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Agenda Supplement 1

Dear Councillor

ORDINARY COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 13TH DECEMBER, 2023

I am now able to enclose, for consideration on Wednesday, 13th December, 2023 meeting of the Ordinary Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No	Item
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7.	<u>Leaders and Chairs Reports and Written Questions</u> (Pages 3 - 16)
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Written questions to be tabled at the Committee meeting.
Appendix F – FAIR Committee report to follow.

9.	<u>Pay Award 2023-24</u> (Pages 17 - 22)
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10.	<u>Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places</u> (Pages 23 - 68)
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14.	<u>Request for dispensation for attendance</u> (Pages 69 - 70)
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Yours sincerely

Chief Executive

Encs

05/12/23

Agenda Item 7

Written Questions will be tabled at the meeting and appended to the minutes.

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Appendix A

Committee(s): Ordinary Council	Date: 13 th December 2023
Subject: Leaders Report, Cllr Barry Aspinell	

Since I have occupied the Chair in the Leader's Room, I have become rapidly aware of the increased demand and expectations from within and outside this Council on the Leader of a local authority. This has increased dramatically since the last time I had the honour of holding this position. Below are a few of the issues I have been dealing with in the last few months. There are, of course, many more; quite a few that cannot be aired in public session at this moment due to commercial sensitivity and the waiting of planning applications being submitted.

Brentwood Enterprise Park

I attended, along with Cllrs Philip Mynott and Martin Cuthbert a presentation of the Brentwood Enterprise Park. This project is nearing its full planning submission. Many members on both sides of the Chamber also took the opportunity of a site visit, seeing the projected proposed development from the various angles and positions. Works are expected to commence once the planning procedure has been completed.

Brentwood School

I attended a presentation by the Chair of Governors and Bursar of Brentwood School to discuss their aspirational plans for future development. These plans will be submitted as individual applications but the school wished us to have an overview of their ambitions. Obviously I cannot give an opinion under our rules of engagement covering planning but I look forward to the submission of the plans so that our Planning Committee members can make a decision at the appropriate time.

Local Highways Panels

Whilst this panel is a County function, Brentwood Borough Council members and Parish Council representatives have historically enjoyed being part of the decision-making process on behalf of their local communities. Sadly, that is no longer the case and for some reason known only to themselves, the Conservatives at County Hall have taken the decision to allow individual Chairs of Local Highways Panels to decide who will, or will not, attend those meetings. In Brentwood's case, attendance by our Borough Councillors and Parish Representatives is no longer permitted. Therefore, the current status of membership for the Brentwood LHP is just four County Council members.

I personally believe this decision has total disregard for local democracy and accountability and offers no transparency for residents.

Staffing Levels

As part of discussions of the #OneTeam Programme Board it has become increasingly obvious to the elected members of both Brentwood and Rochford that

staffing levels in both councils need to be increased. In Brentwood, we will be addressing those areas we believe require resource increase as a matter of priority.

Our Democratic Services and Facilities Management functions are just two areas that require urgent attention and I will also be discussing other areas that we believe additional resource input is required with the Chief Executive.

'Brentwood : Our Borough'

It has been a long-held concern by many members of this Chamber that our communication channels with residents have been based solely on social media platforms. Now those members are part of this joint administration we have been able to address the situation and I'm very pleased to say that the inaugural edition of 'Brentwood – Our Borough' magazine is being delivered through every door in our borough. I thank those officers involved in this project for their efforts in producing such a high quality, informative publication.

Discussions with Essex Leaders

Following discussions with Leaders throughout Essex, the impact of the Government's decision to stop accommodation funding for asylum seekers and refugees has been devastating. These families are/were being housed in various hotels throughout the County. Thanks to the Government's decision responsibility for paying for the accommodation of these people and their future wellbeing is now being undertaken by the authorities in which are living. This is not just a financial burden, which in itself is considerable, there is also the human impact that it will have on those seeking safe refuge here. One of our neighbouring councils has families that were integrating into their community, many had found local employment and their children were attending local schools. They have now received the devastating news that they are being relocated to a town that was able to accommodate their entire family / community. That town is Inverness. This is an extremely serious situation that I am sure will receive considerable discussion at the next Essex Leaders Meeting and the newly formed South Essex Councils meeting.

Appendix B

Committee(s): Ordinary Council	Date: 13 th December 2023
Subject: Chairs report for Audit & Scrutiny Committee	
Committee Chair: Cllr Darryl Sankey	

The Audit & Scrutiny Committee met on the 26th September 2023 with the updates set out below:

Mr Willis explained that the Draft Accounts of 21/22 were completed and published some time ago. However, the audit of those draft accounts are currently taking place. The timetable for the Auditor's Opinion was September. This will now be delayed, as agreed with the External Auditors. It is unknown when the 22/23 Accounts will be audited. Focus is on achieving the previous year's audit. This is due to Nationwide issues with external auditors.

A report gave an update on the Council's treasury management activity and performance for the period April to July 2023. The Council's Treasury Management Strategy was agreed at Council in March and places financial risk as its primary consideration. The Council uses large banks with reputation in the industry, government agencies or counterparties advised by our treasury advisers.

A report recommended to Council that an Independent Person (IP) is appointed to the Council's Audit & Scrutiny Committee (for audit business), in line with best practice. This was agreed by the committee.

A report and recommendations of the Formal Complaints and Performance Indicators Working Group were considered by the Audit & Scrutiny Committee and were agreed.

The Committee considered and agreed the 2023/24 Scrutiny work programme with any additions agreed by the committee at the meeting.

The Audit & Scrutiny Committee met on the 14th November 2023 with the updates set out below:

The committee noted the progress made against the 2023/24 internal audit plan and the findings from the audit completed since the last Committee meeting. The Committee approved an escalation process for the non-completion of audit recommendations where the escalation process was to require the responsible officers for recommendations that have surpassed two implementation dates (the 233 original and one revised date) to attend the Audit and Scrutiny Committee to

provide an update on progress and an explanation for not implementing the recommendation by the agreed dates.

A report introduced the Draft Audit Results Reports for the 2021-22 Accounts prepared by the Council's external auditors EY. The annual audit expressed an opinion on the Council's financial statements and addressed current statutory and regulatory requirements. The Draft Audit Result Report contained the external auditor's findings related to the areas of audit emphasis, their views on the Council's accounting policies and judgements and their finding on material internal controls.

A report set out the findings of the Council's treasury management advisors, Link, in respect of a review of the Treasury Management Strategy. The Council has, over recent years, embarked upon an ambitious capital investment programme that has necessitated significant treasury management activity, including sizeable borrowing. A report was commissioned from the local government experts in this field (Link) to report back on this activity – both in terms of the Council's performance and its current compliance with best practice. Members welcomed this report, in particular its transparency, clarity and usefulness and would like to see this level of transparency reflected in all future reports. Members also requested that debt management was added to the risk register. Officers confirmed debt management would be included in the next Strategic Risk Register before Members.

The Committee was updated on the Council's treasury management activity and performance for the period April to October 2023. In line with the scrutiny of the Council's Treasury Management activity and performance in 2023/24 in compliance with CIPFA's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice (the CIPFA Code 2021 Edition) and generally accepted good practice.

An update was provided on the Insurance & Risk Management Strategy and the status of the Councils 2023/24 Strategic Risk Register.

A report provided a summary and detail of the current financial contributions the Council has secured through section 106 agreements from new developments for affordable housing and public open space works. In addition, the report set out the proposed future plans for s106 Agreement processes and procedures. Mr Summers gave assurance that no monies had been lost through S106 to the Council and this information would be included in future reports. Mr Summers also advised that more detailed information would be available following the review of all S106 processes and procedures taking place as part of the Planning Improvement Plan.

Appendix C

Committee(s): Ordinary Council	Date: 13 December 2023
Subject: Chairs Report for Planning Committee	
Committee Chair: Cllr Philip Mynott	

The Planning Committee met on 21 November 2023. In addition to planning applications determined, the following items were debated and approved:

Planning Appeals Update (July – October 2023)

A report provided the committee with a summary of recent planning appeal decisions in the borough. It formed part of a regular series of updates to the committee for information. Between July and October 2023 there were six appeals decided. Out of those appeals, five were dismissed (83%) and one was allowed (17%). So far this financial year (2023/24) (i.e. since 1 April 2023), there have been 13 appeals decided, 12 were dismissed (92%) and one was allowed (8%).

Response to Essex Parking Standards Consultation

The Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA), consisting of 12 local planning authorities across Essex, including Brentwood, has prepared guidance on the updated Essex Parking Standards. Parking Standards are referred to in local plans and the Essex County Council Local Transport Plan. The guidance sets parking for different vehicle types, design and location, dimensions for parking and a suggested quantum for different types of development.

A consultation on the draft document commenced on 16 October and concluded on 4 December 2023. A response to the consultation was approved by the committee.

The current Essex Parking Standards guidance (EPOA) was approved by Brentwood Borough Council in 2009. Therefore, it requires an update as there have been changes in planning legislation and policy, the introduction of Garden Communities, and a greater awareness of the need to manage the impact of developments on local communities and the environment.

Upcoming Committee Meetings

The Planning Committee has had a busy period recently with several larger schemes being determined, including Local Plan allocations. At the time of publishing this update, by the end of the year the committee will be determining applications for the two largest strategic allocations in the borough at Dunton Hills Garden Village (outline application, 29 November 2023) and Brentwood Enterprise Park (detailed application, 12 December 2023).

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Appendix D

Committee(s): Ordinary Council	Date: 13 th December 2023
Subject: Chairs Report for Clean & Green Committee	
Committee Chair: Cllr Barry Aspinell	

Lower Thames Crossing

Lying adjacent to the Brentwood Enterprise Park is the proposed route of the Lower Thames Crossing, the purpose of which is to alleviate congestion at the Dartford Crossings and is set for a decision next spring (dependant on the date of the General Election, or not).

