

Consultation Comments

| Consultee | Comment |
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| Councillor Chris Boden | <p>I support all of the polling districts proposed for the Fenland District Council area in the consultation document, although would ask for consideration of a minor boundary change between polling districts DA1 and DA2 in Bassenhally Ward.</p> <p>I request some specific polling places be amended, together with a general change in the definition of polling places across the Fenland District Council area.</p> <p>I ask that the names proposed for Town Council wards in March be amended to correspond with the names proposed by the LGBCE and authorised by the Cambridgeshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2016 (SI 1222 (2016)).</p> <p>WHITTLESEY: The successful Corporate Governance Review in Whittlesey allows FDC to rationalise polling districts within St Andrews District Ward and Bassenhally District Ward.</p> <p>Within St Andrews District Ward the creation as proposed in the consultation document of two polling districts (reflecting the County Council Division boundary running through the District Council Ward) provides the most efficient and effective arrangement of polling districts in that area. Each polling district covers the area of a new Town Council Ward. The proposals are logical and sensible.</p> <p>Within Bassenhally District Ward, following the successful Corporate Governance Review, the absorption of Elm and Delph Town Wards into Bassenhally Town Ward allows for a more rational division of Bassenhally District Ward into polling districts. The need for this is exacerbated by the amount of new housing development taking place in the Ward. The arrangement of polling districts proposed in the consultation document comes satisfactorily close to equalising the electorates between Bassenhally District Ward's three proposed polling districts, and I therefore generally support those proposed changed polling district boundaries.</p> <p>I would nevertheless ask that consideration be given, however, to including in polling district DA1 the westernmost part of Drybread Road (currently proposed to be in polling district DA2) , together with Otago Road and the two roads off it (Otago Close and Whiteacres). This will increase the ease with which residents in those roads would be able to vote, involving a shorter walking distance to the Straw Bear than to the Ivy Leaf Centre, and this would not produce an excessive number of potential voters in polling district DA1, nor would it produce an unviably small electorate within polling district DA2.</p> |

OBJECTION TO SPECIFIC POLLING PLACES:

Within Whittlesey's Bassenhally Ward it is proposed that electors from polling districts DA1, DA2 and DA3 vote at the Ivy Leaf Centre, the Ivy Leaf Centre and Whittlesey Library respectively.

This is unsatisfactory because two of the three proposed polling places would be outside the polling district they are meant to serve, and the substantial distances some electors would need to travel to vote would create a barrier to voting, especially for those electors who are less mobile. I understand that the Straw Bear will be available and that the Queen Street Town Offices will soon be available as better placed alternative polling places. As an alternative to the Queen Street Offices, should they be unavailable, Whittlesey Library could be used as a back-up polling place. I would therefore advocate that the polling place for polling district DA1 should be the Straw Bear, that the polling place for polling district DA2 should remain the Ivy Leaf Centre and that the polling place for polling district DA3 should be the Queen Street Town Council Offices, with Whittlesey Library being named as a back-up should the Town Council Offices be unavailable.

My proposed revised scheme of polling places would ensure that all polling places within Bassenhally District Ward would lie within the boundaries of the polling places they serve, thus increasing voter accessibility.

OBJECTION TO POLLING PLACES GENERALLY:

In listing, on Page 5 of the review consultation document, guidance from the Electoral Commission as to key considerations of this review process, the consultation document inexplicably fails to mention the Electoral Commission's strong guidance as to specificity of polling place definition.

The Electoral Commission has produced a 28 page guidance document for the 2018 review cycle entitled "Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations". It is openly available on the Electoral Commission's website. Paragraph 2.15 on page six of the Commission's guidance states: "**We are aware that some authorities designate the entire polling district as the polling place. However, Section 18B(4)(e) of the RPA 1983 states that 'the polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station'. We therefore consider that polling places should always be defined more specifically than simply the polling district - for example, by designating the name of the polling place (normally a particular building or area and its environs).**" One of the purposes of complying with Section 18B(4)(e) is said to be to provide some degree of certainty to voters as to whether or not they need to apply for an absent vote to ensure that they are able to exercise their right to vote. I agree with the Electoral Commission's guidance as to the legal requirement in defining polling places, and therefore request that all references when defining polling places to "Or any other place within the polling district" (or words to that effect) be removed from the final version of the review.

