

# **POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS REVIEW**

## **Responses to Public Consultation**

Summary of responses received  
during consultation and the Returning  
Officer's responses to these

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**Alex Pradere-Johnson (Resident in Rectory Farm Ward)**

**Rectory Farm Ward**

*I would like to comment on the proposal to bring the polling for the part of Rectory Farm ward East of Gt Billing Way back to a single polling station. This is a good move as it restores the polling station arrangements to how it was previous to 2011 and removes the need for parts of the ward to have to cross Gt Billing Way to vote. It will stop a repeat of occurrence where voters had to visit two locations to cast their votes in the recent PCC election and Parish Council Polls which were held in November.*

*I hope that the proposals for this area go through as planned.*

**(Acting) Returning Officer's Response**

**Rectory Farm Ward**

Thank you for your comments in support of the proposals for Rectory Farm Ward.

## **Cllr Mike Hallam (Northampton Borough Councillor for Parklands and Northamptonshire County Councillor for Spinney Hill Division)**

### **Parklands Ward**

*I disagree with the merging of both Parklands polling stations to create just one. Parklands has one of the highest demographics of elderly people in the County and we will be forcing elderly people (many of whom do not drive) to walk further to their polling station e.g. residents in Lorraine Crescent will now have to walk over a mile to get to their nearest polling station - which I feel is too far.*

### **Kingsley Ward**

*I disagree with the merging of two polling stations in Kingsley and Links View to create just one and do not believe the polling station at the Pioneer pub should be removed.*

*Links View is a distinct community and distinct area and residents feel they should be treated as part of Links View rather than part of Kingsley. For example, Stagecoach recently removed a bus service going up to Links View causing uproar with the residents having to walk down to Kingsley - many of whom are elderly and simply cannot walk the extra distance. I believe this to be a very similar example and Links View should be treated as a separate community with a separate polling station.*

## **(Acting) Returning Officer's Response**

### **Parklands Ward**

Having carefully considered the points raised by a number of respondents about the high proportion of elderly residents in this area, I am minded to keep the electoral arrangements the same as they were previously. Therefore, a polling station will remain located at Parklands Nursery School & Childrens Centre as well as at Parklands Community Centre.

### **Kingsley Ward**

Having carefully considered the points raised by a number of respondents, even though the polling station is less than a mile's walk for all residents, given the topography of the area I have decided to keep the electoral arrangements as they were previously. Therefore, a mobile polling station will remain located in the Pioneer

Public House car park and there will be a separate polling station at Kingsley Primary School.

## **George Pollard (Resident in Abington Ward)**

### **Abington Ward**

*I understand that you're reviewing your polling stations at the moment.*

*As part of the drive to reduce the number of polling places that are located on school premises, can I suggest that Stimpson Avenue School is taken off the list of stations.*

*It's enormously disruptive to have the whole school closed for one day. As a parent with a young child at the school, childcare has to be arranged (and last polling day, there was only one week's notice). There's also no parking for anyone visiting by car. I'm sure a much smaller venue could be used with much less disruption to so many people.*

## **(Acting) Returning Officer's Response**

### **Abington Ward**

Whilst I agree that it would be preferable to reduce the number of school premises being used, in areas such as Abington this has not been possible as no suitable alternative locations have been identified. If you are able to propose alternative venues then I would certainly look into the feasibility of using these instead.

### **Roger Rumsey (Resident in Parklands Ward)**

*I have examined your proposals on line and at the "One Stop Shop" and I have had discussions with a number of electors and report the following:-*

- 1) 13 days is not enough time for a proper consultation to be held.*
- 2) If you plan to go ahead have you balanced the estimated cost savings against the increased cost of postal votes which most frail and elderly will have to revert to?*
- 3) If you go ahead does your plan match your legal obligations?*

*You will introduce considerably more effort and inconvenience to voting for a great number of the electorate when with "Voter Apathy" running at the highest level I can ever remember you plan make things even harder!*

### **(Acting) Returning Officer's Response**

Thank you for your email regarding the polling district/station review.