At a presentation I attended with planning colleagues, along with officers, we listened to the proposals and I am pleased to say that National Highways are taking the climate emergency that we in Brentwood have already declared seriously. Not because Brentwood has taken this step, but because they are committed to carbon reduction at all levels of this route – in construction of the concrete and steel that is needed in the provision of the 34 bridges that will be required and in the equipment necessary for construction. Their earth moving equipment is planned to be driven by hydrogen and/or electric along with many other carbon reducing measures.

Hole Farm Community Woodland

A further example of National Highways climate initiatives is their purchase of Hole Farm, Great Warley, which will be leased to Forestry England in perpetuity and in conjunction with Thames Chase, it is intended to plant over 150,000 new trees. This planting will be undertaken by Thames Chase, in partnership with Brentwood's Woodland Management team. I asked if there was room to discuss a solar panel farm and they agreed to be in touch to explore this idea.

High Street Toilets

The previous Conservative Administration closed the High Street toilets permanently due to a fire breaking out and various acts of anti-social behaviour. Unfortunately, no plan was put in place to refurbish and re-open them in the future.

Responding to residents' requests that this valued council facility is re-opened, a programme of refurbishment and cleansing has been put in place. This is nearing its completion, with the installation of some new equipment. A dedicated attendant has been allocated to maintain the facilities as well as undertaking additional High Street cleansing.

Fly-tipping

Fly-tipping throughout the borough has seen an increase this year so this administration has risen to the challenge and has removed more than 200 additional fly tips compared to the same period last year. I attended a public meeting in

Navestock, where the village hall was packed. Residents expressed their frustrations and anger over the deterioration of their community due to this increased criminal behaviour. Officers of Brentwood Council's Waste Management and Enforcement teams were present, along with the Police. Together we assured those residents everything is, and will be done to reduce their concerns considerably by introducing various means, including a speedier attendance to fly-tips. To this end, this council is looking at appropriate new equipment to deal with these situations, which will be taken to our budget setting meeting this year. Also, to assist in reducing this behaviour is the introduction of additional CCTV cameras to cover various sites within the Navestock area, which has only been possible due to the excellent work carried out by our enforcement team in acquiring additional funding to facilitate their purchase.

Navestock Parish Council have also funded four additional cameras that can be moved to various hot spots. Our enforcement team patrol the area daily along with Essex Police Rural Team.

I met a couple of weeks ago with concerned residents of Navestock and the Parish Council Chair to discuss ways to improve their community and agreed that there would be a regular monthly communication provided to their group, who in turn would relay the information to the remainder of the village. They agreed with our Enforcement Team's camera installation and location and also that the Council's proposals to introduce a smaller, more appropriate vehicle to remove fly tips was a sensible way forward. They recognised that their village is just one small area of the borough and that the efforts the Council are putting in are disproportionate to the wider borough area, but it was also acknowledged that if we can, together, resolve this issue to a satisfactory level it would be a system we could put in place elsewhere within the borough, i.e., Warley and other rural areas that experience similar criminal behaviour.

Climate Emergency – Success

Due to this administration's decision to declare a Climate Emergency for Brentwood, rather than ignoring the issue and hoping it goes away, we have started the process of introducing measures to reduce our carbon emissions. To that end, the Clean & Green Committee are being asked to change fuel used in our fleet to Green Diesel, which has an immediate effect on carbon emissions, but we won't rest there, we will look at all alternative fuels and means of carrying out the valued services to the residents of Brentwood whilst also respecting our environment.

Solar Panels are agreed to be installed on the Brentwood Centre roof and additional EV chargers have been commissioned. Contractors have informed me that by the time of reading this report they will be installed in King Georges and Chatham Way car parks. Additionally, we are in contact with other climate emergency groups throughout the County and beyond to discuss best practice and to implement successful measures rolled out elsewhere. To this end, a data collection process is being undertaken and our Environment Officer is suggesting best practice will be for all committees to take into consideration the climate change impact on decisions they make. This is an obvious issue regarding planning, and I know that our officers and members deal with this regularly, but we must be vigilant and every application

needs to be addressed in this way, along with decisions taken through our other spending committees. Additionally, I would ask the Chair of Audit & Scrutiny to take on the task of spot-checking our committee decisions to ensure compliance.

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Appendix E

Committee(s): Ordinary Council	Date: 13 th December 2023
Subject: Chairs Report for Housing, health and Communities Committee	
Committee Chair: Cllr Dr Barrett	

Housing Grounds Maintenance Review

Grounds Maintenance services to the Housing Stock has historically been provided by the depot. However, the last known service level agreement (SLA) was drawn up in 1991, over 30 years ago.

Being that the service level agreement is dated, it has become difficult to accurately note the time and activity on site and the original requirements have somewhat changed.

This means, at present, we are unable to recharge the service charge to Leaseholders which is impacting on the income to the Housing Revenue Account.

As such, a decision was taken to review the specification of works to all housing sites, including garages, amenity greens and communal gardens.

In order to price against the specification, the depot requested a bill of quantities that housing was unable to provide due to a lack of mapping on site.

An external mapping company has since been appointed to conduct an exercise to log all boundaries of HRA land as well as note the number and size of greens, hedges, and shrubs etc.

Once this is received, the depot will be in a position to reprice for the whole HRA contract and importantly break it down site by site to allow Housing to charge the correct service charges to both leaseholders and Tenants.

Brentwood Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The Brentwood Health and Wellbeing Strategy sets out the five-year plan to improve the health and wellbeing of residents in Brentwood and reduce the health inequalities at every stage of residents' lives.

The Strategy sets out the partnership approach to influence the wider determinants of health to make the biggest difference in our communities. The Strategy has been co-produced by board members, those with lived experience and informed by what the relevant data is telling us.

In developing the Strategy, the Health and Wellbeing Board considered the Health and wellbeing outcomes it would want to see in Brentwood, how it links to other local strategies and plans, data and insight from partners and feedback from residents

and those with lived experience. It is also important to recognise the needs that emerged from the COVID 19 pandemic.

Housing Debt Write Off

In July 2023 the Council introduced a new Former Tenant Debt Recovery Agency to assist with the collection of all former tenant debts. This triggered a review of all outstanding debts.

Following this review, a number of accounts have been identified as requiring write offs for debts where all avenues of recovery have been exhausted, the debt is statute barred (6 year old debt) rendering it unrecoverable for legal action or the debtor has passed away and there is no money in the estate to cover the debts.

Leasehold Major Works Payment Options

In 2023, we saw an increase in section 20 notification of works to leaseholders and some of these were anticipating bills in excess of £20,000. Although we reviewed the Leasehold payment options policy in 2022, we have come to realise that due to the level of bills, the timescales attached to some of the payment options, may not be viable for a high number of leaseholders.

In addition to the above, we have also been approached by a higher than expected numbers of leaseholders asking if we will buy their property back due to financial concerns further highlighting that residents are struggling with the cost of living.

In order to assist with the financial pressures, we are proposing to review the payment options policy one year early to include additional options which we hope will ease the pressure.

Rent Setting 2024 / 2025

A report will seek the committee to approve recommendations on the proposed rent and service charge levels for 2024/2025.

The recommendations will be considered by Finance, Assets, Investment & Recovery Committee when the final recommendation will be made as part of the budget setting process. The final decision will be made by Ordinary Council on 28th February 2024.



COMMITTEE TITLE: ORDINARY COUNCIL

DATE: 13 December 2023

REPORT TITLE:	Employee Pay Award 2023/24
REPORT OF:	Jonathan Stephenson – Chief Executive of Brentwood Borough Council & Rochford District Council

REPORT SUMMARY

The following report sets out the local pay offer for 2023/24 for employees of Brentwood Borough Council.

SUPPORT ING INFORMATION

1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Brentwood Borough Council is not part of the NJC and pay is set locally, however over a number of years we have reached agreement on the local pay award, that has mirrored that of the national pay award. On 1 March 2023 the Council agreed to include a 4% pay award within the 2023/24 Budget for Brentwood employees, with a view to wait for the outcome of the nationally agreed pay award, before looking to consult and implement.

National Pay Negotiations 2023/24

There are three separate pay negotiations being undertaken this year for the first time, Chief Executives (ALACE), Chief Officer (JNC) and Officers (NJC).

National Joint Council (NJC)

The National Joint Council (NJC) determines pay as well as terms and conditions of employment for Local government services' workers. It has 70 members: 12 on the employers' side and 58 on the trade union side.

In 1997, the NJC for Local Government Services agreed a national framework with potential for local modification to suit local service requirements. Known as The Single Status Agreement, these pay and conditions of service agreements are published in the Green Book.

They help councils develop a framework for their roles and responsibilities as employers. This covers the relationships between council employers and their employees, including individual rights and collective arrangements.

Negotiations for the National Local Government pay 2023 have been ongoing between the national employees and the trade unions throughout the year, and a full and final offer was agreed by the Unions on the 1 November 2023, as set out below:

- with effect from 1 April 2023, an increase of £1,925 on all NJC pay points up to scp 43
- with effect from 1 April 2023, all locally determined pay points above the maximum of the pay spine (scp 43) but graded below chief officer, should be increased by 3.88%

Chief Officers (ALACE & JNC)

A Chief Officer is an employee of the Leadership Team which comprises of the Chief Executive, 3 Strategic Directors and 9 Directors. These Chief Officers work across the Strategic Partnership with this Council and Rochford District Council.

The salaries and any other applicable payments are shared equally with Rochford District Council.

The Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Chief Executives and Chief Officers of Local Authorities is the national negotiating body for the pay and conditions of service of chief executives and chief officers in England and Wales. The Authorities' Side consists of elected members nominated by the Local Government Association and the Welsh Local Government Association. The Staff Side consists of chief executives nominated by the Association of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (ALACE). ALACE is registered as an independent trade union.

On the 5 May 2023, agreement was reached on a pay award for those officers within scope of the JNC for Chief Officers of local authorities. The agreement was an increase of 3.50 per cent with effect from 1 April 2023. This was applied, as set out in the contracts of employment for Chief Officers, as part of the partnership arrangements.

