

COMMITTEE: ADMINISTRATION & REGULATION

DATE: 3 OCTOBER 2019

SUBJECT: POLLING DISTRICTS/ PLACES/ STATIONS REVIEW

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CONTACT OFFICER: SAM FREER/ BERT SIONG 01582 546088/ 546781

IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL	✓	COMMUNITY SAFETY	
EQUALITIES		ENVIRONMENT	
FINANCIAL	✓	CONSULTATIONS	✓
STAFFING	✓	OTHER	

WARDS AFFECTED: All

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this report is to present the results and recommendations relating to further enquiries about the polling station at Denbigh Primary School instructed to be carried out by the committee on 9 September 2019 for consideration and approval.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to:-
 - (i) consider and determine whether the polling place at Denbigh Primary School for the BCCS polling district should be moved to Venue Central at the Britannia Estates in Legrave Road, Luton, given the financial and disability access implications of that location;
 - (ii) if (i) above is not approved, to approve that Denbigh Primary School be retained as the polling place for the BCCS polling district and the school be required to provide a suitable room for future elections use;

- (iii) **Authorise the Electoral Registration Officer/ Returning Officer to make any further necessary changes to the relevant polling place, if required, to enable the smooth running of the next scheduled election for the Police and Crime Commissioner on 7 May 2020 and any other unscheduled elections.**

BACKGROUND

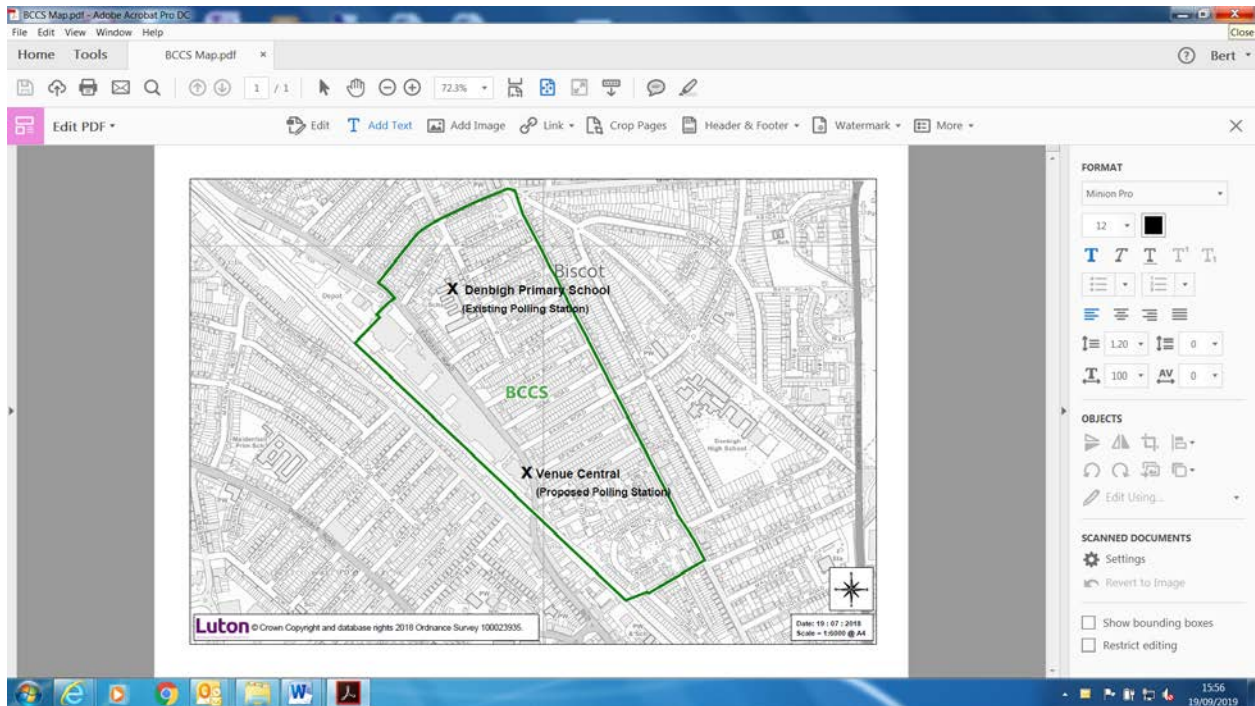
3. On 9 September 2019, the Committee considered and approved most of the recommendations of the Chief Executive on the outcome polling districts/ polling places/ polling stations.
4. The Committee also instructed that further enquiries be made in relation to potential replacement polling places for Denbigh Primary School.