There may be urgent circumstances (such as a fire or a flood in a building designated as a polling place) which make it impossible to locate a polling station within a designated polling place. Such circumstances are rare, but they do happen and we need as an authority to ensure that the Returning Officer is able to act appropriately in siting a polling station when such circumstances arise. The Electoral Commission's guidance provides assistance in this regard in paragraphs 8.1 to 8.3 of the guidance, on pages 18 and 19: "8.1

If a polling station becomes unavailable, the (Acting) Returning Officer should consider whether another polling station could be designated within the polling place. Changing the polling station within the polling place would not require a review.

8.2 If a building becomes unavailable before an election, the polling place can be changed by the local authority in accordance with their decision making arrangements. If delegation procedures are in place, for example to a committee of the council, these should be followed as set out in the council's constitution and the person or persons who are entitled to make changes to polling places should be contacted.

8.3 Between compulsory reviews, all polling places and polling stations used should be kept under consideration, and an evaluation of their suitability carried out after each election. If any changes are identified as being desirable, the same steps should be followed as for conducting the compulsory review."

I therefore request that, if necessary, a suitable scheme of delegation (to the Returning Officer, if felt appropriate) be brought to Full Council, either at the meeting at which this review is approved or at the following meeting of Full Council, to provide the delegation procedures recommended by the Electoral Commission in paragraph 8.2 of their guidance.

NAMES OF TOWN COUNCIL WARDS IN MARCH:

I note on pages 16-18 of the consultation document for this review that the March Town Council Wards are named as follows:

MARCH CENTRAL WARD
MARCH SOUTH WARD
MARCH EAST WARD
MARCH NORTH WARD
MARCH EASTWOOD WARD
MARCH RURAL NORTH WARD
MARCH RURAL SOUTH WARD

My understanding is that a polling district and polling place review does not have the power to change the names of wards, even at Town Council level. My reading of the names proposed for the new March Town Council Wards by the LGBCE (referenced to the official map) and authorised in law by the Cambridgeshire (Electoral Changes)

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| | <p>Order 2016 (SI 1222 (2016)) do not include the word “MARCH” and that the Town Council wards should therefore be named as follows: CENTRAL WARD SOUTH WARD EAST WARD NORTH WARD EASTWOOD WARD RURAL NORTH WARD RURAL SOUTH WARD</p> <p>This decision as to Ward Names by the LGBCE is sensible as it will ensure that wards which are not co-terminous at District and at Town level do not share the same name (Specifically relating to “March East” District Council Ward and “March North” District Council Ward, which are not co-terminous with “East” Town Council Ward and “North” Town Council Ward respectively). I therefore request that, in the Official Ward names for Town Council Wards in March, the practice currently in place in Wisbech, Chatteris and Whittlesey is followed and the name of the Town be excluded from the Official Town Council Ward names.</p> |
| Councillor Stephen Court | <p>BB1, BB2 and BB3 The GER has easy access for pedestrians and a car park and being a social club has big rooms to use. The Community Centre in Station Road a good choice as it has a car park and easy for pedestrians to use. St Johns Church Hall suitable but parking may be difficult. Westwood School could be used as an alternative polling station for the March North Ward. Two of the polling stations are on the same road – Station Road at either end.</p> |
| Councillor Carol Cox | <p>EA – The Robert Hall Centre Polling station central to Clarkson Ward, has disabled access, easy parking and is a suitable walking distance.</p> |
| Councillor Sam Clark | <p>RC – Newton Village Hall No issues – suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible</p> |
| Councillor Michael Humphrey | <p>RA – Gorefield Community Hall No issues – suitable, good access and parking</p> |
| Councillor Simon King | <p>EB1 (College of West Anglia) and EB2 (Awdry House) No issues - both suitable and central to the ward.</p> |
| Councillor David Mason | <p>DC1 – St Andrews Parish Hall This location has been used for a number of years satisfactorily and is still central for all wards within the new district.</p> |
| Councillors David and Christine Ambrose Smith | <p>1F1, 1E1 and 1G1 – Littleport East, Littleport West and Black Horse Drove All are in suitable locations and the buildings are suitable – large enough, easy access, facilities on site, parking available nearby and voting areas easily accessible. Slight negative for the elderly/inform at Black Horse Drove due to the community centre being located some</p> |

