

# WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## COUNCIL

15<sup>th</sup> July 2021

**Councillor Jonathan Nunn, Leader of the Council**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Changes to Polling Places</b>
<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Catherine Whitehead, Monitoring Officer. Catherine.Whitehead@westnorthants.gov.uk</b>

### Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

<b>West MO</b>	Catherine Whitehead	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2021
<b>West S151</b>	Martin Henry	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2021
<b>Other Director/SME Electoral Registration Officer</b>	Anna Earnshaw	5 <sup>th</sup> July 2021

### Appendices:

None

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The report seeks Council's approval for a change to polling stations for the by-election in Talavera Ward of Northampton Town Council which will take place on 2 September 2021. It also seeks approval for the Democracy and Standards Committee which has responsibility for the conduct of polling station reviews to make changes to polling districts, polling places and polling stations as required for operational purposes and to recommend a statutory polling station review to Council and finally to grant the Electoral Registration Officer delegated power, when it is not practicable to seek Member Approval, to make changes to polling districts, polling places and polling stations as required for operational purposes.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council:
- 2.1.1 Agree the change to the polling place that will be used in the Talavera Ward – Polling District NSTV6 for the by-election on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021.

- 2.1.2 Delegate to the Democracy and Standards Committee the ability to make changes to polling places outside a review.
- 2.1.3 Delegate to the Electoral Registration Officer the ability to make changes where it would not be practicable to seek Committee approval for a change in a polling place in time for an election in consultation with Ward Members and Group Leaders.

### **3. Issues and Choices**

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- 3.1 A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a constituency, ward or division into smaller parts. A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the Returning Officer. A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the local authority, polling stations are chosen by the (Acting) Returning Officer for the election.
- 3.1.1 In the event of polling stations becoming unavailable at short notice, the Electoral Registration Officer needs delegated powers to make changes to polling stations at short notice.
- 3.1.2 Following the casual vacancy in the Talavera ward concerns have been raised with the Returning Officer over the costs to Town Council of the by election following on from the recent election on the 6 May and we are looking at alternative venues to reduce cost. The changes considered are;

<b>Polling District</b>	<b>Current Polling Station</b>	<b>Proposed Polling Station</b>	<b>Saving</b>	<b>Recommended</b>
<b>NSTV6</b>	Rectory Farm Community Centre	Growing Together Blackthorne Community Centre	£450	Yes
<b>NNTV4</b>	Mobile at Nisa Goldings Car Park	NPH community hub	£1377.44	No (due to objection)

- 3.1.3 Polling District NNTV4 currently vote at the Mobile at Nisa Goldings Car Park. There is an NPH community hub which is just around the corner from the current venue which would be free to use and would be a suitable venue for the polling station. However, we have received an objection to this polling station from the Leader of the Labour Group on the Town Council on the basis of accessibility and therefore this change has not been recommended.
- 3.1.4 Polling district NSTV6 is currently allocated to Rectory Farm Community Centre due to it falling in the Northampton South Constituency. As only a

parish election will be taking place on 2 September, we propose it is combined with NNTV5 to vote at the Growing Together Blackthorn Community Centre. This will mean that the polling station is closer to the residents living in NSTV6.

- 3.1.5 The total savings to the Town Council in making both changes would have been £1827.44 however as the first change is not recommended, the recommended change at NSTV6 will save £450 for the Town Council. If the proposed change is approved, there will be signage outside the polling place informing voters of the change of venue and if the Town Council request poll cards, a note will be put on the poll cards to advise electors of any new arrangements. Additional signage could have been provided to direct electors to the Goldcrest Community Hub from the current location at the Golding Shopping Centre if that change had been recommended.

#### **4. Implications (including financial implications)**

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##### **4.1 Policy**

- 4.1.1 None have been identified

##### **4.2 Resources and Financial**

- 4.2.1 The cost of the Talavera election will be covered by the Northampton Town Council so there are no financial implications for West Northamptonshire Council however there will be an impact on the Town Council and therefore the residents in the area.

##### **4.3 Risk**

- 4.3.1 The risk of electors not knowing the location of the polling station are mitigated by the proposed steps highlighted within the report.

##### **4.4 Legal**

- 4.4.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended) (Section 18C (5) and Section 31) allows a local authority to conduct a review of any polling district, polling place or polling station within its area, outside of the timescales for a compulsory review.
- 4.4.2 Where a polling place is not designated as a public building (or land) and the Returning Officer is informed that the location is not available, the Returning Officer has no legal power to insist upon the use the location and must therefore find an alternative location for the polling station.

4.4.3 Whilst the Democracy and Standards Committee is responsible for designating the locations of all polling places within the borough and recommending them to Council when a full review and consultation of polling districts and places is conducted, the terms of reference of the committee do not provide for those instances where a polling place becomes unavailable at short notice and a review and consultation is not practicable before a forthcoming election takes place.

#### **4.5 Climate Impact**

4.5.1 None have been identified.

#### **4.5 Community Impact**

4.5.1 None have been identified.

## **5 Background Papers**

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5.1 None