On the 1 November 2023, agreement was reached in terms of the pay award to be applied to Chief Executives. The agreement was an increase of 3.50 per cent with effect from 1 April 2023. This was applied, as set out in the contracts of employment for Chief Officers, as part of the partnership arrangements.

Brentwood Pay Offer 2023/24

Considering the nationally agreed pay award and the 4% agreed at Council on the 1 March 2023, to cover the cost of living pay award. Jonathan Stephenson, Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and the Opposition Group Leader, used delegated powers to seek agreement to offer the below local pay award as there would be no additional impact on our budget, which was confirmed by Tim Willis, Director of Resources.

Pay Award 2023/24:

- With effect from 1 April 2023 an increase of £1925 on all Brentwood pay points up to scp 46
- with effect from 1 April 2023, pay points above scp 47 but graded below chief officer, should be increased by 3.88%

This offer was then proposed to Unison, the Council's recognised Union, to which they consulted with their members until the 24 November 2023. On the 27 November 2023, Unison advised us that members had accepted the above offer and this will now be applied in December's pay, with back dated monies being paid as appropriate from the 1 April 2023.

Pay Policy

The Localism Act 2011 requires councils to produce and publish a Pay Policy Statement. According to the Act and statutory guidance published in 2012 and 2013, the statement should include the local authority's policy on specific aspects of chief officers' remuneration: remuneration on recruitment, increases and additions to remuneration, use of performance-related pay and bonuses, termination payments, and transparency arrangements.

Brentwood's Pay Policy was last updated in March 2023 and will be updated to reflect the revised pay scales for 2023/24.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

By following the national pay offer, it is expected this will create parity and equality for employees, not only for the strategic partnership between Brentwood and Rochford but across all other Essex Authorities as well.

National Living Wage (NLW) is currently £10.42 (age 23 and over), this will increase to £11.44 from the 1 April 2024 and so the proposal to apply £1,925 up to scp 46, is to create some headroom to meet current NLW requirements on our lowest pay scales.

Grade/ SCP	Annual Salary	Monthly Salary	Hourly Rate	NLW 2023	With increase of proposed £1,925	NLW 2024 (age 23 and over)
A/11	19,969	1,664	10.35	10.42	11.35	11.44
B/12	20,330	1,694	10.53	10.42	11.53	11.44

The table shows that an increase of £1,925 will give further headroom to meet NLW requirements for 2023, however consideration for employees on Grade A

will need to be reviewed, and NLW will need to be applied from the 1 April 2024 for employees on this Grade.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

Relevant risks in not applying the national pay award locally:

- National Living Wage inconsistencies.
- Staff retention and recruitment.
- Pay awards in comparable sectors e.g. NHS.
- Staff morale.
- Cost of living and inflationary increases for employees.

4.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

Staff have been advised of the National Pay Award 2023/24 and that a local offer had been put to Unison. Unison was asked to consult with its members and return a position on the offer at their earliest opportunity and as soon as the consultation concluded on the 24 November 2023. Of which they did and confirmed that members had accepted the offer on the 27 November 2023.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

On 1 March 2023 the Council agreed to include a 4% pay award within the 2023/24 Budget and therefore the cost of living pay award to be implemented can be met within resources.

Name & Title: Tim Willis, Director – Resources & Section 151 Officer
Tel & Email: 01277 312500 / tim.willis@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

6.0 LEGAL/GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

The are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Name & Title: Claire Mayhew, Acting Joint Director – People & Governance & Monitoring Officer
Tel & Email 01277 312500 / Claire.mayhew@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

7.0 ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

Ensuring the Council maintains a healthy pay scale position, will continue to create growth and prosperity across the organisation.

Name & Title: Phil Drane, Director - Place
Tel & Email 01277 312500 / phil.drane@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

8.0 EQUALITY & HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful.
- b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- c. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not include tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that ‘marriage and civil partnership’ is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

The proposals in this report will not have a disproportionate adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

Name & Title: Kim Anderson, Corporate Manager - Communities, Leisure and Health

Tel & Email 01277 312500 kim.anderson@brentwood.gov.uk

9.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

Name & Title: Henry Muss, Sustainability & Climate Officer

Tel & Email 01277 312500 henry.muss@brentwood.gov.uk

REPORT AUTHOR:

Name: Nichola Mann

Title: Acting Joint Director of People & Governance

Phone: 01268 312609

Email: Nichola.mann@brentwood.gov.uk

APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Ordinary Council	2 November 2022

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ORDINARY COUNCIL

13 DECEMBER 2023

REPORT TITLE:	Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places
REPORT OF:	Jonathan Stephenson – Chief Executive & Electoral Registration Officer Carole Tatton-Bennett – Corporate Manager – Electoral Services

REPORT SUMMARY

This report details the responses received to the recent public consultation on the review of polling districts and polling places, evaluates the issues raised and proposes an amended schedule with polling district boundary maps for Members' approval.

RECOMMENDATION

- R1. Approve the Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places, as appended to the report, to take effect from 4 January 2024.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Council is required to keep polling districts and polling places under review and make amendments where necessary. The recent review of the ward structure in the Brentwood Borough by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has made changes that will affect where some people go to vote.

This review sets out revised polling districts and polling places within the new ward structure drawn up by the LGBCE. It cannot amend any of the ward boundaries that have been put in place and given Government approval.

1. A revised schedule of polling districts and polling places needs to be put in place at the earliest available opportunity to ensure proper planning of the all-out Borough elections in May 2024. This includes providing information to the Returning Officer so that he can initiate plans and book and staff polling stations. It will also assist political parties and prospective candidates with the planning of their campaign activities.
2. Approval of the schedule at this meeting will allow for the publication of a revised Register of Electors in January 2024, as well as scheduled early notification to all electors of any changes to their polling station and voting arrangements.
3. The Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places before Members takes into consideration issues identified during the public consultation and subsequent cross-party discussions. The aim has been to ensure that all electors in the Borough have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. Particular attention has been given to accessibility issues, including the duties placed on the Returning Officer under the Elections Act 2022.
4. When determining the Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places, the Council is required to have regard to the recommendations of the Returning Officer. His response is attached at Appendix B.

Issues identified and analysis of options available

5. A public consultation was held between 9 September and 23 October 2023. Representations were received from two local residents and on behalf of Brentwood Access Group, Ingatestone & Fryerning Parish Council, Brentwood Conservative Group, Brentwood Labour Group and Brentwood Liberal Democrats. Appendix C.
6. The responses were analysed and clarified to determine any common themes and to identify particular proposals that had attracted adverse comment.
7. As well as the positive feed-back from members of Brentwood Access, there was wide cross-party support for the majority of proposals within the draft schedule.
8. Particular issues were raised within the following wards:

Brentwood North – Doddinghurst Road Church (the existing polling station) is not central to the Sawyers Hall Polling District. Alternative venues were put forward and it was further suggested that electors in the immediate vicinity of Doddinghurst Road Church could be transferred to the neighbouring polling district and vote at St George’s Church Hall.

Brentwood South – the lack of a suitable polling station venue within the Warley Mount Polling District. There was opposition to the proposal that electors should vote at The Nightingale Centre.

Herongate, Ingrave & West Horndon – the reallocation of part of Great Warley to this ward. This is a consequence of the LGBCE ward boundary review and not within the scope of this polling district and polling place review.

Hutton North – the proposal to merge the Long Ridings Polling District into a new Poplar Polling District and cease use of Long Ridings School as a polling station. There were comments both for and against the proposal.

Hutton South – the proposal to cease use of Three Arch Bridge Community Hall (Maple Hall) as a polling station and move to the Knights Way Centre. Additionally, a suggestion that electors in Brocksparkwood estate should vote at St Stephen’s Church Hall.

Ingatstone, Fryerning & Mountnessing – the proposal that electors in the Heybridge estate should vote at Inगतstone and Fryerning Community Hall on a permanent basis. It was suggested that an alternative venue should be used, such as Inगतstone Library or the United Reformed Church.

Shenfield – a suggestion that the ward should be divided into two polling districts with electors voting at an alternative venue in the north of the ward.

Warley – a suggestion that The Galleries should be included in the Clements Park PD and that electors voting at the Christ Church Centre should be transferred to an alternative venue closer to Keys Hall and the new housing development.

9. Officers made enquiries regarding the availability of alternate venues that had been suggested and the Council’s Health and Safety Adviser was asked to assess their suitability.
10. Once all the responses had been considered and evaluated, cross-party discussions were held to seek consensus.

Conclusions from cross-party discussions

11. It was agreed that the Long Ridings Polling District should be retained due to the needs of the community it served and the convenience of the current polling station for these electors. Following discussions with Long Ridings Primary School, it was confirmed that the main hall at the school would be

made available for all elections. This would overcome the issues raised by the Returning Officer. Poplar Polling District would therefore operate as a single polling station. **Long Ridings Polling District to be retained, Long Ridings Primary School to continue as polling station but larger hall to be used.**

12. Similarly, a resolution was sought to assist the electors in the Heybridge area. Unfortunately, the alternative venues put forward by the Ingatestone & Fryerning Parish Council proved to be either unavailable or to have other issues regarding their suitability as a polling station. An alternative which evolved from discussions was for electors from Heybridge to vote at Mountnessing Village Hall. This venue has excellent facilities, sufficient capacity to operate as a double station, good parking provision and is on the bus route from Heybridge. Although the location is outside of the polling district, the Returning Officer has no objection to the proposal. As a consequence of this amendment, it was agreed that the current polling district structure should be retained in Ingatestone, Fryerning & Mountnessing Ward. **Existing Polling Districts to be retained, Mountnessing Village Hall to be used as polling station for Heybridge Polling District.**
13. There has been confirmation that the proposed redevelopment at Three Arch Bridge Community Hall (Hutton South Ward) is on hold and, following health and safety recommendations, its continued use as a polling station is viable. Therefore, electors can continue to vote at this location. **Three Arch Bridge Community Hall (Maple Hall) to remain as polling station for Three Arches Polling District.**
14. The suggestion to relocate electors in Brocksparkwood to the Thrift Park Polling District (Hutton South Ward) was accepted. Similarly, electors from The Galleries and Water Tower Road have been moved to the Clements Park Polling District (Warley Ward). **Electors to be relocated.**
15. It was accepted that identifying suitable, available polling venues within the Sawyers Hall Polling District (Brentwood North Ward) and Eagle Way Polling District (Warley Ward) would take further investigation and negotiation. These could be taken forward at the planned review in 2024. There were also no concrete proposals with regard to Shenfield Ward at this time. **Current polling district and polling station arrangements to remain with future review in 2024.**
16. The identification of a suitable polling station for the Warley Mount Polling District (Brentwood South Ward) also proved difficult. Having carried out an inspection in September 2023, the Council's Health and Safety Adviser's view was that Brentwood Mosque Community Hall could no longer be used safely as a polling station, as well as having accessibility issues. Officers had sought

an alternative venue within the polling district that met the needs of all electors and had adequate facilities for operation as a polling station.

