



Committee and Date

Council  
22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022

Item

Public

## **Interim Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations 2022**

**Responsible  
Officer**

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### **1. Synopsis**

This report details the findings of the Interim Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations in accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended) for the polling places mentioned.

### **2. Executive Summary**

2.1. The main purpose of the review is to ensure that all electors have reasonable facilities for voting within the following polling places:

- Baschurch (Baschurch Ward)
- Church Stretton (All Stretton Ward)
- Shrewsbury (Bagley Ward) (part of)
- Shrewsbury (Cophorne Ward) (part of)
- Shrewsbury (Harlescott Ward) (part of)
- Shrewsbury (Porthill Ward) (part of)

2.2. Local Authorities must comply with legislative requirements regarding the designation of the polling districts and polling places, ensuring that each parish is to be a separate polling district, unless special circumstances apply, and must designate a polling place for each polling district, unless size or other circumstances are such that the situation of the polling station does not materially affect the convenience of the electors.

- 2.3. The polling place must be in an area in the district, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the district.
- 2.4. Local Authorities must also seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

### 3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That members of Council approve the following arrangements, in order for them to be implemented on or by 1 December 2022.

<b>DIVISION</b>	<b>PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS</b>
Polling District Reference: NKA Baschurch (Baschurch Ward)	Baschurch Village Hall replace Millington Close Community Rooms as the polling place for NKA Baschurch (Baschurch Ward).
Polling District Reference: SBB Shrewsbury (Bagley Ward) (part of)	Emmanuel Church replace Riversway Elim Church as the polling place for SBB Shrewsbury (Bagley Ward) (part of).
Polling District Reference: SJA Shrewsbury (Harlescott Ward) (part of)	Riversway Elim Church replace Emmanuel Church as the polling place for SJA Shrewsbury (Harlescott Ward) (part of).
Polling District Reference: SIA Shrewsbury (Cophorne Ward) (part of)	Army Reserve Centre replace Woodfield Infants School as the polling place for SIA Shrewsbury (Cophorne Ward) (part of).
Polling District Reference: SPB Shrewsbury (Porthill Ward) (part of)	Army Reserve Centre replace Woodfield Infants School as the polling place for SPB Shrewsbury (Porthill Ward) (part of).
Polling District Reference LHA Church Stretton (All Stretton Ward)	All Stretton Village Hall replace Silvester Home Institute as the polling place for LHA Church Stretton (All Stretton Ward).

- 3.2. That delegated authority be given to the Returning Officer to find a suitable alternative, in conjunction with local members, should any polling station not be available for a particular election.

## **REPORT**

### **4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

- 4.1. The Council is obliged to conduct a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations on a regular basis.
- 4.2. There is no anticipated environmental impact associated with the recommendations of the report.
- 4.3. The recommendations are not at variance with the Human Rights Act 1998 and is unlikely to result in any adverse Human Rights Act implications. The recommendations are in line with relevant legal procedures prescribed by the Act and with guidance issued by the Home Office.
- 4.4. Any amendments to the current polling districts, polling places and polling stations will take into account the provisions of the Equalities Act, Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006), and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 4.5. The council must seek to ensure all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- 4.6. The council must seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

### **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1. Appendix 1 provides either decreased or increased costs where they have occurred based on the hire charges and staffing levels applied for the Local Elections in May 2021 and Parliamentary By-Elections in December 2021.
- 5.2. There will be a total increase of £1295.50 for future elections if all recommendations are accepted, however, it should be noted that charges are likely to increase year on year.

### **6. Climate Change Appraisal**

- 6.1. There are no anticipated effects on climate change matters from the changes proposed to polling places identified within the report.

## **7. Background**

- 7.1. A review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations should be carried out on a regular basis, to ensure all locations remain appropriate, and suitable for electors. On this occasion, it was considered best to commence an interim review during a fallow election year.
- 7.2. The proposed polling places have been identified following consultation with council officers, local members and partner organisations, and a full review on their suitability has been conducted prior to the consultation taking place.
- 7.3. A public consultation was held from 1 July to 12 August 2022. Details were published on the Council's website, at the Council Offices and in the affected Town and Parish Council areas, and circulated to the relevant stakeholders and community groups. The consultation invited comments and proposals from the Shropshire Council Returning Officer, MPs for Ludlow, North Shropshire and Shrewsbury and Atcham Constituencies, Unitary Councillors in the affected divisions, Town and Parish Councils in the affected areas, local political groups, the public and known local groups/ organisations connected with disability groups.
- 7.4. A number of responses were received during the consultation and were published on the Council's website and outlined in Appendix 1.
- 7.5. The Returning Officer's proposals were published on the Council's website, and considerations invited from 24 August to 14 September 2022.
- 7.6. Submissions were received from Church Stretton Town Council, and Councillor Munro, Mayor of Church Stretton Town Council, in response to the Returning Officer's proposals. These are outlined in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 of the report.
- 7.7. The Returning Officer's proposals originally supported no change to the polling provision for Church Stretton (All Stretton Ward).
- 7.8. Further consideration was given to the additional submissions received in response to the Returning Officer's proposals, and it was concluded that greater weight should be given to the 'protected characteristics' of the age demographic in the area and formal

support of the proposals from Church Stretton Town Council. On balance it is considered that the proposals to replace Silvester Home Institute with All Stretton Village Hall as the polling place for Church Stretton (All Stretton Ward) should now be considered for approval.

- 7.9. Guidance issued by the Electoral Commission provides a staged approach to conducting a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations according to the relevant legislative requirements. This guidance has been considered and referred to during the review process.

## 8. Conclusions

- 8.1. The arrangements proposed in the review enable the Council to designate the most appropriate polling places and polling stations to enable electors, including disabled users, to access suitable facilities for voting which are practicable in the circumstances.
- 8.2. It is planned that any changes resulting from the review would be incorporated into the annual register when published on 1 December 2022.

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

Representation of the People Act 1983: Section 18

Electoral Administration Act 2006: Part 4 Section 16

Electoral Commission Guidance on Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

**Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)**

Gwilym Butler

**Local Member**

Local members within the affected electoral divisions.

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Schedule of Proposals

Appendix 2 – Full Submission from Councillor Munro, Mayor of Church Stretton Town Council