



<b>Report for:</b>	Electoral Review Committee
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>9 January 2020</b>
<b>Part:</b>	<b>1</b>
If Part II, reason:	

<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>POLLING PLACE REVIEW</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	<p>Cllr Williams: Leader of the Council</p> <p><b>Responsible Officer:</b> Sally Marshall, Chief Executive in the role of Returning Officer. Mark Brookes – Solicitor to the Council</p> <p><b>Author:</b> J Doyle: Elections Team Leader</p>
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To consider the various options for the arrangement and re-designation of Polling Stations and to consider the results of the consultation on these issues with the various stakeholders
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the transfer of the polling station for Tring Central Ward, (polling district DBAA), from Bishops Wood C of E Primary school to Nora Grace Hall be agreed.</li> <li>2. That the suggested alternative polling stations for Tring West &amp; Rural Ward (currently Goldfield infants school) be considered for suitability as the polling station for polling district DCAA.</li> <li>3. That arrangements be finalised for the polling station for Boxmoor Ward, polling district AGB.</li> <li>4. That the proposed amendments be included in an updated Polling Places Order 2020.</li> </ol>
<b>Corporate objectives:</b>	<p>The holding of elections contributes to the Council's community leadership role and fosters public engagement in the democratic process.</p> <p>The responsibility for the good conduct of elections falls on the Electoral Registration Officer, who for all Local Government Election matters is the Chief Executive</p>

Implications:	<u>Financial</u>
'Value for money' implications	The re-allocation of some polling stations could result in additional costs. The cost of the alternative hall hire is to be confirmed  <u>Value for money</u>  The provision of Polling Stations for elections is reviewed on a regular basis and the funding is overseen by the Electoral Commission and the Elections Claims Unit.
Risk implications	Electoral matters require continual review to ensure that the democratic process operates effectively. A failure to provide polling places would result in huge reputational damage.
Consultees:	The Returning Officer; Election Agents, Parish Councils, Ward councillors; Polling Station Caretakers/Payees; Heads of designated Schools.
Background papers:	Bishops Wood School submission (supported by local correspondence)  Goldfield School submission (supported by local correspondence)
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	PH - Portfolio Holder  EC – Electoral Commission.  ECU – Elections Claims Unit

## BACKGROUND

1. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The current compulsory review was due to be started and completed between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive). Following this requirement, Dacorum's Polling Places Review carried out during November and December 2019. The availability and suitability of the various polling stations to be used for future elections in Dacorum Borough were confirmed and reviewed. The review included consultation with all of the Political Party Agents, Councillors, Caretakers, Booking Agents and School Heads. Each venue organiser/booking agent was asked to complete a questionnaire regarding the facilities provided at each station and confirm its suitability for use by people with disabilities.
2. As a result of this review Polling Stations in the following locations were identified as no longer suitable or a more suitable option considered.

### 2.1. Tring Central Ward – Polling District DBAA

At the moment the polling station for Polling District DBAA (Tring Central Ward – Bunstrux Parish) is Bishops Wood C of E Primary School. The current electorate is 1230. The actual Polling Station is in the main school building and accessed from the main gate to the school. At present on polling days, the electors access the school using the same entrance as the students.

The school's representatives, parents and Head Teacher have expressed serious reservations about the use of the site as a Polling Station, mainly on safeguarding grounds, and there are recorded incidents of teaching staff being abused by visitors to the polling station. Instances of this abuse were highlighted during the recent UK Parliamentary Election (see the Head teacher's e-mail at Annex B.) We have received written complaints from four parents concerning the disruption to their child's education; and the child-care difficulties and inconvenience caused by the closure of a school.

As an alternative, the school, parents, and a Borough councillor for Tring have suggested the nearby Nora Grace Hall, Faversham Close, HP23 5BA. Officers have visited the building and the facilities are very suitable for use as a Polling Station.

The site also has extensive off-road parking provision (See attached Map and Nora Grace Hall website: <https://www.tringtogether.org.uk/nora-grace-hall> .

The hall providers have been contacted and are amenable to its use as a Polling Station.

However, the Nora Grace Hall is not in polling district DBAA but is in polling district DBBB. In order to use this venue for polling district DBAA, the boundary between the two polling districts will have to be altered. This can be achieved without moving any electors but residents in and around Faversham Close may then ask why they have to pass a polling station on their doorstep to go the polling station for district DBBB at Tring Community Centre. An option would be to move the DBAA polling district boundary to encompass these (44 properties with approx. 66 electors) residents/electors. Conversely, residents at the Tring town centre side of the polling district may well ask why they have to pass the polling station they have used for many years to get to the new venue.

Tring Town Council have been consulted on this issue and dealt with it at their December meeting. Their response to a request from Bishop Wood School not to be used as a Polling Station was that they are happy to support the request as there are suitable alternatives nearby.

## **2.2 Tring West & Rural Ward - Goldfield Infants School**

Many of the same issues as above are experienced at Goldfields Infants School and they too have requested that DBC investigate the use of the Scout hut on Longfield Road or Old Church House on Western Road as alternatives. Whilst there is limited parking at both sites, there is parking available for those with limited mobility and this would involve a shorter and easier walk than is currently the case at Goldfield School. The results of a preliminary investigation will be reported verbally at the meeting.

## **2.3 Boxmoor Ward - Camelot Rugby Club**

Since the last meeting of this committee in January 2019, DBC has used Camelot Rugby Club, Chaulden Lane, Hemel Hempstead for the three elections held during 2019.

Although on the edge of the ward, this site has a substantial amount of parking spaces and as a purpose built sports club has access suitable for all.

At the last meeting members expressed a preference to use one of the halls at St Mary and St Joseph's church, which is more central to polling district AGB.

However, on three occasions since the last meeting, prior to all of the 2019 elections, the church administrators were contacted with a view to using the halls but they have been unable to accommodate any election due to existing bookings which they were not prepared to move or postpone. This could cause issues in the future in the event of a by-election or another snap national event.

While the facilities and parking at Camelot Rugby Club have proved suitable for its use as a polling station there have been a number of complaints made to the local Dacorum Borough councillor regarding the position of the polling station on the edge of the ward and access issues in the approach to the site along Chaulden Lane.

3. While this committee has the authority and power to make the changes/decisions suggested in this report they will also be reported to the January 2020 Council meeting as part of a Polling District Order.

Annex A – Head Bishop Wood School Letter

Annex B – Abuse e-mail

Annex C – Bishop Wood School Map