17. As none had been identified, the proposal was to use The Nightingale Centre, just outside the polling district boundary. As well as having good facilities, it also benefited from a car park. This venue had been used on a previous occasion for electors in the Warley Mount Polling District when no other venue was available. In the absence of any appropriate venue within the polling district, it was the opinion of the Returning Officer that The Nightingale Centre should be used as the polling station for Warley Mount Polling District.
18. However, a further site visit to Brentwood Mosque in November 2023 resulted in an offer to make the Main Hall available for use as a polling station. This is at the front of the building and has a dedicated access ramp and a lobby suitable for use by tellers. Limited waiting parking is available outside the building. The Health and Safety Adviser was able to assess the facilities and confirmed that he had no issues with the alternative arrangements agreed.
Main Hall at Brentwood Mosque to be used as a polling station for the Warley Mount Polling District.
19. Arising from the above, and taking into account the recommendations of the Returning Officer, the proposed schedule of polling districts and polling places was revised and is now before Members for consideration and approval.
Appendix A.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

20. When designating polling districts, the council has a duty to seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. In addition, and unless there are special circumstances that lead the council to determine otherwise, each parish must be in a separate polling district.
21. The polling place for a polling district must be within the area of the district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area either wholly or partly outside of the polling district. The polling place must also be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the polling district how they will be able to reach their designated polling station.
22. The council has a duty to consult the Returning Officer and must have regard to his recommendations when determining the schedule of polling districts and polling places.

23. It is the statutory responsibility of the Returning Officer for the particular election to provide a sufficient number of polling stations and allot the electors to those polling stations in such manner as he or she thinks the most convenient.
24. Additional duties regarding accessibility and facilities for disabled voters have been placed on the Returning Officer under the Elections Act 2022.
25. The council is required to give 14 days' notice of publication of the revised register.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

26. Officers will continue to review the arrangements in both the Sawyers Hall Polling District (Brentwood North Ward) and Eagle Way Polling District (Warley Ward). Potential alternative polling station locations have been identified and will be investigated further.
27. Updated information will be provided to Members as part of the statutory Parliamentary Constituency polling district and polling place review in summer/autumn 2024.

4.0 RELEVANT RISKS

28. Failure to approve a schedule of polling districts and polling places aligned with the revised borough ward boundaries would result in the council being unable to meet its statutory duties and would jeopardise the planning, due to commence in January 2024, for the forthcoming local elections in May 2024.

5.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

29. Details of the existing arrangements were circulated to Ward Councillors and the relevant public notices were displayed on 23 August 2023. A draft schedule of polling districts, polling places and polling stations was published and circulated on 8 September 2023.
30. The Returning Officer was consulted and his views are contained in the Appendix to this report.
31. Responses to the public consultation, which closed on 23 October 2023, are appended to the report.
32. Brentwood Access, a local group representing those with particular expertise in regard to access and disability, were advised of the consultation and asked

for their views. Feedback on accessibility issues was also obtained through the Polling Station Inspectors' reports and visits carried out by the Council's Health and Safety Adviser.

33. Details of the proposals were also sent to Parish Councils within the Borough to seek their views on any proposals affecting their area.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Tim Willis, Director – Resources & Section 151 Officer
Tel & Email: 01277 312500 / tim.willis@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

52. The proposals would mean an increase in the total number of polling stations from 49 to 50. These are sited over 38 locations. There would therefore be a small increase in costs for venue hire, equipment and staffing.

7.0 LEGAL/GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Claire Mayhew, Acting Joint Director – People & Governance & Monitoring Officer
Tel & Email 01277 312500 / Claire.mayhew@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

51. The recommendations set out within this report are lawful and within the Council's powers and duties. The Council has statutory duties within an existing legal framework to designate polling districts and polling places.

In conducting a review of such polling places the local authority must seek to ensure that (i) all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and (ii) the polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled.

The Council must consult on its review of polling places, including seeking representations from such persons as it thinks have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for people with different forms of disability, and ensure that the outcome of this consultation is conscientiously taken into account as part of any lawful decision-making process.

8.0 ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Phil Drane, Director - Place
Tel & Email 01277 312500 / phil.drane@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

52. No economic implications.

9.0 EQUALITY & HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Kim Anderson, Corporate Manager - Communities, Leisure and Health

Tel & Email 01277 312500 kim.anderson@brentwood.gov.uk

The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful.
- b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- c. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

The Returning Officer has a duty to ensure polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled.

There is also opportunity for voters to apply for a postal vote or proxy vote if required.

10.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Name & Title: Henry Muss, Sustainability & Climate Officer

Tel & Email 01277 312500 henry.muss@brentwood.gov.uk

52. No direct implications.

REPORT AUTHOR:

Name: Carol Davis

Title: Electoral Services Officer

Phone: 01277 312708

Email: carol.davis@brentwood.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places: December 2023 (with accompanying maps showing polling district boundaries)

Appendix B - Returning Officer's Response

Appendix C - Responses received to the public consultation

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Proposed Schedule of Polling Districts, Polling Places & Polling Stations (Sept 2023)
– website

Introduction to Proposal District Proposal Document – website

Notice of Review – website

Background information for Members – Electoral Services Office

Polling Station Inspection reports – Electoral Services Office

Polling Station Suitability Reviews 2023 – Electoral Services Office

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Ordinary Council	16/03/2022

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Proposed Schedule of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

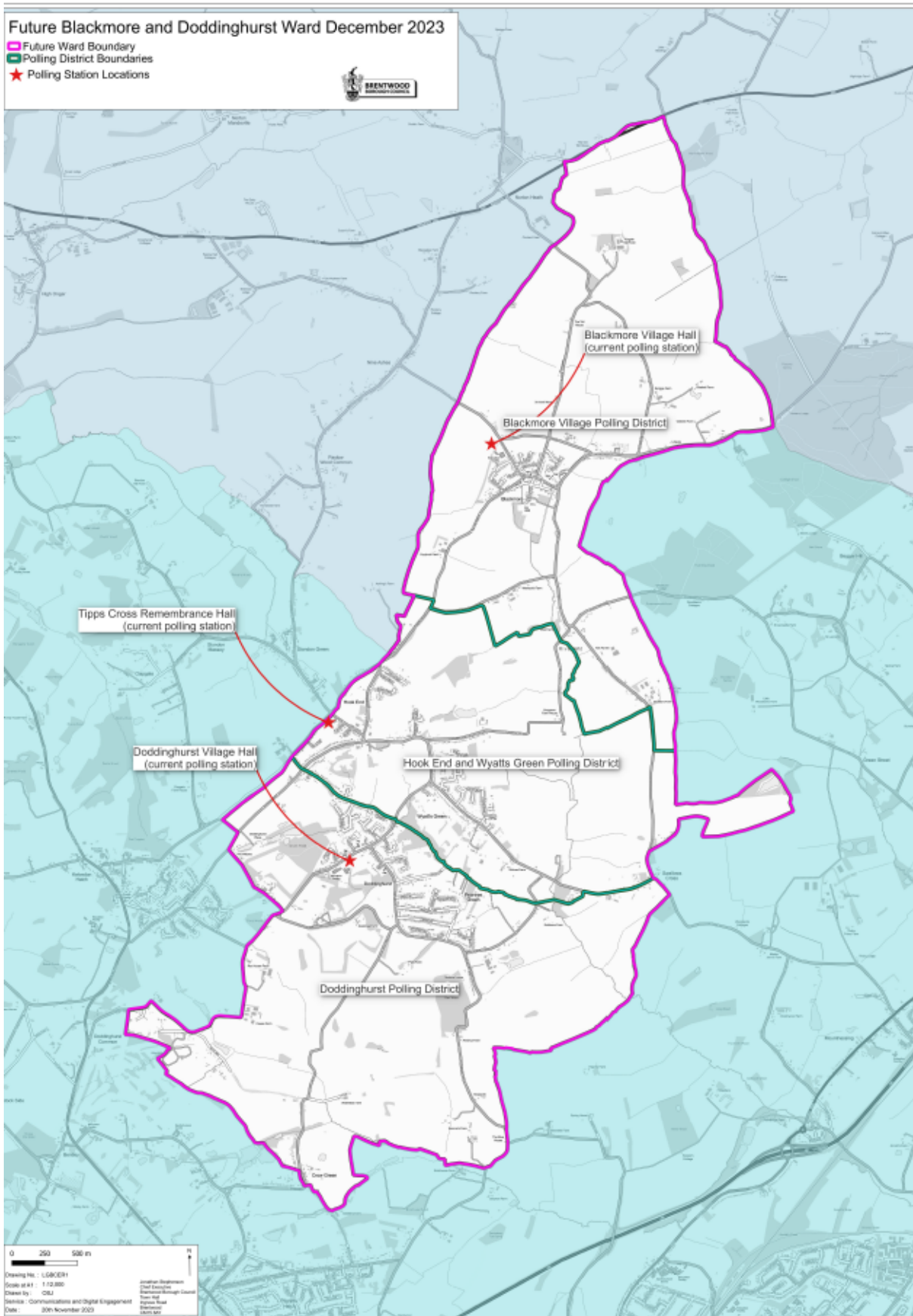
For that part of the Brentwood & Ongar Parliamentary Constituency that falls within the Borough of Brentwood (13 December 2023)
To be read in conjunction with the accompanying ward maps

