

SCARBOROUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Interim Polling Districts &

Polling Places Review

September 2020 – January 2021



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Initial Recommendations (September 2020)

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Polling Districts & Polling Places Review

Background

Within each local authority area, legislation requires councils to carry out reviews of the Polling Districts and Polling Places in that area. A council's area is divided into polling districts, with one or more polling districts making up a district ward, with a polling place being an area or building within a polling district in which a polling station is situated.

The Electoral Registration & Administration Act 2013 governs the timings of compulsory Polling District and Polling Place Reviews. The next compulsory review is due to commence in the 16 month period beginning on 1 October 2023, though a council can conduct a review at any time, but it will still have to conduct a full review during the compulsory timeframe.

The Council's last full review was held in 2018, which saw changes to polling districts brought about by the 2017/2018 Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) review of the Borough's warding pattern. This created a need for many polling district changes, though in the main, polling stations remained unchanged.

The Council is now conducting an interim review of polling districts and polling places, due to concerns or comments from elected Members and residents about polling stations used at the last elections in 2019.

This document has been distributed to local community groups, action groups, disability groups, charities, and political parties, relevant Ward Councillors, Parish Councils and County Councillors to allow consultation on the proposals. It has also been published on our website and at Customer First Centres. Comments received will be considered, before final recommendations are made.

This review must be conducted now to ensure the availability of suitable polling stations in time for the scheduled elections in May 2021.

The (Acting) Returning Officer is satisfied that the proposed polling places allow a suitable polling station, and will consider any representation before making any final recommendations.

Issues During 2019

The year of 2019 saw an unusual electoral year, with three polls across the entire Borough of Scarborough:

- Local Council Ward and Parish elections (all-out)
- European Parliamentary
- UK General Parliamentary General Election (UKPGE)

Grosmont Polling District:

Polling stations were used more in a year than normal, with one poll being held in December, which is very unusual. A December poll sees much less daylight and generally colder and wetter weather conditions. This caused problems at the Sports Pavilion in Grosmont village. The access path was wet and very boggy, and the external lighting was particularly poor. These issues were not raised in previous years as the conditions had not been so poor, hence not so much of a problem with previous polls being held on generally drier and lighter days. Due to the short notice of the UKPGE the usual Presiding Officer based at that station was not available, and an alternative officer was used. Their concerns raised on a pre-polling day visit, gave sufficient notice to allow Scarborough Borough Council to put sufficient measures in place to improve the access path and install some external lighting, which was well received by staff and electors on the day. This review now seeks to explore potential alternative polling places within the existing polling district.

Abbey No 1 Polling District

Since 2016, the polling place for the polling district of Abbey No. 1 has been Whitby Mission & Seafarers' Centre. This change was brought about due to the closure of the historically used Whitby Tourist Information Centre (TIC), which was ideally located for the electors. Since the change, comments have been received (approximately 2 per election) that this is not the best venue to be used, with alternatives being suggested. All suggestions were researched and assessed in 2016 when the TIC closed, and the existing polling station was deemed to be best, albeit not within the polling district geographical area. This review is to revisit the best option for the polling district.

Northstead No.2 Polling District

Alexandra Bowls Centre has been used for many years for this polling district. There have never been any complaints, and the only concern has been that the location is a fair walk for the electors. This view was echoed in 2019 by two Borough Councillors, who suggested that the now well established community centre in Lower Clark Street, named 'The Street' be considered as a potentially more suitable location, which was built in 2013, and now offers a range of well-established community services, and is known to be under stable management.

Remaining School used as a Polling Station

In 2019 we conducted a polling station review which had the main aim of moving away from using schools as polling stations, due to increasing safeguarding measures and the difficulties posed within communities, and at the schools themselves, with being polling stations. Only one school remains on our list of polling stations (St Hilda's RC Primary School), the main reason being lack of suitable alternatives within the polling district (Whitby – Town South, FC). The added complication is that the school now faces potential closure (pending consultation to be undertaken by North Yorkshire County Council). It is felt that now is the right time to seek alternative venues for electors within this polling district, should the school become unavailable for future polls.

The proposal is to move the electors within the affected polling district to a polling station used for the neighbouring polling district of Whitby - West Cliff (RA), and whilst the polling place is not within the affected polling district, it is felt to be the most suitable alternative under the circumstances. The total number electors proposed to be voting in person at the proposed polling place (Church House Centre, Flowergate) is 1,347, which is still fewer electors than at many other urban polling places around the Borough. Representations on this particular proposal are encouraged and welcomed.

