

Council  
23<sup>rd</sup> April 2014



<b>Electoral Arrangements</b>	<b>Agenda No: 8</b>
<b>Corporate Priority:</b> <b>Report presented by: Nicola Beach, Returning Officer</b> <b>Report prepared by: Steve Daynes</b>	
<b>Background Papers:</b> Developing Democracy Group	<b>Public Report</b>
<b>Options:</b> A limited number of options related to Polling Stations are available and discussed in the report.	<b>Key Decision: No</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>  <b>Polling Stations</b>  Section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 places a duty on the Council to designate a Building or Area for use as the Polling Place. There are few restrictions on the Location of the "Place" however this should, "where practicable" be within the Polling District thereby providing those electors with an accessible location. Having designated the Polling Place it is for the Returning Officer to secure suitable accommodation for the Polling Station within the Polling Place.  Traditionally Public buildings (schools, church and community halls etc) are used as these afford the Returning Officer with reasonable access, sometimes at relatively short notice.  Across the District there are however 3 Polling Districts where the designated Polling Places are located in residential properties. Access to the Polling Places serving two Polling Districts, <b>Little Maplestead (DL)</b> and <b>Tilbury Juxta Clare (DX)</b> have been declined and as such alternative locations are required.  The Developing Democracy Group considered this matter on the 26th March 2014 and supported proposals which amend the locations of the following designated Polling Places:  <b>Little Maplestead (DL)</b> - St John the Baptist's Church, Church Road, Little Maplestead  <b>Tilbury Juxta Clare (DX)</b> – Community House, Belchamp St Paul	

<b>Decision:</b> That the proposals to re-designate two Polling Places as outlined in the report be supported.
<b>Purpose of Decision:</b> To ensure that suitable venues are secured for the conduct of elections.

<b>Corporate Implications</b>	
<b>Financial:</b>	None
<b>Legal:</b>	The proposals comply with Section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983
<b>Equalities/Diversity</b>	The proposed Polling Places provide for suitable access for all electors
<b>Safeguarding</b>	No apparent issues.
<b>Customer Impact:</b>	It is anticipated that the change of locations will not adversely impact on customers.
<b>Environment and Climate Change:</b>	None
<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	All affected Parish Councils, Members of DDG and Political Parties have been consulted and support the proposal related to the designation of alternative Polling Places
<b>Risks:</b>	There are no significant risks to be considered
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## **POLLING PLACES**

### **1.0 Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to revise the current polling places due to the unavailability of current buildings.

### **2.0 Polling Districts**

#### **Tilbury Juxta Clare (DX)**

The designated Polling Place for this village is the Artist Studio at The Pines, Tilbury Juxta Clare. It is however located at the end of the Garden (approx 75 yards) with access being across the lawn with no clearly defined pathway.

By way of background, the owner indicated that whilst she was happy for The Studio to be used as a Polling Station for the Police and Crime Commissioner election in November 2012, she was concerned that access arrangements would not be appropriate.

Given the physical restrictions of using the Studio in winter Members accepted that there was an overriding case to make temporary arrangements for the community to vote at Belchamp St Paul and revert to the established Polling Place for future elections.

In planning for the European Parliamentary elections scheduled for 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014 the Returning Officer's staff have been unable to secure access to the designated Polling Place.

The overriding principal when designating the Polling Place is to provide the electorate with a consistent location for the purpose of voting and whilst we have been indebted to the owners of The Pines over many years the Returning Officer has a duty to provide both a sustainable and accessible Polling Place.

Following consultation with the Tilbury Juxta Clare Parish Council they have reluctantly accepted that temporary arrangements used in November 2012 would now represent a more sustainable solution for the electorate of Tilbury Juxta Clare.

### **2.1 Polling District**

#### **Little Maplestead (DL)**

The designated Polling Place for this Polling District is the residential property known as Baytrees, School Road, Little Maplestead. The current owners have however declined the Returning Officer's request to use their property for the European Parliamentary election.

Alternative accommodation has however been secured in the Parish Church in Church Road, Little Maplestead.

Given that St John the Baptist's Church serves as both a place of community worship and as a focal point for community social events it is proposed to designate this location as the new Polling Place.