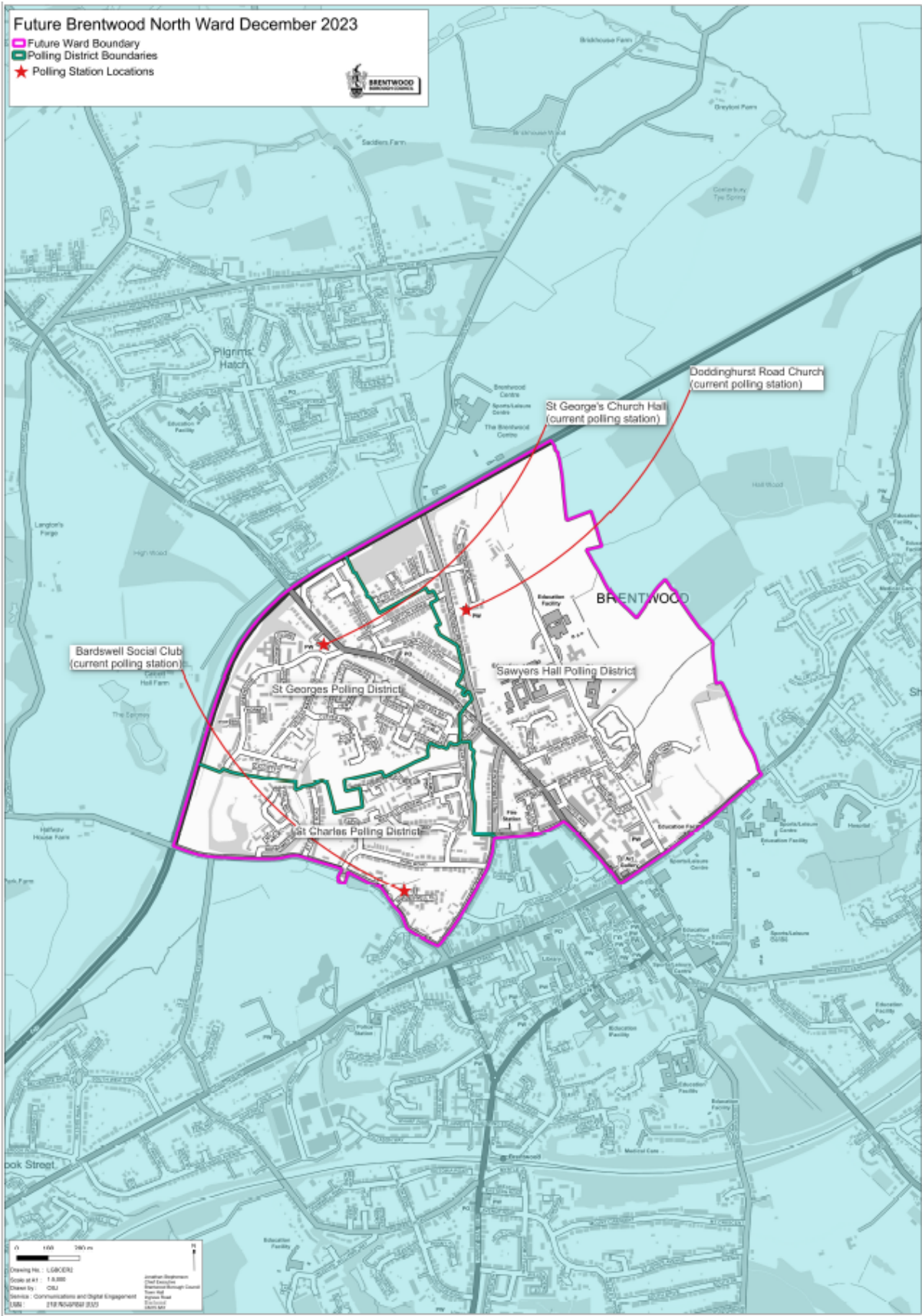
WARD	POLLING DISTRICT	POLLING PLACE	POLLING STATION
Blackmore & Doddinghurst	Blackmore Village	Blackmore Village	Blackmore Village Hall, Nine Ashes Road
Blackmore & Doddinghurst	Hook End & Wyatts Green	Hook End	Tipps Cross Remembrance Hall, Blackmore Road
Blackmore & Doddinghurst	Doddinghurst	Doddinghurst Village	Doddinghurst Village Hall, Church Lane
Brentwood North	St Charles	The polling district	Bardswell Social Club, Weald Road
Brentwood North	St Georges	The polling district	St. George's Church Hall, Ongar Road
Brentwood North	Sawyers Hall	The polling district	Doddinghurst Road Church, Doddinghurst Road
Brentwood South	Hogarth	The polling district	Hogarth Primary School, Riseway
Brentwood South	Queens Road	The polling district	Cathedral Large Hall, Ingrave Road
Brentwood South	Warley Mount	Within ¼ mile of Warley Hill	Brentwood Mosque, Warley Hill
Brentwood West	Crescent Road	The polling district	Victoria Court, Victoria Road
Brentwood West	Honeypot	The polling district	South Weald Parish Hall, London Road
Brentwood West	St Faiths	The polling district	Kings Hall, Kings Chase
Brizes, Stondon Massey & South Weald	Kelvedon Hatch	Kelvedon Hatch Village	Kelvedon Hatch Village Hall, School Road
Brizes, Stondon Massey & South Weald	Navestock	Navestock Side	Navestock Village Hall, Navestock Side
Brizes, Stondon Massey & South Weald	Stondon Massey	The polling district	Stondon Massey Village Hall, Ongar Road
Brizes, Stondon Massey & South Weald	Coxtie Green	The polling district	St Paul's Church Centre, Mores Lane
Brizes, Stondon Massey & South Weald	Weald Park	Within ¼ mile radius of Brook Street/London Road junction	South Weald Parish Hall, London Road
Herongate, Ingrave & West Horndon	Herongate & Ingrave	Ingrave Village	Ingrave Church Hall, School Lane
Herongate, Ingrave & West Horndon	West Horndon	West Horndon Village	East & West Horndon Village Hall, Thorndon Avenue
Herongate, Ingrave & West Horndon	Little Warley	Little Warley Village	Little Warley & Childerditch Village Hall, Magpie Lane

Hutton East	St Martins	The polling district	Hutton Free Church, Hanging Hill Lane
Hutton East	Hutton Park	The area within a mile radius of the junction of Rayleigh Road and Wash Road	Hutton Community Centre, Harrison Close
Hutton East	Haverings Grove	The polling district	Adagio School of Dance, Rayleigh Road
Hutton North	Hutton St Peter	The polling district	St Peter's Church Hall, Claughton Way
Hutton North	Poplar	The polling district	Bishops Hill ACL, Rayleigh Road
Hutton North	Long Ridings	The polling district	Long Ridings Primary School, Long Ridings Avenue
Hutton South	Three Arches	The polling district	Maple Hall (Three Arch Bridge Community Hall), Maple Close
Hutton South	Thrift Park	The polling district	St Stephen's, St Stephens Crescent
Hutton South	Hutton Mount	The polling district	Hutton & Shenfield Union Church, Roundwood Avenue
Ingatestone, Fryerning & Mountnessing	Fryerning	The polling district	Fryerning Parish Rooms, Mill Green Road
Ingatestone, Fryerning & Mountnessing	High Street	The polling district	Ingatestone & Fryerning Community Centre, High Street
Ingatestone, Fryerning & Mountnessing	The Furlongs	The polling district	Christy Hall, Pemberton Avenue
Ingatestone, Fryerning & Mountnessing	Heybridge	The area within one mile radius of the junction of Roman Road and The Leas	Mountnessing Village Hall, Roman Road
Ingatestone, Fryerning & Mountnessing	Mountnessing	Mountnessing Village	Mountnessing Village Hall, Roman Road
Pilgrims Hatch	Bishops Hall Park	The polling district	Bishops Hall Park Community Centre, Elizabeth Road
Pilgrims Hatch	Larchwood Gardens	The area within one mile radius of the junction of Larchwood Gardens and Ongar Road, Pilgrims Hatch	Larchwood Primary School, Larchwood Gardens
Pilgrims Hatch	Ashwells	The polling district	Bentley Village Club, Ongar Road, Pilgrims Hatch
Shenfield	Shenfield	The polling district	Shenfield Parish Hall, Hutton Road or Shenfield Library, Hutton Road (currently being redeveloped)
Warley	Clements Park	The polling district	Holly Trees Primary School, Vaughan Williams Way
Warley	Eagle Way	The polling district	Christ Church Centre, Warley Hill
Warley	Hartswood	The polling district	Warley Primary School, Chindits Lane