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| | distance from many houses in this long hamlet and there is a lack of defined pathways. Traffic is relatively light however, and there is no better alternative. |
| Benwick Parish Council | CA – Benwick Village Hall No issues – suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible. |
| Chatteris Town Council | AA (Chatteris Library), AC (Masonic Hall) and AD (Emmanuel Church Hall) No issues - suitable, easily accessible and well known. AB – Quaker Way Residents Community Room Suitable as is King Edward Community Centre, but Kingsfield Primary School is not suitable due to parking problems and disruption to the school |
| Doddington Parish Council | FA – Doddington Village Hall No issues - suitable and has been used for many years, easy to locate and accessible – no suitable alternatives known. |
| Manea Parish Council | HA – Manea Village Hall No issues - suitable and in village centre, easy to locate and accessible - no suitable alternatives known. |
| Mepal Parish Council | JC1 – Mepal Village Hall No issues – suitable, central location, good size, easy to locate and easily accessible. |
| Newton-in-the-Isle Parish Council | RC – Newton-in-the-Isle Village Hall No issues – suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible. |
| Wimblington Parish Council | KA – Wimblington Village Hall No issues – suitable, easily located in centre of village with good access and parking. |
| Parson Drove Parish Council | PA – Parson Drove Village Hall No issues - suitable, in centre of village with ample car parking spaces |
| Wisbech St Mary Parish Council | GD and PD – Oliver Twist Councillors commented that it was noted that since the Guyhirn Village Hall was no longer available The Oliver Twist Country Inn had been used and the School was another possibility. Otherwise no comments. |
| Wisbech Town Council | Members of the Town Council indicated that they are generally supportive of all of the suggestions/proposals within the consultation document. However, the council is of the opinion that with regard to the Polling Place for elections in the Staithe ward (Polling District EF), Walsoken Village Hall (which is not located within the ward but in Polling District EC (Kirkgate ward)) should not even be considered as an option for a Polling Place for elections in the Staithe ward; Meadowgate School (which is in the Staithe ward) should be the only consideration in that regard. The opinion of Wisbech Town Council is that Meadowgate School is not only located within the Staithe ward but is situated ideally for access by voters who reside in that ward; the use of Walsoken Village Hall as a Polling Place for elections in the Staithe ward would, because of being located in the Kirkgate ward, cause confusion for voters. |
| Witcham Parish Council | J11 – Witcham Village Hall No issues – suitable, village hall is best accessible place in Witcham, large enough and centre of village. |

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| | Anticipate village hall will always be available subject to being booked with plenty of notice and is suitable for people with disabilities. |
| Alderman Jacobs School | DA1 – Currently Alderman Jacobs School No issues - an adequate polling station and has access and space. |
| Mr B R Darlow | GC – Chapel Cottage No issues – suitable and on the main road through the village, easy to locate and accessible. The address has been used as a polling station for over 30 years with no problems, it is on the main road through the village so you go right past it. No suitable alternatives known. |
| Hayley Winn, Cambridgeshire County Council | AA – Chatteris Library No issues - suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible. |
| Ruth Ingram, Christchurch Recreation Ground Charity | GE – Christchurch Community Centre No issues – suitable, has a large car park with disabled parking and is easily accessible – no suitable alternatives known. |
| Nicola Brooks, The Eastrea Centre | DF – The Eastrea Centre No issues – suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible. Large, comfortable, clean and tidy venue. Meeting room ideal for polling. |
| Lisa Smart Clarion Housing | BA2 (Fleming Court) and DB (Quinion Close) No issues – both suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible as designed to meet older peoples needs. There are other schemes in other towns which could also be used for polling stations (Wisbech, Chatteris, Wimblington and Leverington) |
| Michael Humphrey, Gorefield Playing Field Association | RA – Gorefield Community Hall No issues – suitable, easy to locate, good access and parking. |
| S Brown, Ivy Leaf Club | DA2 and DA3 – Ivy Leaf Club No issues – suitable, easy to locate, has easy access for abled and disabled plus ample car parking |
| Pamela Manley, Leverington Village Hall | RB1 – Leverington Village Hall No issues – suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible. Previously used successfully as a polling station. |
| J McPherson, Meadowgate Academy | EF – Meadowgate Academy Café Feels it is unsuitable as using the Academy stops students accessing facilities and education and there are alternatives. It is not easy to locate as it is down a dead end lane which narrows to single file, pupils walk down the lane and twice a day it is not accessible. The elderly, infirm and disabled would have difficulty using the polling place as there is no parking on site, it is a significant distance to walk from off site parking. Would need a risk assessment on Meadowgate Lane and would not allow access between 08.30-09.30 and 02.30-03.30. The Academy site is not a local authority site. |
| Patricia Pickering, Manea Village Hall | HA – Manea Village Hall No issues – suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible. |

