

SCARBOROUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL
Interim Polling Districts &
Polling Places Review
September 2020 – January 2021



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FINAL Recommendations (October 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 has been 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 has considered all representations 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 sought 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 revisited 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 were encouraged and welcomed.

Summary of Representations (with Acting Returning Officer Comments)

All representations received based on the initial proposals can be seen in the following table for ease of reference. After considering those representations, any changes made have also been updated within the relevant Ward tables throughout the document. To summarise:

- One change to the initial recommendations has been made within Streonshalh Ward (FC)
- The recommendations within Northstead Ward are supported in the main, and remains unchanged.
- No representations were received in relation to the recommendation within Esk Valley Ward, and remains unchanged.

Representations Received to Initial Proposals (with Acting Returning Officer Comments)

No	Commentator	Comment	Assessment of comments	Returning Officer's final recommendation
Polling District: Northstead no 2- PB (Northstead Ward)				
1	Cllr Broadbent (for SBC Northstead Ward, and NYCC Northstead Division)	I welcome the change of polling station in the Northstead Ward from the Alexandra Bowling Centre to the 'Street' Building. This change will suit the residents of the Northstead Ward as the "Street" is more central in the Ward.	Those felt to be adversely affected by the recommended change is 11 electors out of 1067 (1%). Woodall Avenue is unaffected (sits just outside the district).	No change to initial recommendation.
2	Cllr Atkinson (for SBC Northstead Ward)	I agree with the proposal to use The Street in place of the Alexandra Bowls centre a greater number of residents live near this location (e.g. Durham, Clark, Hope, Vincent etc..) and this may increase the turnout a little. Only Kepwick House, Peasholm Gap and Woodall I think will be adversely effected.	It is felt that the benefit of a one mile less walk for the majority of electors outweighs the desire to remain at a venue simply for historic reasons. There is a car park at William Street, next to The Street. The room to be used is wholly for the use of polling (The Sports Hall), and fully segregated from all other activity within the venue, as with the Bowls Club.	
3	Cllr Smith (for SBC Northstead Ward)	I wish it noted that several residents I have communicated with, have reservations about the change. The main observation is that they are quite happy to use the established venue of the bowling		

No	Commentator	Comment	Assessment of comments	Returning Officer's final recommendation
		club, as it is easy to park and walk to and particularly the staff are extremely friendly and helpful and people voting can enjoy watching the bowling and also have a drink or snack. One elderly Durham Street resident highlighted these issues and his concerns about the consultation, in relation to the publicity. He could not see the advantages of moving to the new venue, causing confusion. The present venue lends its main hall to its purpose and it's not clear if the William street venue has a segregated area to do so.		
Polling District: Abbey no 1 – FA (Streonshalh Ward)				
4	Cllr Stonehouse (for SBC Streonshalh Ward)	I have spoken to many electors from the FA area, who are unhappy with that location. Surely, the St Hilda' Business Centre provides a more central option. The burden of distance and incline, either on the way or by return, would be shared by electors rather than borne mainly by residents of the streets already listed. I believe that the gravity of this issue should weigh heavily against any issues concerning the Business Centre	Having looked at St Hilda's Business Centre in a review in 2016, followed up with recent contact as part of this 2020 review, it has been ascertained that there is no availability of a suitable polling area within the venue currently. Suitability is dependent on the availability of units, and with tenants that come and go, it is not a reliably available venue.	No change to initial recommendation
5	Labour Party - Whitby Branch	<p>Whitby Mission & Seafarers' Centre, is also outside the polling district, and we propose instead using St Hilda's Business Centre, The Ropery, which is located fairly centrally in the polling district. While it may be objected that this requires a long uphill walk for residents living below it, the walk back from the Whitby Mission & Seafarer's centre is an even longer uphill walk for residents of e.g. St Mary's Crescent.</p> <p>If St Hilda's Business Centre is not suitable, then another option, which would at least be better than using Church House Centre for polling district FC,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The communal area within the venue is small, not private, would require screening off in an already limited space. There is no natural daylight to the area. It has been deemed unsuitable, although it was noted that parking and proximity for electors is good. • The meeting room off the communal area has a large board room table and 8/10 chairs which are not easily 	