Future Blackmore and Doddinghurst Ward December 2023

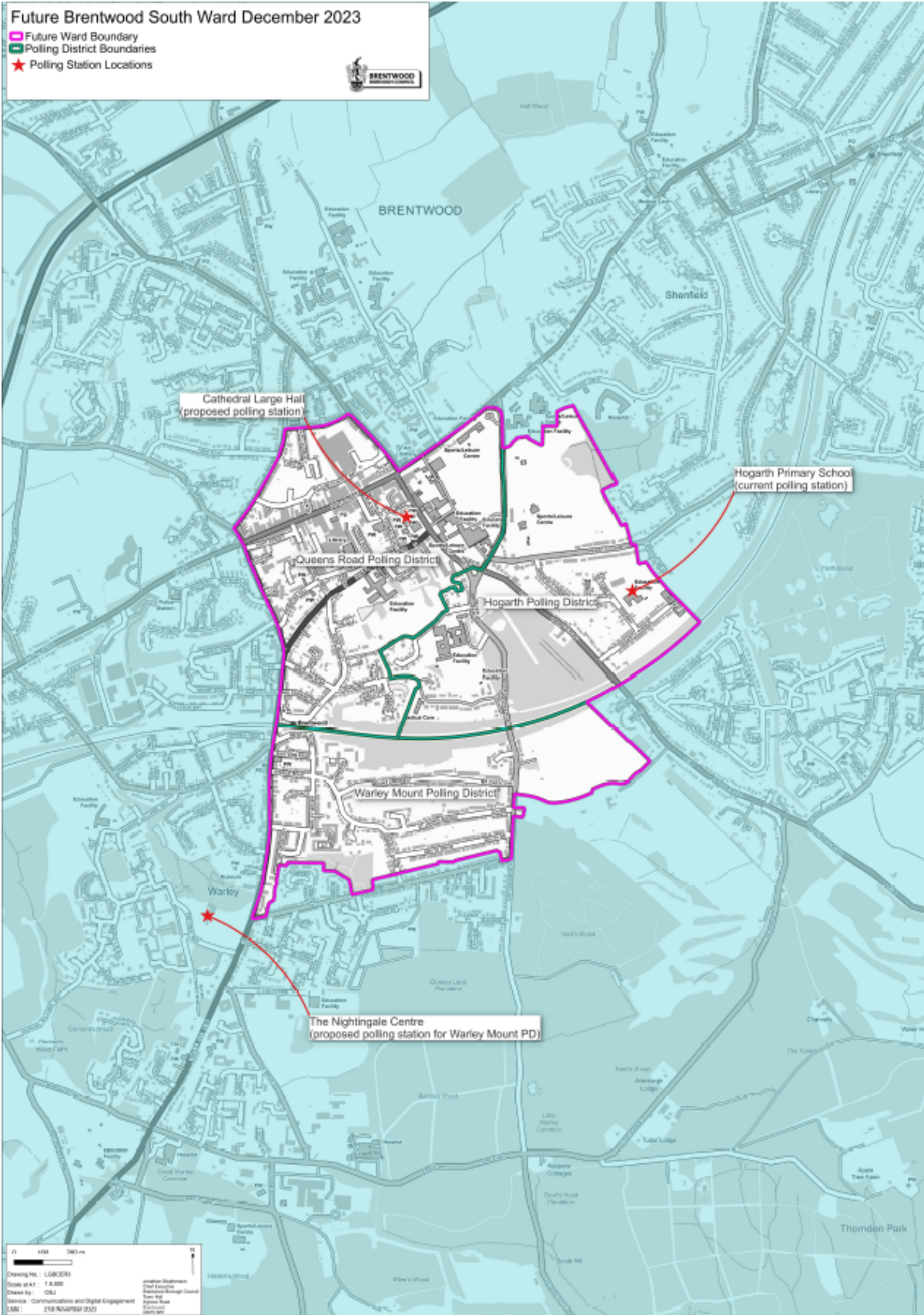
- Future Ward Boundary
- Polling District Boundaries
- Polling Station Locations





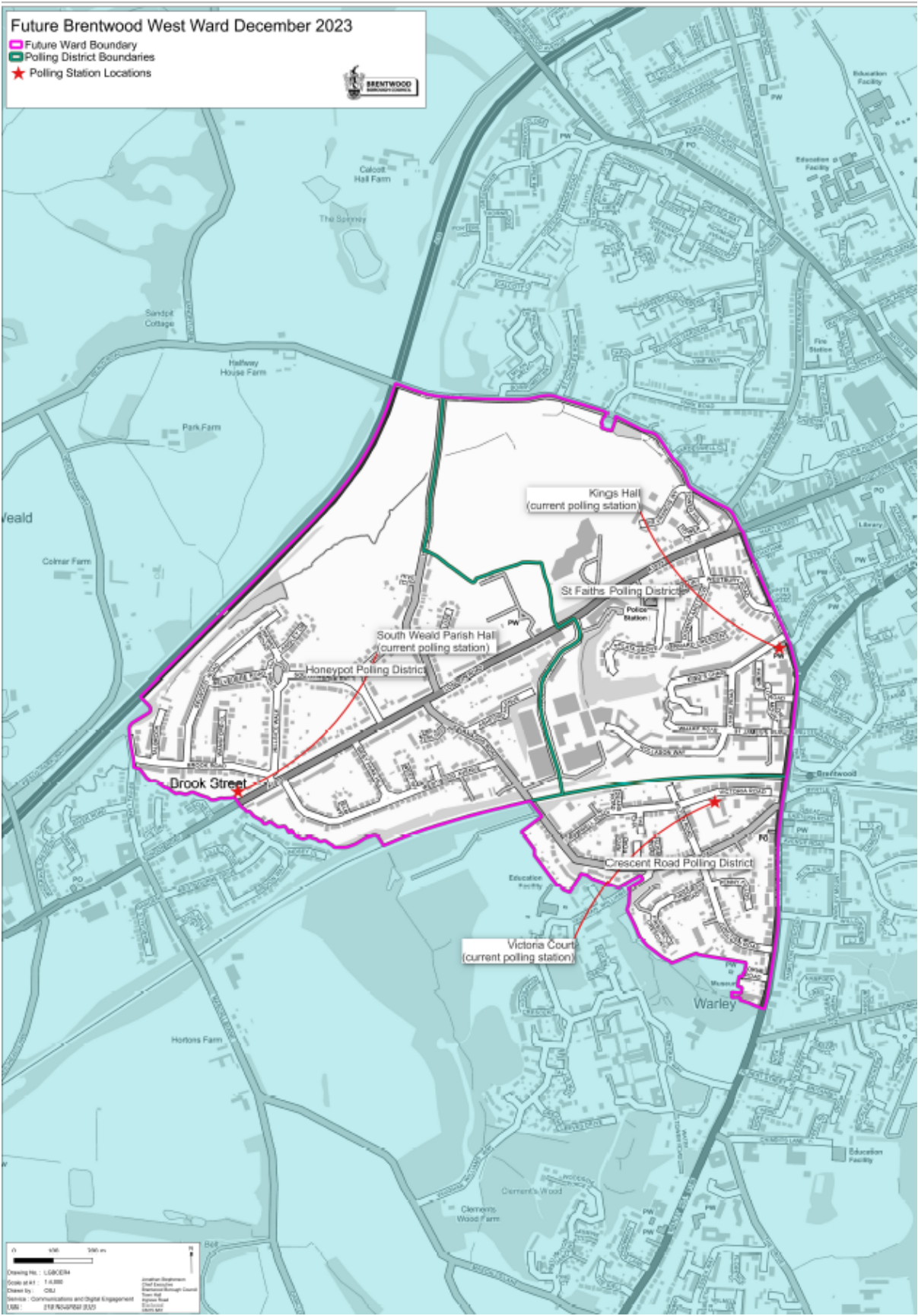
Future Brentwood South Ward December 2023

- Future Ward Boundary
- Polling District Boundaries
- ★ Polling Station Locations



Future Brentwood West Ward December 2023

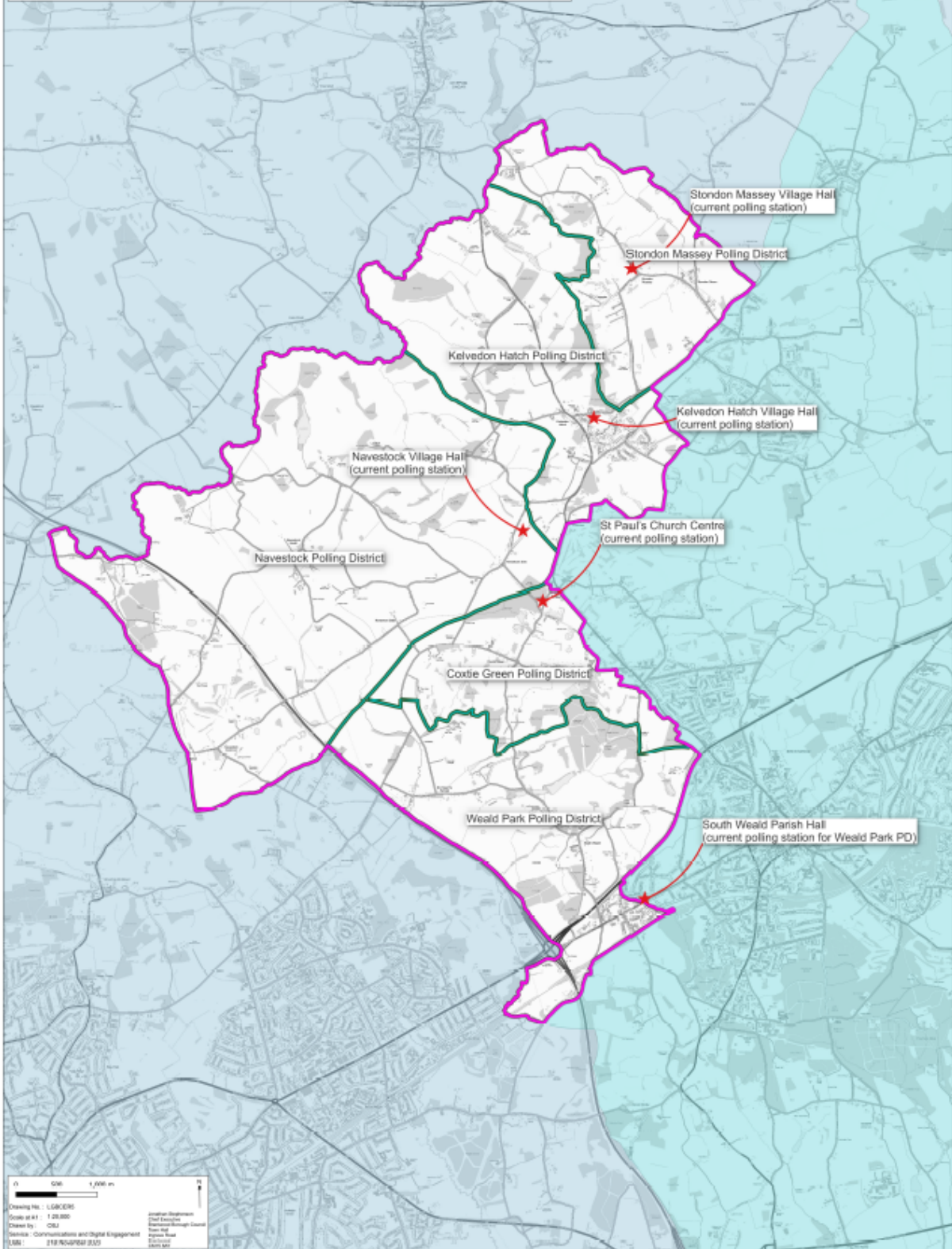
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- ★ Polling Station Locations