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| Michelle Naylor, March Community Centre | BB1 – March Community Centre No issues – suitable, central to town, easy to locate and easily accessible. |
| Les Mills, March Town Cricket Club | BC2 – March Town Cricket Club No issues – suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible. Well signed premises with a large car park and access for disabled. Excellent facilities for polling station staff. |
| Anna Palmer and Liz Tierney, Ormiston Families | BA3 and BA5 – March District Childrens Centre No issues – adequate polling place which has good access, but limited parking and busy during school opening and closing. Easy to locate and easily accessible. |
| Christine Carr, Murrow Village Hall | PC – Murrow Village Hall No issues – suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible |
| Louise Hayes, Parson Drove Village Hall | PA – Parson Drove Village Hall No issues – suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible. |
| Chris Stevens, Wisbech Community Development Trust | EG1 and EG2 – Oasis Community Centre No issues – suitable, in the heart of the Waterlees Ward which is the most deprived in Cambridgeshire and polling station has to be easily accessed by all. The polling place is on bus route 66, easy to locate and easily accessible. |
| Sheila Otter, Robert Hall Centre | EA – Robert Hall Centre No issues – suitable, central, easy to locate and easily accessible. The building meets all requirements under the Disabilities Act, it has good facilities for the polling staff, it is warm when required to be and there is car parking for staff vehicles. |
| Janet Sirr, Our Lady of Good Counsel & St Peter Catholic Church | BA1 – Roman Catholic Church Hall No issues – suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible. |
| Pauline Richards, St Johns Ambulance | DD & DI – St Johns Ambulance Whittlesey No issues – suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible. The building has been used as a polling station in the past. |
| Jane Groome, St Marys Church Westry | BB4 and BC4 – St Marys Church Hall No issues – suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible. |
| Mr D Hazell, St Raphael Club | ED – Wisbech St Raphael Disabled Club No issues – suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible. It is a disabled club and has all requirements for disabled. It has a car park next to the premises and has been used as a polling place over the years. |
| Angela Weldon, Thorney Toll Village Hall | PE – Thorney Toll Village Hall No issues – suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible. Ease of access in centre of village with parking. |
| Mrs B A Rowell, Tydd St Giles Community Centre | RD – Tydd St Giles Community Centre No issues – suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible by all. |
| Jakki Racey, Whittlesey Library | DC2 – Whittlesey Library No issues – suitable, central location which is easy to locate, car park and easy access. |

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| Dave Dobson, Wisbech Rugby Club | EE – Wisbech Rugby Club No issues – adequate polling place, easy to locate and easily accessible with ramp and car parking. |
| Fay G Allen | EC – Walsoken West Ward No issues – suitable, easy to locate and easily accessible. |
| Frederick Gerstner | DC1 (St Andrews Parish Hall), DC2 (Whittlesey Library) and DC3 (St Andrews Parish Hall) No issues – both suitable with good facilities, historically well known and easy to locate and easily accessible. There are car parking facilities near by. |

Received after deadline for response:

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| Councillor Mrs Mayor | DA1, DA2 and DA3 Agree with Polling stations to be sited at The Straw Bear Public House and The Ivy Leaf Club for districts DA1 and 2 - If possible the following streets to be included within the DA1 Polling Station at The Straw Bear rather than at the Ivy Leaf Club - Otago Road, Otago Close and Whiteacres. The 3rd Polling Station to be sited at the New Town Council Office (The Old Police Station) in Queen Street, rather than the Library. However, if the New Town council Office alterations are not complete before May 2019 to revert to The Library. |
| Councillor Mrs Davis | KA – Wimblington Parish Hall No issues – suitable, central location with car park and wheelchair access. |