No	Commentator	Comment	Assessment of comments	Returning Officer's final recommendation
		would be to use the Whitby Mission & Seafarers' Centre for both polling districts, FA and FC.	relocated and is not large enough to be a polling station.	
Polling District: Whitby Town -South – FC (Streonshalh Ward)				
6	Cllr Stonehouse (for SBC Streonshalh Ward)	I can understand that locating a suitable location within FC is problematical, but would suggest that Whitby Library is the closest option and has good disabled access. If the Library is out of question, I feel that the Mission is better than the top of Flowergate as the steep hill is avoided.	Due to issues relating to covid-19 pandemic, the Library isn't an option at this time, though post-pandemic, this option could be brought back to review. Regards Whitby Mission & Seafarers Centre as an alternative, this has been considered along with seeking advice from the Presiding Officers familiar with the polling stations, and deemed a suitable alternative.	Change to initial recommendation
7	Labour Party - Whitby Branch	Church House Centre is some way from all parts of the polling district, and we would propose instead using Whitby Library which, while outside the polling district, is much nearer to it than Church House Centre and does not require an uphill walk. As an alternative to the library, Whitby Mission & Seafarers' Centre would be a better location than Church House Centre as it is nearer to the polling district and also does not require an uphill walk. Another option which is nearer than Church House Centre and which seems suitable to us is the Coliseum. Repeated from above (FA): use the Whitby Mission & Seafarers' Centre for both polling districts, FA and FC	Combining FC with FA at Whitby Mission & Seafarers Centre is a sensible suggestion given the number of electors affected (1,205 @ 100% turnout). It can be combined as one single register polling station as they are part of the same Ward. If at Parish elections both parishes are contested, the station is large enough to be split into a double station.	
8	Cllr Campbell (for SBC Streonshalh Ward)	It is of concern that two of the three polling stations are now to be located outside of the ward boundaries. I note the report states other possible locations were looked at but no reasons are given for rejecting them. I also note the response given to Cllr Stonehouse, he forwarded your Email, regarding the library and St Hilda's Business Centre but no reason is given regards the Coliseum or Friendship Club.	Regards the Coliseum as an alternative, this has also been considered, and the parking options are less than at the Whitby Mission (but similar to Whitby Library). The Coliseum and Whitby Mission are only 7 minutes walking distance apart, and it seems sensible to combine both FA & FC	

No	Commentator	Comment	Assessment of comments	Returning Officer's final recommendation
		<p>I concur with Cllr Stonehouse that the proposal to use Church House for voters in FC is problematic due to the incline of Flowergate. If in the short term it is necessary to relocate (FC) I believe that using the Whitby Mission would be a better option. It is a shorter and more level walk from the polling district. Also, combining the two Streonshalh polling stations, FA and FC, into one location is more logical than having a mixed constituency at Church House.</p> <p>Another alternative location for I would propose would be the Harbour Office which is just outside of district FC</p>	<p>at the same station. This can be reviewed again after the May polls in 2021</p> <p>Whitby Harbour Office has been reconfigured in recent years and now houses a TIC Centre on the ground floor, and has a small office adjacent, both deemed to be too small for polling.</p> <p>When this polling district is brought back to review after the May 2021 polls, all venues will be reconsidered, along with Whitby Library, which seems a good alternative which is currently unavailable. Full initial assessment of venues will be included at the initial proposals stage to allow understanding of the issues for each venue within the consultation process.</p>	

Final Recommendations

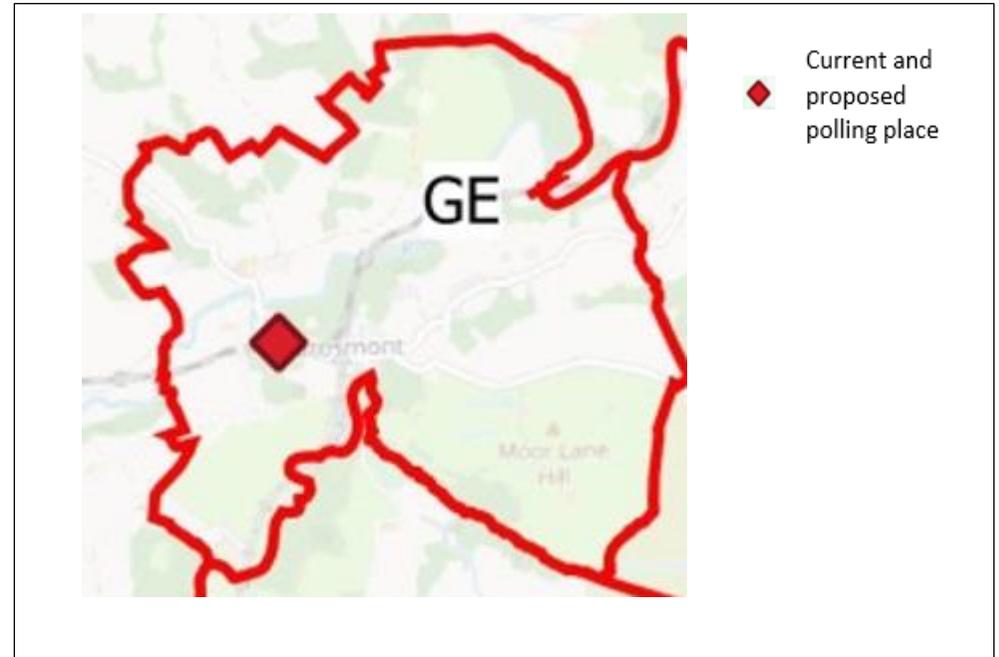
Ward Name			Esk Valley						
Parliamentary Constituency			Scarborough & Whitby						
Polling District	Polling District Name	Parish (if any)	Current Polling Place	Proposed Polling Place	Disabled access	No of electors	No of Postal voters	Voting in person	
GE	Grosmont	Grosmont	Sports Pavilion, Grosmont	Sports Pavilion, Grosmont	Yes	273	55	218	

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	1,249	182	1,067

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.