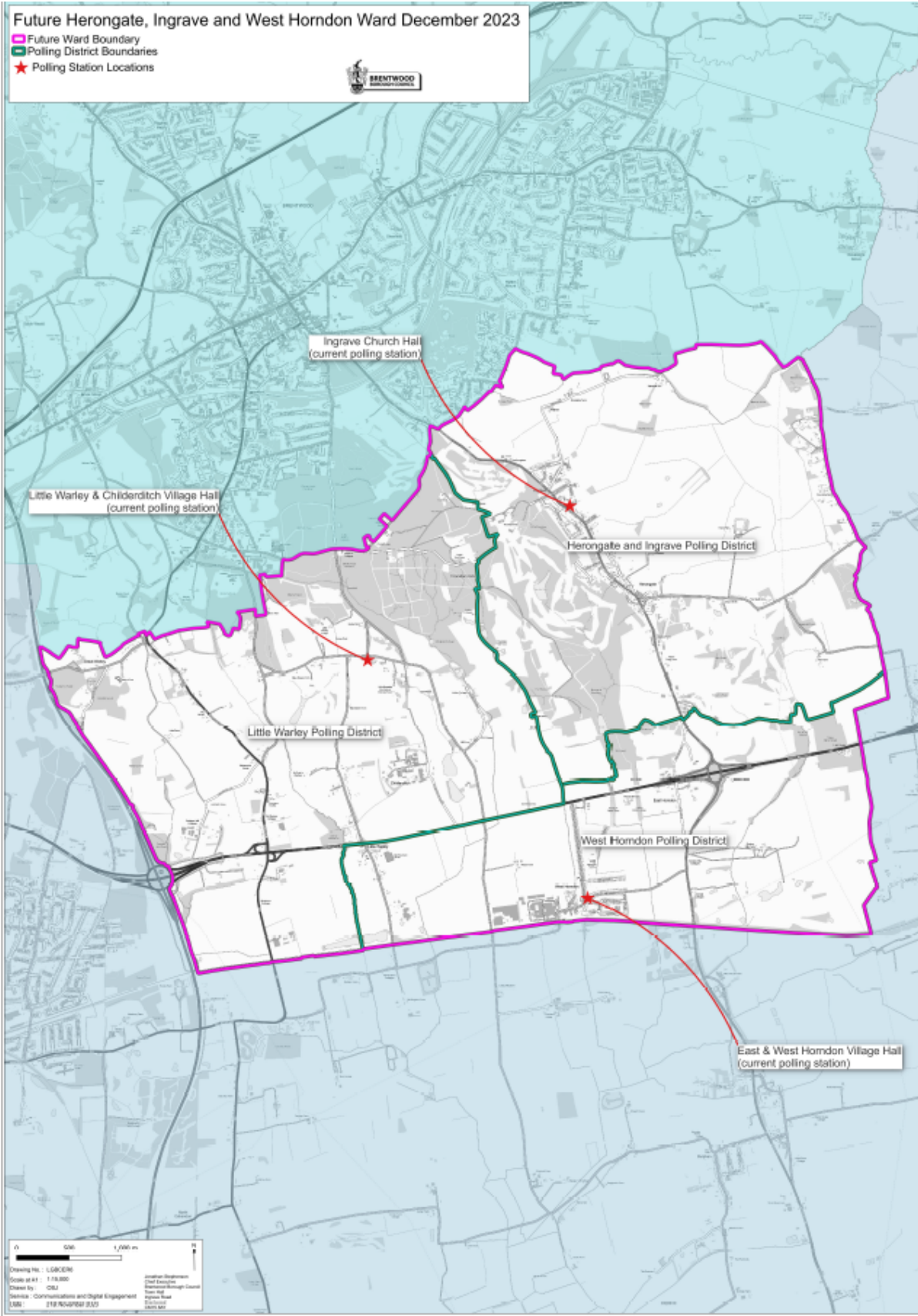


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Future Brizes, Stondon Massey and South Weald Ward December 2023

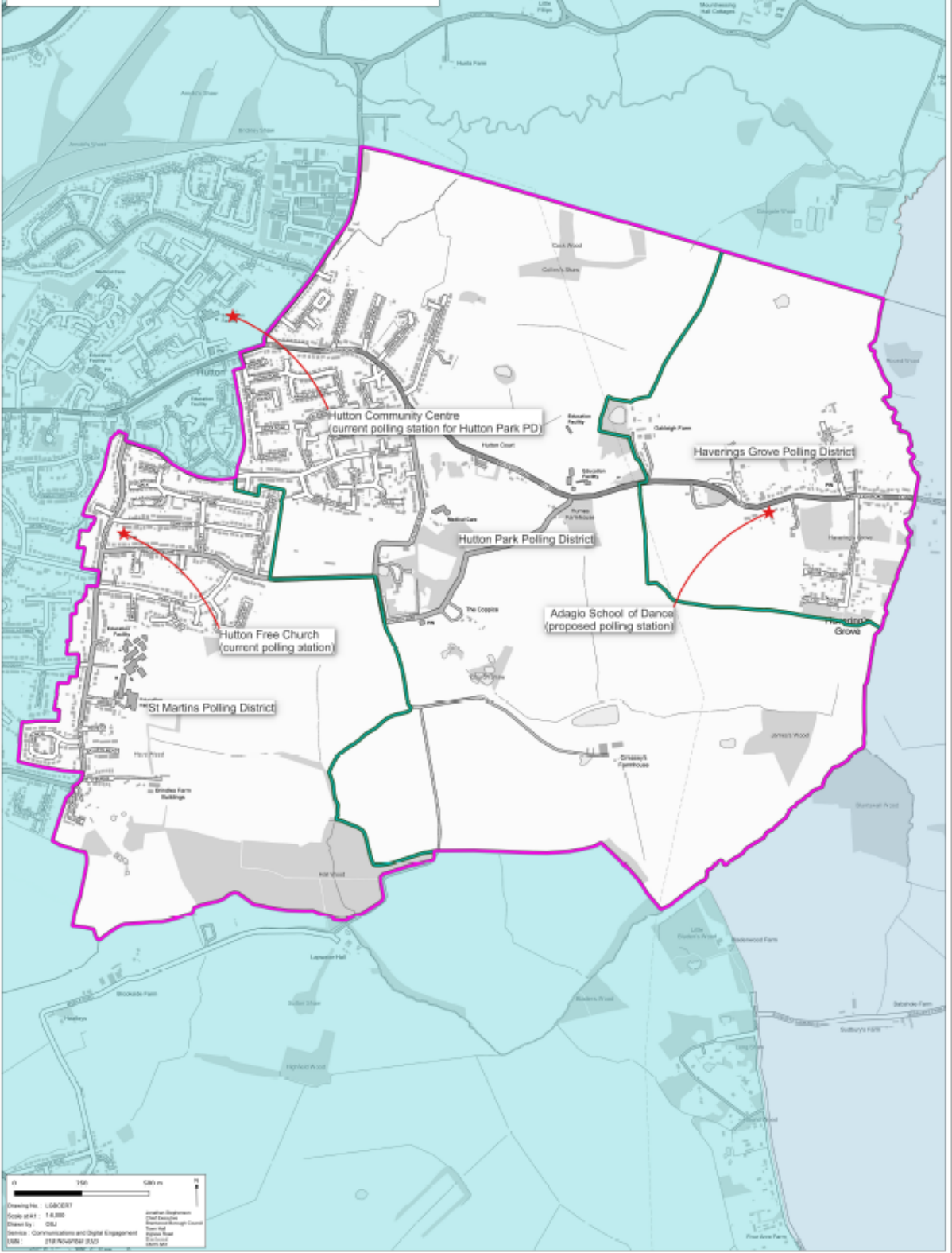
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- ▬ Polling District Boundaries
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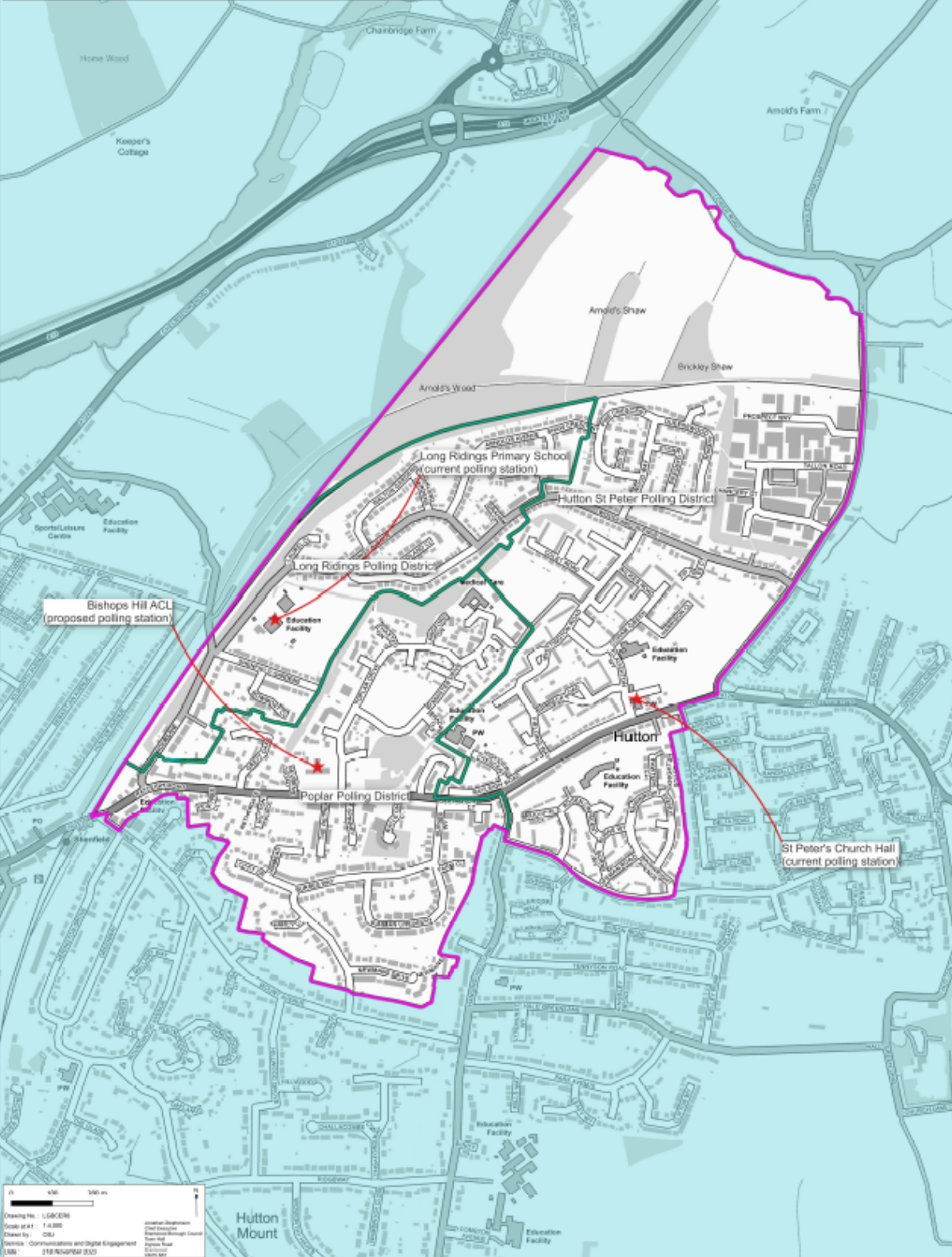
Future Hutton East Ward December 2023

