

APPENDIX A

The Returning Officers View (Rushmoor district Area)

The Returning Officer (RO) for the Aldershot County Constituency who is based within Rushmoor has been asked for his views as part of this review.

The Returning Officers View (Hart district Area)

The Returning Officer (RO) has reviewed the current structure of polling districts and polling places.

The RO reminds Council that for the purposes of a poll at an election he must select a suitable building and room for electors to vote within each polling place. These buildings and their suitability for use in an election are under constant review. The RO is obliged under current legislation to ensure that these polling stations are located in places that are most suited to serving the whole population.

The RO asks Council that no recommendation they make under this review should affect his ability to select a range of premises as polling stations that can serve all sections of the population at the time of an election.

Existing polling districts and polling places

As a general observation the RO is satisfied with the current pattern of polling districts and polling places. This is for the following reasons:

- They are suitable for short term population growth. Larger scale developments on Hitches Lane, Dilly Lane or the Queen Elisabeth Barracks site, that may or may not proceed might require a review of current districts but it is inappropriate to consider them at this time. The districts and places can be reviewed at anytime in the future and must be reviewed again before the 31st December 2011.
- The current structure of broadly defined geographical polling places allows the RO to respond flexibly and promptly to the needs of the community in selecting polling stations. He recommends that he is permitted to continue this practice.
- As an example of this practice being utilised; recent changes in the location of polling Stations have been made to reflect changing requirements within communities. e.g. Schools in Fleet Courtmoor and Dogmersfield polling districts have requested that the Returning Office no longer use them for polling. New building developments at the RAF station have led to the change of station from "Oscars" to the "WACC". It has been possible to accommodate changes such as these within the current schedule.
- The current schedule is based on electoral areas that are simple to administer and we believe are understood by all the stakeholders in the elections process.

- The polling places are drawn in a broad enough way that the RO is able to select premises in each polling place that are suitable for polling and fulfil his legal obligations.

Recommended changes to polling districts and polling places.

There are, however some minor changes which if made would simplify the current structure, prepare for the new Parliamentary Constituencies, and ensure that the structure is robust enough to cope legally, with emergency situations.

The current polling places were last reviewed in 2005, prior to the 2005 General Election and are principally based on the polling district structure that was in place following completion of the last district boundary review in July 2000. Full Council approved the current list of districts and places at its meeting on the 24th February 2005.

Since that time, new boundaries for the County Council divisions were adopted in December 2005, following the periodic review of County boundaries in 2004/5. The adoption of the new boundaries has made some of the existing polling districts and places redundant. This is because not all of the boundaries of the new County divisions rely on the boundaries of the old polling districts. The Returning Officer recommends that this current review should be taken as an opportunity to merge these superfluous polling districts with their adjacent districts in order to simplify the structure.

This will lead to the merging of districts QA1 & QA2, QD1 & QD2 and finally PG1 & PG2. This change will provide clarity for electors, operational advantages for managing an election and will be welcomed by candidates and agents as it will make door to door campaigning for elected office easier.

The Boundary Commission in its fifth general review of Parliamentary constituencies changed the constituency boundary between Aldershot and NE Hampshire. The Returning Officer recommends that the identifying letters of those polling districts that will move from one constituency to the other have their identifying letters changed to reflect their new Constituency. This will lead to PH changing to QQ1, PF changing to QQ2, and PG1 & PG2 changing to QQ3. The three polling districts remaining in the Aldershot Constituency; PC, PD & PE should be renamed PA, PB and PQ. This will mean that the first two districts have alphabetically ordered letters and the PQ district will join the other 3 districts in Yateley parish in having a Q in their identifying letters in recognition of their Yateley parish link.

The Returning Officer is concerned that the current polling districts and polling places make no allowance for emergency situations. e.g. the loss of a polling station in the last few days prior to an election is likely to lead to the temporary relocation of a station in an adjoining polling district. The current polling place arrangements make no allowance for this. Such an incident would therefore need an emergency meeting of Council in order to alter the polling place. This is not a desirable situation and it may not actually be possible to call a meeting in time with the resultant legal challenge to the election. The Returning Officer therefore recommends that he is

permitted on a single occasion to move a polling place into any part of an adjacent polling district where there is insufficient time to present a report to Council on the change.

The above changes have been incorporated into the schedule of polling districts and polling places and form part of Appendix B. Subject to there adoption the Returning Officer recommends the new schedule to be adopted.