In response to your questions:

- 1) I would have preferred to have longer to deal with this issue but the boundary review reported somewhat later than is ideal, and this was coupled with the need to conduct the PCC elections in November and conclude the Community Governance Review all of which meant that the polling district review, which is a major task in itself, could not be completed earlier. The review has to be completed in time to be applied to the 1st March Register on which the County Elections will be based.
- 2) Following changes a few years ago, everyone can apply for and receive a postal vote. This change was of particular benefit to people who would have difficulty accessing a polling station due to mobility concerns or due to other commitment such as work or travel. It is possible that some people will decide to take this option up if they feel that any change to polling station is too long a distance from them, but it is not possible to estimate the numbers involved. The numbers of postal voters increase every year anyway as people are more and more preferring that option. Following problems in other parts of the country in 2010 (not in Northampton) the Electoral Commission now specify staffing levels for polling stations which make the cost of smaller polling districts and stations much higher than they used to be. Clearly I have a responsibility to manage that position and I will of course review the impact of these changes after the May elections and in future years.
- 3) Yes it does.

I have had representation from Councillor Hallam, who I note you have copied into your email, regarding arrangements in his ward. I will be taking these points into

consideration and am very happy to make changes to these proposals to reflect concerns. If you have particular areas or stations that you would like to flag up to me as being in your consideration too far for elderly and frail residents, then I will of course give those the same level of further thought.



## **Michael Ellis MP (Northampton North)**

*I am writing to you regarding your consultation on Polling Stations in Northampton.*

*Whilst as you know I am generally supportive of the Council's efforts to reduce expenditure, I do feel that democracy is an area where the Council must be able to strongly justify any changes before implementing them. To that end I welcome your consultation and would like to take this opportunity to raise two concerns with you.*

*My two concerns specifically are:*

### **1) Links View and Kingsley**

*I am concerned that the proposal in this ward would negatively affect the residents of Links View in two ways. Firstly, many of the residents in this area are elderly – making walking long distances difficult. This is especially the case given that many of the roads in the Links View area are both long and steep. I do think therefore that it would be in the interests of democracy to maintain a polling station in this area.*

*I am also aware of concerns amongst residents that this area of the town is losing its identity, as local shops and bus services are moving to Kingsley. Whilst this is not a factor that directly affects democracy it is a relevant matter for the Borough Council to consider.*

### **2) Parklands**

*As you know, the proposal in the Parklands ward is to reduce the current two polling stations (the Community Centre and the Primary School) into one polling station. Parklands is a large community and again one with a high proportion of older residents. My concern is that by merging the two polling stations into one the Council would be creating long walking distances to the polls for many residents of this ward. We do not want to have people discouraged from voting by the distance to their polling station. I am also concerned that the Parklands station has a higher turnout than average and amalgamating it with another may lead to queues and delays- which could frustrate voters and reduce turnout.*

*In conclusion, I know that you share my concerns that we do all that we can to ensure as many people in our town exercise their right to vote. I am sure that you will also agree with me that the Council must proceed with the utmost caution in matters such as this. I welcome the consultation into this matter and I look forward to seeing the results of it.*

*If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me again.*

**(Acting) Returning Officer's Response**

In light of the concerns expressed by local residents about the proposed changes in the wards of Parklands and Kingsley, I propose that the voting arrangements remain as they have been previously.

**Liz Smorfitt (Headteacher at Kingsthorpe Village Primary School in Kingsthorpe Ward)**

***Kingsthorpe Ward***

*I am writing to contribute to the change of location for the polling station from Kingsthorpe Village Primary School to Kingsthorpe Community Centre. From my point of view as Headteacher of the school, I welcome the move. The disruption to our school has been considerable recently, with elections of some sort being held every year. I have many parents who are not happy when school closes for elections and I am in agreement with them. I believe that a community centre is a much more appropriate venue.*

**(Acting) Returning Officer's Response**

**Kingsthorpe Ward**

Thank you for expressing your support of these proposals.

