

Crawley Borough Council

Report to Governance Committee

Monday 10 October 2022

Polling Arrangements 2023: Schools

Report of the Head of Governance, People & Performance – **LDS/189**

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To consider the outcome of the temporary changes to the Scheme of Polling Places relating to schools made for the May 2022 Borough Council elections, and to consider whether to extend these for the elections in 2023. To designate Forge Wood Community Centre as the polling place for Forge Wood.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee recommend to the Full Council that the Forge Wood Community Centre be the designated polling place for polling district LJC.
- 2.2 To consider whether to recommend to the Full Council that the temporary changes made to the Polling Scheme relating to polling districts as set out in paragraph 5.2 continue for the 2023 elections.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

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

4. Background

- 4.1. 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.
- 4.2. The current Scheme was adopted by the Council in January 2019 following 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 Polling Scheme worked well at the three sets of elections held in 2019.

5. Information & Analysis Supporting Recommendation

5.1. As a response to the challenges presented by holding elections in the Covid pandemic, a number of temporary changes were made to the Polling Scheme for the elections held in [2021](#) and [2022](#). These changes included ensuring that the three primary schools in the Polling Scheme were not used as polling stations in May. This was in recognition of the severe disruption they had faced due to the pandemic and to avoid causing further disruption. A further report relating in to polling for LMD at the Town Hall and LMC at Holiday Inn Express will be submitted to the Committee for consideration at the next meeting.

5.2. The temporary changes relating to schools approved by the Full Council for the May 2022 elections were:

Polling District	Ward	Normal Polling Place	May 2021 Polling Place
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

5.3. The table below shows a comparison between the turnout for the polling districts in May 2022 compared to May 2019 and the 2021 combined Police and Crime Commissioner, West Sussex County Council and Borough elections. The closest point of comparison is between the 2019 and the 2022 elections as the turnout across the Borough was similar. The overall turnout in May 2019 was 31.6%, in May 2021 36.3%, and in May 2022 it was 31.7%. The table below shows that the temporary changes maintained, or bettered turnout for these polling districts. The turnout for polling districts across the borough is shown on the table set out in Appendix A.

Polling District	2019 Polling Place	2021 and 2022 Polling Place	May 2022	May 2021	May 2019
LFB	The Mill Primary School	Ifield Community Centre	39.1%	44.3%	35.0%
LFD	The Mill Primary School	Ifield West Community Centre	37.8%	40.7%	37.3%
LHB	The Brook School	Maidenbower Community Centre	31.4%	34.7%	27.1%
LJC	Forge Wood Primary School	Wakehams Green Community Centre	19.7%	26.7%	19.6%
Borough Turnout			31.7%	36.3%	31.6%

5.4. Forge Wood Primary School was designated as the polling place for Forge Wood polling district (LJC) in the Polling Scheme adopted in 2019 as the community facilities for the neighbourhood were not under development at that stage. The new Forge Wood Community Centre is now nearing completion and will be available to use for the elections in 2023. The new building will offer good polling facilities and is well located at a site next to the Primary School. It is therefore recommended that the permanent polling place for LJC is designated as the Forge Wood Community Centre. A map showing the location of the new building is shown at Appendix B.

5.5. The Committee is recommended to consider whether to extend the temporary polling station changes relating to the remaining two schools for the 2023 elections.

- 5.6. Experience at the last 2 sets of elections has shown that providing alternative polling places has not negatively impacted turnout. Extending these changes would avoid disrupting these schools in 2023. Due to the layout of the building, the Head Teacher at the Brook School considers that the school would need to close in order to enable polling to take place. The Mill Primary school has been able to remain open on polling day at most elections in the past, but inevitably adaptation is needed which would affect the running of the school.
- 5.7. A full statutory review of polling places is due to commence in Autumn 2023 which will enable the Committee to consider polling station provision across the Borough and develop a new Polling Scheme for future elections.

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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