Interim Polling District & Polling Station Review 2020/2021: Initial Recommendations

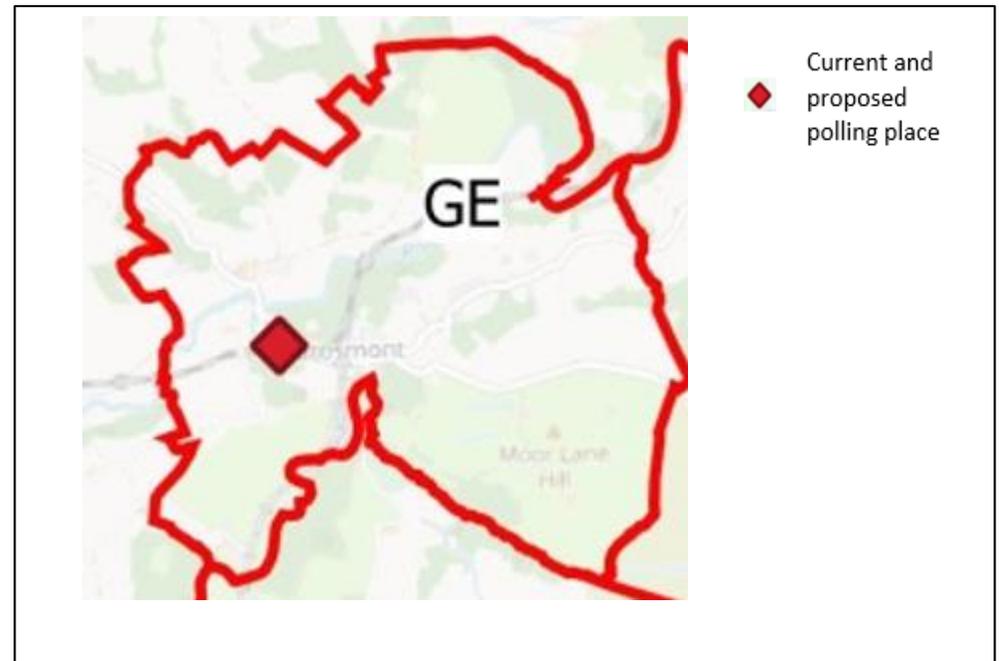
Ward Name			Esk Valley					
Parliamentary Constituency			Scarborough & Whitby					
Polling District	Polling District Name	Parish (if any)	Current Polling Place	Proposed Polling Place	Disabled access	No of electors	No of Postal voters	Voting in person
GE	Grosmont	Grosmont	Sports Pavilion, Grosmont	Sports Pavilion, Grosmont	Yes	270	55	215

Reason for change / comments:

The issues highlighted and experienced in December 2019 (due to the December snap UKPGE) saw the assigned polling station being used in much colder and darker conditions, which saw risks for electors.

Venues explored as part of this review include: Grosmont Tea Rooms, Station Tavern, Grosmont Book Shop, St Matthews Church, Hazelwood Tea Rooms, Geall Gallery and Art Shop, The Crossing Club, the Village Hall and Grosmont House Hotel.

When assessing accessibility, location, suitability and likely availability, the existing used polling place was considered the best option. No complaints have ever been received from electors in relation to the venue, which supports the belief that the venue is suitable. Measures can be put in place if required to ensure a safe and satisfactory voter experience per election.



Ward Name			Northstead					
Parliamentary Constituency			Scarborough & Whitby					
Polling District	Polling District Name	Parish (if any)	Current Polling Place	Proposed Polling Place	Disabled access	No of electors	No of Postal voters	Voting in person
PB	Northstead No.2	None	Alexandra Bowls Centre	The Street, 12 Lower Clark Street	Yes	1,142	182	960

Reason for change / comments:

Alexandra Bowls Centre sits a fair distance away from the main residential area within the polling district (nearly 1 mile, 15-20 minute walk).

'The Street' is now a well-established and well used venue (built in 2013), and it sits in the heart of the residential area. A suggestion to assess the suitability of the venue as a polling station has been taken on board, and has been deemed to be more suitable for the residents than the existing venue.



