

**PROPOSED CHANGES TO
POLLING STATIONS AND POLLING PLACES
2022/23**

BRISTNALL

The Bristnall ward has a total of eight polling districts. For the elections held in May 2022, voters living in these districts used one of six different polling places, as follows:--

- BRA and BRB districts; (inside) Langley Swimming Centre
- BRC: Temporary hut on the Langley Swimming Centre car park
- BRD and BRH: Our Lady & St Hubert's RC Primary School
- BRE: Hurst Road Community Centre
- BRF: George Road Community Centre
- BRG: Barlow Homes Community Centre

Following a review, it is proposed:

- To relocate the station for voters living in the BRD district from Our Lady & St Hubert's RC Primary School to Hurst Road Community Centre.
For the significant majority of voters in BRD, this should make a more straightforward and closer journey to get to their polling place. Because of the increase in the number of voters allocated to Hurst Road Community Centre this polling place will, in future, house two polling stations instead of one.
- To relocate electors who live in the BRA district from Langley Swimming Centre to Our Lady & St. Hubert's school.

- To relocate the polling station for electors living in the BRC district from a Temporary hut on Langley Swimming Centre car park to a polling station inside the Centre - and thereby avoiding having to use an unpopular and expensive temporary hut.

Therefore, if these proposals are approved, the polling stations and the districts they serve would become :-

- BRA and BRH: Our Lady & St Hubert's RC Primary School
- BRB and BRC (inside) Langley Swimming Centre
- BRD Hurst Road Community Centre
- BRE Hurst Road Community Centre
- BRF: George Road Community Centre
 - (i.e. no proposed change)
- BRG: Barlow Homes Community Centre (i.e. no proposed change)

Under these proposals, there would still be the same six polling places in the ward, no need to use a temporary hut and no need to use a building that hasn't previously been used as a polling station.

Where there is a change to an elector's polling station, the change will be communicated to each household in the relevant district by letter. The change will also be highlighted on each individual elector's poll card, on the council's internet site prior to the next election and in the Spring edition of the Sandwell Herald.

Following consultation with ward members, one councillor was supportive of these proposals and the remaining two raised no objections.

Recommendations:

The polling place/station for BRA transfers from (inside Langley Swimming Centre) to Our Lady & St Hubert's Primary School, Moat Road, Oldbury.

The polling place/station for BRC transfers from a temporary hut on the car park of Langley Swimming Centre to (inside) Langley Swimming Centre.

The polling place for BRD transfers from Our Lady & St Hubert's Primary School, Moat Road, Oldbury to Hurst Road Community Centre, Hurst Road, Smethwick.

*

HATELEY HEATH

**Current polling station for the HHB district:
Hall Green Primary School, Westminster Road, West Bromwich**

Shortly before the May 2022 elections, Electoral Services were notified of the closure of Moorlands Methodist Church in Hydes Road and, therefore, of the loss of the venue used as the polling station for HHB district.

Following consideration of alternative venues, and ward member consultation, it was agreed to re-locate this polling station to the venue used for the neighbouring, HHD district at Hall Green Primary School in Westminster Road. It was agreed to review this arrangement after the May 2022 elections.

At the conclusion of the elections, no issues were reported and therefore it is proposed that this change, becomes a permanent alteration. Ward members have been consulted and were supportive of this proposal.

**Current polling station for the HHG district:
Hargate Primary School, Hargate Lane, West Bromwich**

In the 2021 polling place/station review, members were advised there was a concerted effort to, wherever possible, reduce the number of schools used as polling stations and so avoid disrupting children's education with school closures caused by their premises being used for voting.

However, one school that the Council had no alternative but to keep using as a Polling Station was Hargate Primary School in Tantany Lane. A possible alternative to the school within the HHG district, West Bromwich Baptist Church, also in Tantany Lane, was, at the time of the review, closed for refurbishment.

Since that time, however, the church has re-opened and, following a recent visit by a member of the Electoral Services team, was considered a suitable venue to be a polling station in the future. The church has good access for people with mobility difficulties and its own dedicated car park - the entrance to which is approximately 100 yards from the car park entrance to Hargate Primary School.

It was felt that, if agreed, this proposal will also address some of the concerns raised by the Presiding Officer working at the school at the last election, such as poor lighting on the long path leading to the station.

However, following recent consultation with ward members, strong objections to the proposals were reported, predominantly on the grounds of car parking and, as a consequence this proposal is therefore not being recommended at the present time.

It is expected that, so as to address the concerns of the Presiding Officer at the last election, the difficulties can be resolved by re-locating the polling station from one room in the school, to another.

Recommendation:

The temporary transfer of the polling place/station for the HHB district from Moorlands Methodist Church to Hall Green Primary School, Westminster Road, West Bromwich, becomes a permanent alteration.

*

OLDBURY

**Current polling station for the OLB district:
Tipton Road Methodist Church, Tipton Road, Tividale.**

The Electoral Services team have recently been informed of the closure of Tipton Road Methodist Church, i.e. the location of the polling station for the OLB district.

Consideration of possible suitable alternative venues led to another church located within the district being contacted; but they replied that there were unable to help us because of issues concerning the Church Trust's deeds and their constitution.

The alternative proposal is therefore, to use the Shri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple, located in the neighbouring OLC district. This venue was first used as a polling station for the elections in May 2022, and currently acts as such for the OLC and OLE districts.

By relocating the station for the OLB district there as well, means it would become the polling place with the largest number of electors allocated to it within the Borough.

However, given a) the size of the hall used as the polling station and b) the ample car parking facilities available, it is felt to be sufficiently large to be able to cater for the increased number of people visiting it on election day.