REPORT

7. Venue Central in Leagrave Road, Luton was visited and assessed. The rest of Britannia Estates was also visited but no suitable places were available, as the site was due for re-development.
8. Venue Central is a very large facility mainly for weddings, but also available for conferences and meetings. It is situated on the non-residential side of a very busy main road, within the BCCS polling district, virtually opposite Saxon Road. (See photo below). Voters in the district would need to cross Leagrave Road to get to it, using the one zebra crossing opposite the premises.



9. Parking at the rear of the building would be available for election staff and disabled voters only.
10. The below map shows Venue Central relative to Denbigh Primary School within the BCCS poling district.



11. The pros and cons of Venue Central as polling place are as follows:

Pros

- Suitable in terms of space and facilities within the building
- It is within BCCS district
- It would not have the restrictions associated with schools

Cons

- The cost would be between £2000 to £2500. (Note: The Cabinet Office was consulted on the cost and have responded as follows:

“Thank you for your email below which has been passed on to me for a response.

I understand that as part of your polling station review you are considering an alternative venue which provides better facilities but is more expensive than the existing school.

Whilst this is ultimately a matter for the Returning Officer, the cost is likely to be challenged if there are other suitable venues that can be used at a lower cost. It is important to consider the value for money to the taxpayer and therefore any decision needs to strike the right balance between the facilities available and the cost.

The Representation of the People Act 1983 (with amendments) states that:

- (1)The returning officer may use, free of charge, for the purpose of taking the poll—*
- (a)a room in a school to which this rule applies;*
 - (b)a room the expense of maintaining which is payable out of any rate.*

Consideration should, therefore, also be given to other suitable venues that are payable out of any rate that may be used free of charge by the Returning Officer.

I would be more than happy to discuss this further if you would find that helpful)”

- It is on the wrong side of the very busy Leagrave Road, mitigated by a zebra crossing just opposite
- No wheelchair access at the gate, unless a ramp is provided to overcome a slight step up into the yard. (Note: The venue owners have indicated they would be willing to have a concrete slope put in at the gate at their cost to facilitate wheelchair access, if hired)

PROPOSAL/OPTION

18. That the Committee consider whether to approve the change of Polling Place from Denbigh Primary School to Venue Central or that Denbigh Primary School be retained as the polling place and the school be required to provide a suitable room for future elections use.

(Note: The below implications are the same as provided for the main report considered by the committee on 9 September 2019, as still applicable)

FINANCE IMPLICATIONS

19. There is a cost associated with the use of all polling places for elections, borne by the Council for local elections or centrally funded for national elections. However, cost is not a consideration in the designation of polling places.
20. The cost of using Denbigh Primary School, a publicly funded building, is £30 plus a nominal reimbursement for site agent's overtime. The cost of moving to Venue Central would be between £2000 and £2500, which, as set out as above, the Cabinet Office have said they might challenge. If they refuse to pay, this additional cost would need to be met from Luton Council's budget.
21. There are otherwise no direct financial implications arising from this Report. This has been agreed by Dev Gopal on 23 September 2019.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

22. Save as otherwise referred to in the Report there are no legal implications and this has been agreed with Rachael Campbell, Legal Services on 15 August 2019.

HR IMPLICATIONS

23. There are no direct Human Resource implications arising from this report. This has been agreed by Angela Claridge, Service Director, HR and Monitoring Officer, on 19 August 2019.

CONSULTATIONS IMPLICATIONS

24. No further consultation made in relation to this proposed change in this report.

APPENDIX

None

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D

- Schedule A1, Representation of the People Act 1983;
- The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013;
- The Electoral Services Commission Guidance – Reviews of Polling Districts, Polling Places, and Polling Stations
- Reports and draft minutes of the Admin & Regulation Committee of 9 September 2019