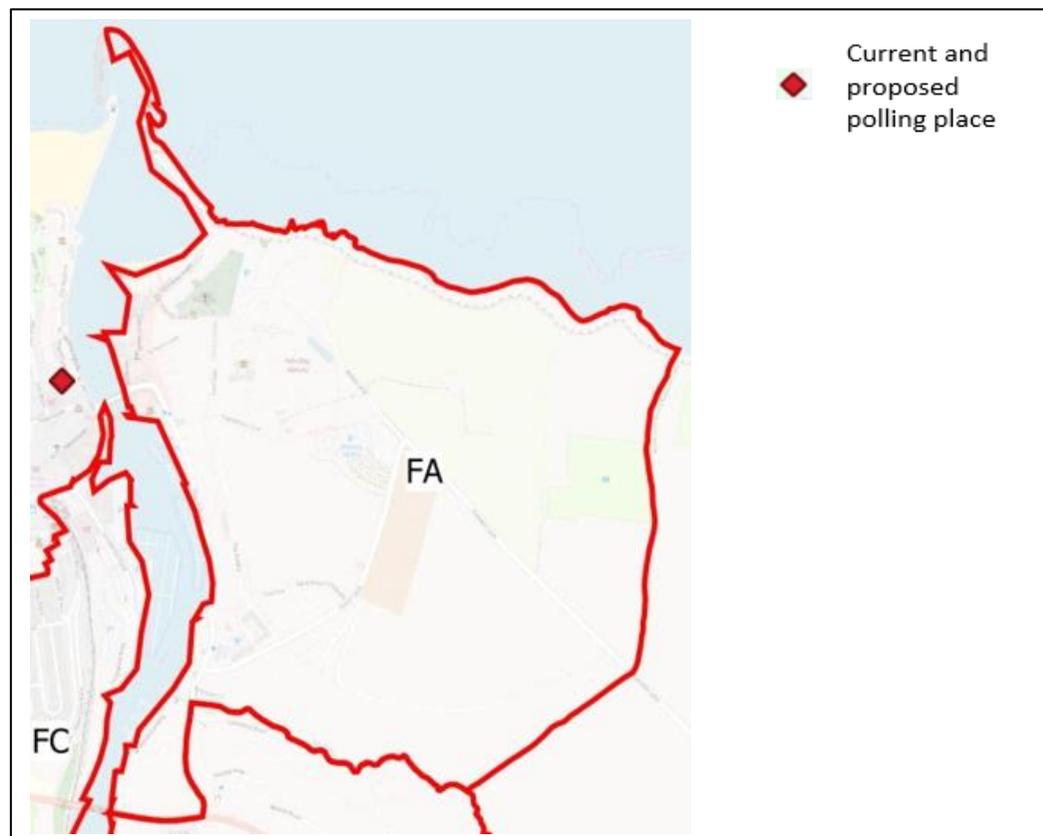
Ward Name			Streonshalh (FA)					
Parliamentary Constituency			Scarborough & Whitby					
Polling District	Polling District Name	Parish (if any)	Current Polling Place	Proposed Polling Place	Disabled access at proposed station	No of electors	No of Postal voters	Voting in person
FA	Abbey No.1	Abbey	Whitby Mission & Seafarers' Centre	Whitby Mission & Seafarers' Centre	Yes	789	124	665

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	Whitby Mission & Seafarers' Centre	Yes	624	84	540

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 was considered, but feedback during consultation suggested Whitby Mission & Seafarers Centre as a more easily accessible location on the basis of avoiding steep hill climbs for electors. This alternative sees polling districts FA and FC sharing a station, which is possible due to size of the room used. The venue would be split into a double station if **either** Whitby Town South or Abbey no 1 Ward of Whitby Town Council were contested, but for all other election levels the registers would be combined. Whitby Mission is estimated to be further 4-5 minute walk than the initial recommendation of Church House Centre for the electors (but an easier one). Those driving would be able to make use of Cliff Street Car Park, which is only a flight of stairs to the polling place. There are limited car parking spaces outside the Whitby Mission for the disabled.

