place for the existing polling district LHB that are central and accessible.
- 7.4 An alternative option would be to amalgamate the polling districts and have voting for the entire ward at the Maidenbower Community Centre. However, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee have conducted a site visit with the Electoral Services Manager and were concerned about the distance that electors in the southern part of Maidenbower would have to travel to vote.
- 7.5 The ward and division have been consulted and Councillors Lanzer, Peck, Walker and Trussell have strongly supported continuing the present arrangements.
- 7.6 The Brook School has arranged an inset day to be held on 7th May 2015 and therefore it is recommended that the polling scheme for Maidenbower remains unchanged.

8. Implications

- 8.1 The cost of these changes and polling places has been met from within existing budgets and the proposals will have a minimal effect on the cost of providing future elections.
- 8.2 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.

9. Background Papers

Electoral Administration Act 2006
Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations – The Electoral Commission

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