## **Mrs Jarvis (Parent of a child at Fairfield's School in Trinity Ward)**

### ***Trinity Ward***

*Mrs Jarvis is concerned that her daughter's school is used each year as a polling station. Fairfield's School is a special needs school and they are unable to remain open during the election and therefore have to close. This causes extra stress to the parents as it is not as easy to get childcare. This also forces unnecessary change on to the children which can make their condition worse.*

## **(Acting) Returning Officer's Response**

### **Trinity Ward**

Given the inconvenience caused by the school closure, we will investigate alternative locations, including at the Malcolm Arnold Academy. However, if a suitable alternative cannot be found, the polling station will have to remain at Fairfield's School.

**Cllr Phil Larratt (Northampton Borough Councillor for East Hunsbury Ward and County Councillor for Nene Valley Division)**  
**East Hunsbury Ward**

*I have two observations regarding this review as far as they relate to my NBC Ward, East Hunsbury.*

*You are proposing that SNEHC votes at East Hunsbury Primary School. I think it would be preferable if this Polling District voted at Blacky More Community Centre with SNEHB as virtually all electors in SNEHC will have to go past the Community Centre in order to get to East Hunsbury Primary School. Blacky More is close to the District Centre in Butts Road, and is far more accessible to the community of SNEHC than the Primary School. This will just leave electors in Polling District SNEHD voting at East Hunsbury Primary School.*

*You are also proposing that SNEHD votes at the Grangewood Club. This is a small facility hidden away at the end of two residential streets – Barn Owl Close and Peregrine Place. It is not a well-known facility beyond the immediate streets / vicinity and has not been a Polling Station for that long. I would strongly suggest that this Polling District should vote at the Abbey Centre that has been a Polling Station for many years and is a well-known community building. It is larger than the Grangewood Club and has much better parking facilities, also it is less hidden away being so close to the District Centre at Mereway, especially the local library, and is far easier to find.*

*I hope you can accept my views on these matters.*

**Nene Valley County Division**

*I have no comment on your proposals for Nene Valley, my County Council Division, and would offer my support for them.*

**Rushmills Ward**

*My only other comment relates to a Polling Station in Rushmills. I would suggest that the electors of SRMC should vote at the Old Scouts Rugby Club in Rushmere Road, not the Old Northamptonians on Billing Road. The Old Scouts is far more relative to the Polling District than the Old Northamptonians that is outside the Polling District. The car park at the Old Northamptonians gets very congested with cars dropping off and picking up pupils from Northampton School for Boys. Also, if there is an event at the Cripps Hall in the evening or during the day, again the car park is congested. When the car park is congested there is often conflict between vehicles and pedestrians. The Old Scouts does not have the vehicle traffic or relationship with the Boys School / Cripps Hall that the Old Northamptonians has, so I would therefore suggest that the Old Scouts is a much more suitable venue for a Polling Station.*

## **(Acting) Returning Officer's Response**

### **East Hunsbury Ward**

Given that the majority of electors in SNEHC would pass the community centre on their way to the primary school, it seems sensible that they vote at the community centre instead of the school. The proposal that electors in SNEHC vote at the Blacky More Community Centre is therefore supported.

In light of the Abbey Centre being more accessible to electors than the Grangewood Club and given that it is no more than a mile's walk for any elector in this new larger polling district the proposal to move the polling station to the Abbey Centre is supported.

### **Nene Valley Division**

Thank you for expressing your support of these proposals.

### **Rushmills Ward**

Enquiries are being made at the Old Scouts Rugby Club as to whether this venue would be available for use as a polling station. If the venue can be secured, the polling station will be moved to this location. If this is not possible, it will have to remain at the Old Northamptonians Association.