

Crawley Borough Council

Report to Governance Committee

Tuesday 21 September 2021

Review of May 2021 Polling Arrangements

Report of the Head of Legal, Governance & HR – LDS/171

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To consider the outcome of the temporary changes to the scheme of polling places made for the elections held on 6th May 2021.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee consider the potential options (set out in Paragraph 5.1 of this report) regarding amending the Crawley Polling Scheme and decide which approach to recommend to the Full Council for adoption.

3. Reason for the Recommendations

- 3.1 To ensure that the Polling Scheme for Crawley is up to date.

4. Background

- 4.1 On 6th May 2021 elections were held for the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, Councillors for West Sussex County Council and Councillors for one third of Crawley Borough Council. As part of the preparation for these elections the Committee considered a response to the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic at its meeting held on [26th January 2021](#). The Committee recommended to the Full Council temporary changes to the location for polling stations as set out in the Council's Polling Scheme. These changes were adopted by the Full Council at its meeting held on 24th February 2021.
- 4.2 The Council has a duty to divide the Borough into polling districts, and to designate suitable polling places to meet the reasonable requirements of electors whilst taking account of the accessibility of disabled persons. The Polling Scheme should be reviewed as appropriate and there is a regular statutory review every five years. The next statutory review must take place by 2024.
- 4.3 The current Scheme was adopted by the Council in January 2019 following the ward boundary changes arising from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England electoral review of Crawley Borough Council. Polling districts were created which reflected the new Borough wards and West Sussex County Council Division boundaries. The new Polling Scheme worked well at the three sets of elections held in 2019: the Borough Council elections on 2 May, the European Parliamentary

elections on 23rd May and the General Election on 12th December. The current Scheme is set out in Appendix A.

4.4 The temporary changes approved by Full Council for the May 2021 elections were:

Polling District	Ward	Normal Polling Place	May 2021 Polling Place
LAB	Bewbush & North Broadfield Ward	Broadfield Scout Hut	Broadfield Community Centre
LBB	Broadfield Ward	Creasys Drive Adventure Playground	Broadfield Community Centre
LEB	Gossops Green & North East Broadfield Ward	Broadfield Scout Hut	Broadfield Community Centre
LJA	Pound Hill North & Forge Wood Ward	The Grattons Indoors Bowls Club	Milton Mount Community Centre
LFB	Ifield Ward	The Mill Primary School	Ifield Community Centre
LFD	Ifield Ward	The Mill Primary School	Ifield West Community Centre
LHB	Maidenbower Ward	The Brook School	Maidenbower Community Centre
LJC	Pound Hill North & Forge Wood Ward	Forge Wood Primary School	Wakehams Green Community Centre

4.5 The table below shows a comparison with the turnout for the polling districts in May 2021 compared to the turnout at the May 2019 all out Borough Election. This is the closest point of comparison since the changes to the ward boundaries. The overall turnout in May 2019 was 31.6% and in May 2021 36.3%, so although turnout varies for each polling district a change of approximately +5% would indicate a neutral effect on turnout for the temporary change in polling stations.

Polling District	Normal Polling Place	May 2021 Polling Place	May 2021	May 2019	difference
LAB	Broadfield Scout Hut	Broadfield Community Centre	33%	28.2%	4.8%
LBB	Creasys Drive Adventure Playground	Broadfield Community Centre	30.8%	23.7%	7.1%
LEB	Broadfield Scout Hut	Broadfield Community Centre	49.6%	33.4%	16.2%
LFB	The Mill Primary School	Ifield Community Centre	44.3%	35.0%	9.3%
LFD	The Mill Primary School	Ifield West Community Centre	40.7%	37.3%	3.4%
LHB	The Brook School	Maidenbower Community Centre	34.7%	27.1%	7.6%
LJA	The Grattons Indoors Bowls Club	Milton Mount Community Centre	42.5%	36.6%	5.8%
LJC	Forge Wood Primary School	Wakehams Green Community Centre	26.7%	19.6%	7.1%

4.6 The Returning Officer wrote to each elector affected by the temporary changes to explain the reason for the change of location and enclosing a postal vote form in case the elector preferred to vote by post. In some areas this resulted in a greater number of electors voting by post. The overall number of electors that have applied to vote by post in the borough has risen by 3723 (approx. 25.3%) since May 2019.

4.7 The turnout for each of these poll districts was either close to the expected level or exceeded the expected turnout.

Use of Schools as Polling Stations

- 4.8 The temporary changes agreed by the Committee involved ensuring that the three primary schools used as polling stations in the current Polling Scheme were not used as polling stations in May. This was in recognition of the severe disruption that they had faced due to the pandemic and to avoid causing further disruption. Two of these schools, The Mill Primary Academy and Forge Wood Primary School are normally able to remain open for teaching when polling takes place, although polling does involve adaptation, for example, Forge Wood Primary school is unable to serve hot school lunches on polling day and the entrance to the school needs continual staffing for security. Due to the layout of the building the Headteacher considers that The Brook School needs to close to enable polling to take place.
- 4.9 The Committee is requested to consider whether to extend the temporary replacement of schools for a further year.

5. Options for the Committee's Consideration

- 5.1 The Committee is requested to consider whether it would be appropriate to amend the Polling Scheme and decide which of the following options it wishes to recommend to the Full Council for adoption:
- a) Revert back to the Polling Scheme originally adopted in 2019 (set out in Appendix A to this report).
 - b) Amend the 2019 Polling Scheme (Appendix A to this report) to incorporate **all** of the temporary changes approved by Full Council for the May 2021 elections (set out in paragraph 4.4 of this report).
 - c) Re-adopt the Polling Scheme originally adopted in 2019 (set out in Appendix A to this report) but to include the temporary replacement of schools for a further year.
 - d) Amend the 2019 Polling Scheme (Appendix A to this report) to incorporate **some** of the temporary changes approved by Full Council for the May 2021 elections (set out in paragraph 4.4 of this report).

6. Implications

- 6.1 The creation or removal of polling districts and provision of additional polling places has financial implications in terms of the cost of staffing polling places, the delivery and collection of equipment and the hire of premises.
- 6.2 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.

7. **Background Papers**

[Local Government Boundary Commission for England Final Recommendations for Crawley Borough Council](#)

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