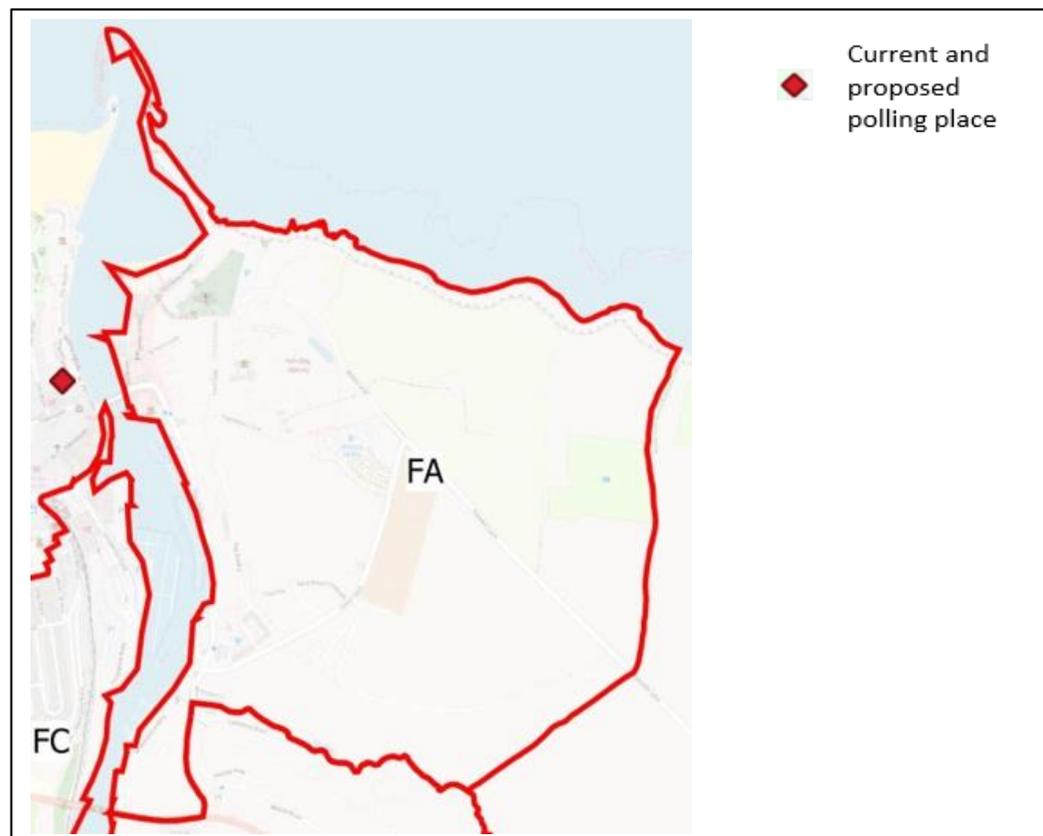
Ward Name		Streonshalh (FA)						
Parliamentary Constituency		Scarborough & Whitby						
Polling District	Polling District Name	Parish (if any)	Current Polling Place	Proposed Polling Place	Disabled access at proposed station	No of electors	No of Postal voters	Voting in person
FA	Abbey No.1	Abbey	Whitby Mission & Seafarers' Centre	Whitby Mission & Seafarers' Centre	Yes	776	124	652

Reason for change / comments:

Feedback during 2019 elections raised concerns regarding proximity of the venue in relation to the majority of residents, and that it sits out of the polling district geographical area. The current polling station was assigned in 2016, following the closure of the Whitby Tourist Information Centre, which was historically the assigned polling station for this district, but was also outside the polling district. A thorough review of all possible polling stations has been conducted, and whilst none were perfect, Whitby Mission & Seafarers' Centre was the best option. The potential alternative venues considered as part of the review were:

- Whitby Friendship Amateur Rowing Club, New Way Ghaut
- The Coliseum, Victoria Place
- St Hilda's Business Centre, The Ropery
- Whitby Library, Windsor Terrace
- Green Lane Centre, Whitby

Based on up to date research on possible venues, previous feedback on occasionally used venues, and knowledge of the area, it is felt that the Whitby Mission & Seafarers Centre remains the best option.



Ward Name			Streonshalh (FC)					
Parliamentary Constituency			Scarborough & Whitby					
Polling District	Polling District Name	Parish (if any)	Current Polling Place	Proposed Polling Place	Disabled access at proposed station	No of electors	No of Postal voters	Voting in person
FC	Whitby Town - South	Whitby Town-South	St Hilda's RC School	Church House Centre, Flowergate	Yes	621	84	537

Reason for change / comments:

Early in 2020, St Hilda's RC Primary School notified the (Acting) Returning Officer that the school risked closure pending the outcome of a consultation. This was halted due to coronavirus pandemic. It is not a safe assumption that this venue will be available longer term. In 2019 the (Acting) Returning Officer expressed a desire to move away from schools where possible due to inevitable disruptions caused to schools and the wider community by using them as polling stations. This is the only school still used as a polling station in the Borough.

Church House Centre on Flowergate sits within the Whitby West Cliff (RA) polling district, but in the absence of a suitable alternative within FC, it is the closest most suitable venue. Due to the parish arrangements for Whitby Town Council, it is not possible to change the polling districts to accommodate a larger group of electors. The venue would have to be split into a double station for Parish/Town council elections to accommodate 2 sets of electors, but for all other election levels, that would not need to happen, the registers could be combined.

Existing polling staff at the station are confident the venue can cope with all electors from both polling districts (810 + 537 = 1,347).