Nevertheless, given the size of the electorate, the use of the temple as a venue for the three polling districts, will be reviewed following the local

elections in May 2023 to assess whether it is suitable to act as a polling place for other elections in the future when traditionally, a larger turn-out would be expected.

The temple is 0.8 miles/a 17-minute walk from the furthest point away in the OLB district.

**Current polling station for the OLD district:
Christ Church C of E Primary School, Albert Street, Oldbury**

Members will be aware of the request made by the Department for Education and the Cabinet Office to Returning Officers in February 2021, to minimise any further disruption to pupils' education by avoiding using schools as polling stations, where it is practically possible to do so.

A potentially suitable alternative venue for the polling station at Christ Church C of E Primary School was identified as being Christ Church in Birmingham Street. Although this alternative venue was identified prior to the May 2022 elections, issues regarding the church's ownership made it unwise to have pursued that option at the time.

Now, however, issues concerning its ownership have been resolved and the building, formerly known as Christ Church, has now re-opened as Kingdom Life Apostolic Chapel and, following a visit by a member of staff from Electoral Services, the venue was found to be a suitable venue to host a polling station.

As members may also be aware, prior to the 2019 elections and for many years previously, the building housing the Chapel was formerly used as a polling station. However, because of the issues concerning its ownership, the polling station was relocated to the nearby school.

This proposal is therefore, in effect, to revert to the original polling place for the OLD district.

Ward members have been consulted on both of these proposals and have communicated their supportive.

Recommendations:

The polling place/station for the OLB District transfer from Tipton Road Methodist Church to the Shri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple.

The polling place/station for the OLD district transfers from Christ Church C of E Primary School to Kingdom Life Apostolic Chapel, Birmingham Street, Oldbury.

*

ST PAUL'S

**Current polling station for SPC district:
Temporary hut in Woodland Drive.**

One of the objectives of this year's polling station review was to consider reducing the number of temporary huts used as places for electors to go to vote. This was because, not only are huts expensive to hire, but also because they are prone to anti-social behaviour in the days immediately before/after voting day, are unpopular with local residents and staff alike and may not be as easy to access for some voters with mobility problems as compared with a permanent building.

One hut that has been used as a polling station in recent years has served the SPC district, situated in Woodland Drive, Smethwick - near to New Hope Christian Centre.

In seeking to identify a suitable alternative venue, Electoral Services has contacted the Christian Centre to see if they would be willing to allow their premises being used as a polling station.

This centre has previously used as a polling station a number of years ago, but the Station had to be moved elsewhere after the centre decided not to allow the premises to be used in this way.

Now, however, they have agreed that the Centre can, once again, be used as a polling station and, following a visit from a member of staff from the Electoral Services team, it was again found to be a suitable venue.

There are no proposals to change any of the other polling stations in the St Paul's Ward.

Ward members have been consulted on this proposal and have not raised any objections.

Recommendation:

The polling place for the SPC district is transferred from a temporary hut in Woodland Drive to the New Hope Christian Centre, Woodland Drive, Smethwick B66 1JF.

*

SMETHWICK

**Current polling station for the SMC district:
Holy Trinity Church, Church Hill Street, Smethwick.**

Members will recall that, prior to the outbreak of Covid in 2020, the long-standing polling station for the SMC district was the Community Room at Smethwick Fire Station in Stony Lane. Because of Covid, use of the room as a Community facility was suspended by the Fire Service and, as a consequence, we were unable to continue to use it as a polling station. It was therefore agreed that the polling station for the SMC district should be merged with that of the neighbouring SMD district at Holy Trinity Church in Church Hill Street.

Whilst this venue proved to be able to cope with serving two districts of the Smethwick ward, some voters living in SMC complained about the extra distance they were having to travel to their polling station and of the fact they were required to travel up a hill to get to the church.

Following a return to pre-Covid times, the Fire Service have now relaxed the restrictions on the use of the Community Room and are willing to allow it to be used as a polling station again.

Although perfectly adequate before Covid, in the intervening years, disabled access/egress to/from the Community Room has been improved further.

It is therefore proposed that the polling station for SMC reverts to the Community Room at Smethwick Fire Station (access from Green Street) for electors living in the SMC district, whilst Holy Trinity Church resumes to being used solely for electors living in the SMD district.

**Current station for the SMH district:
Temporary hut at the junction of Thimblemill Road and Hales Lane,
Smethwick**

As members will no doubt recall, prior to the 2019 elections, the polling station for this district was in St Marks Church but, following its closure and there being no other suitable building available within the district, it moved to a temporary hut, situated nearby at the junction of Thimblemill Road and Hales Lane.

However, part of the original church building has now re-opened as New Beginnings Community and, following a recent visit by a member of the Electoral Services team, was found to be a suitable venue to host a polling station.

This proposal is therefore to move the polling station back inside (part of the original) St Marks Church building and, in doing so, avoid the significant costs associated with hiring a temporary hut and improve the voting experience for both electors and staff alike.

Ward members have been consulted on both of these proposals and have expressed their support.

Recommendations:

The polling place for the SMC district transfers from Holy Trinity Church, Church Hill Street to Smethwick Fire Station, Stony Lane, Smethwick (access from Green Street)

The polling place for the SMH transfers from a temporary hut situated at the junction of Thimblemill Road and Hales Lane to New Beginnings Community at St Marks Church, Thimblemill Road, Smethwick.

*

There are no proposals to make changes to any Polling Stations in the following Wards:

Abbey

Blackheath

Charlemont with Grove Vale

Cradley Heath and Old Hill

Friar Park

Great Barr with Yew Tree

Great Bridge

Greets Green and Lyng

Langley

Newton

Old Warley

Princes End

Rowley

Soho and Victoria

Tipton Green

Tividale

Wednesbury North

Wednesbury South

West Bromwich Central