- █ Future Ward Boundary
- █ Polling District Boundaries
- ★ Polling Station Locations



Future Hutton North Ward December 2023

- █ Future Ward Boundary
- █ Polling District Boundaries
- ★ Polling Station Locations

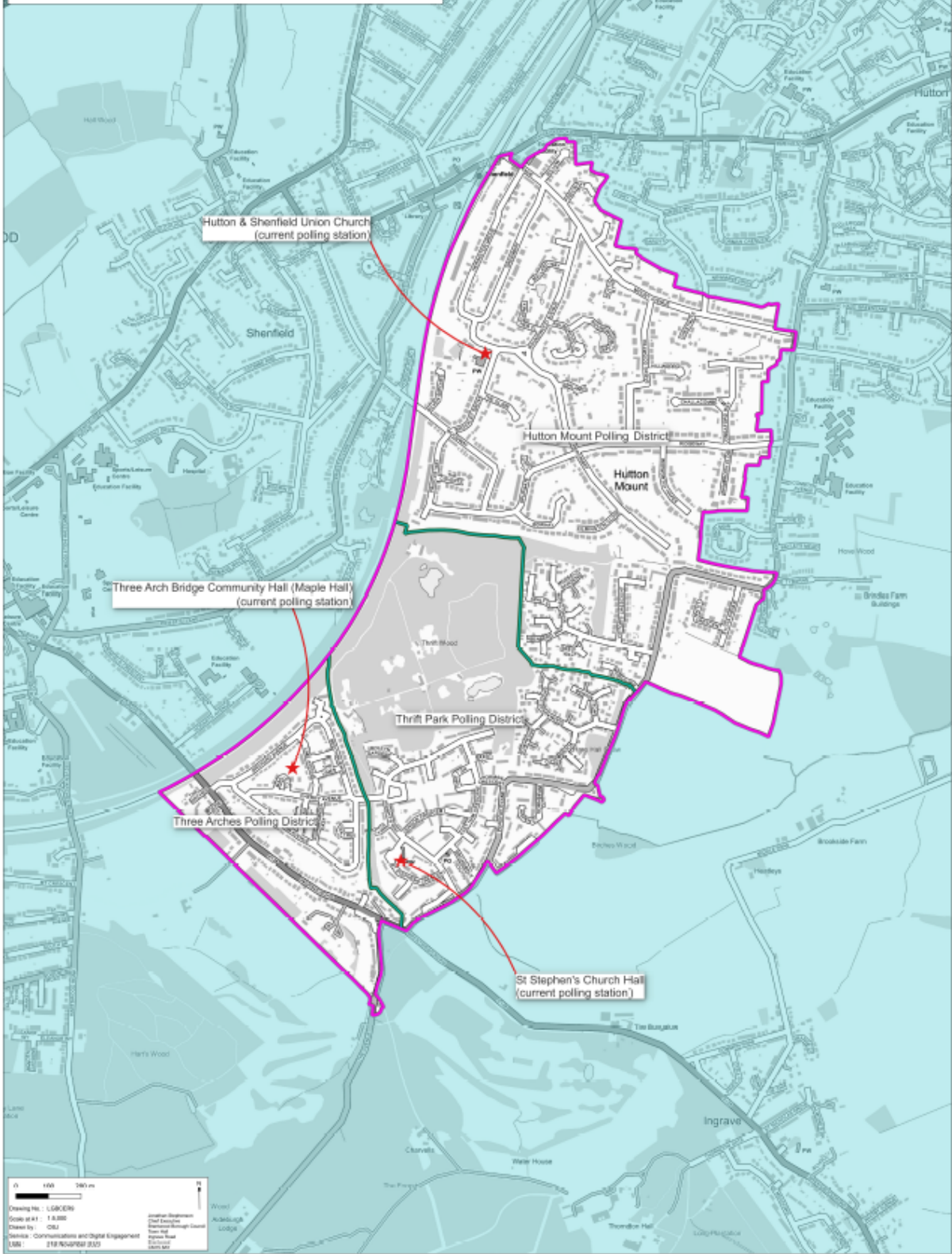
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Future Hutton South Ward December 2023

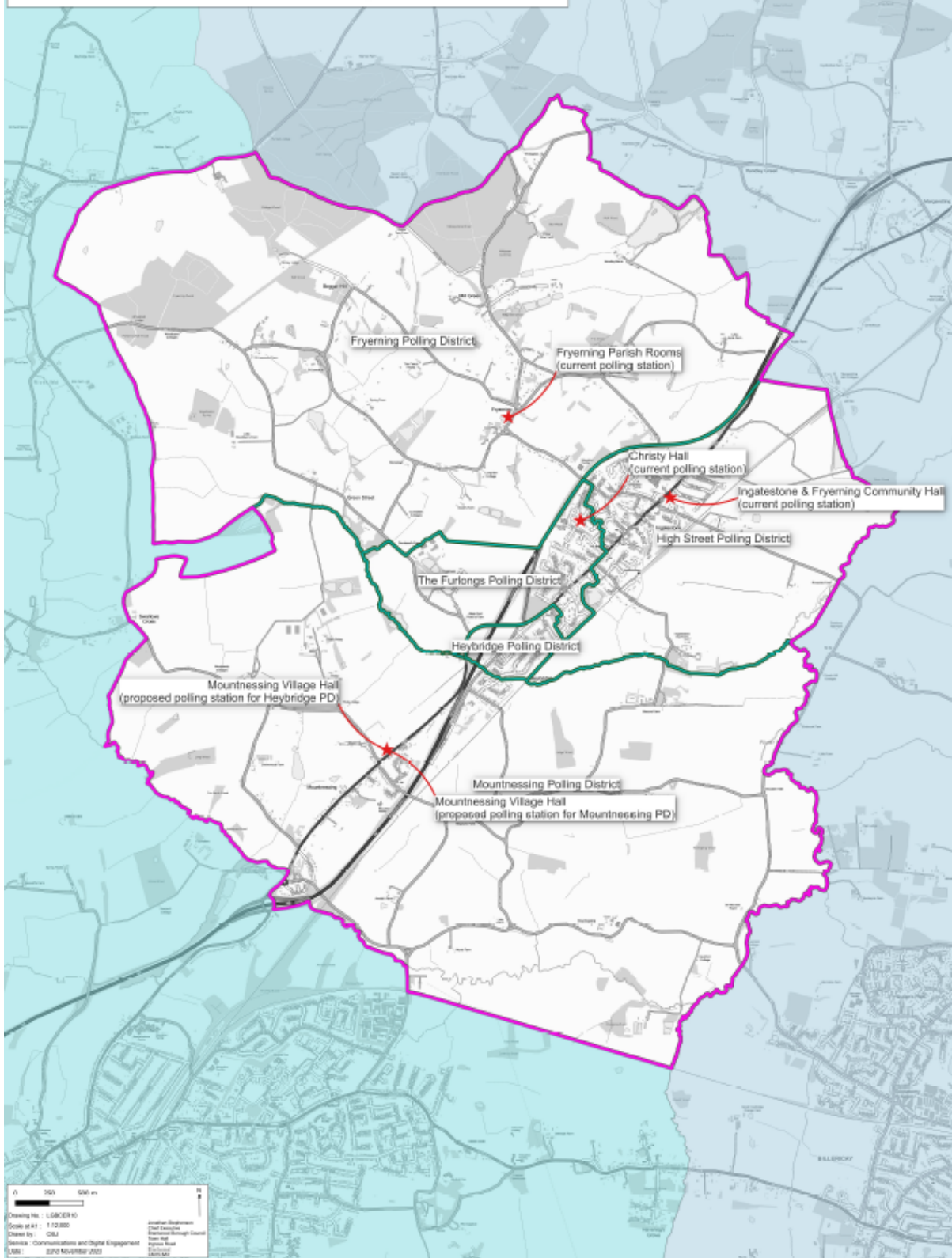
- Future Ward Boundary
- Polling District Boundaries
- ★ Polling Station Locations



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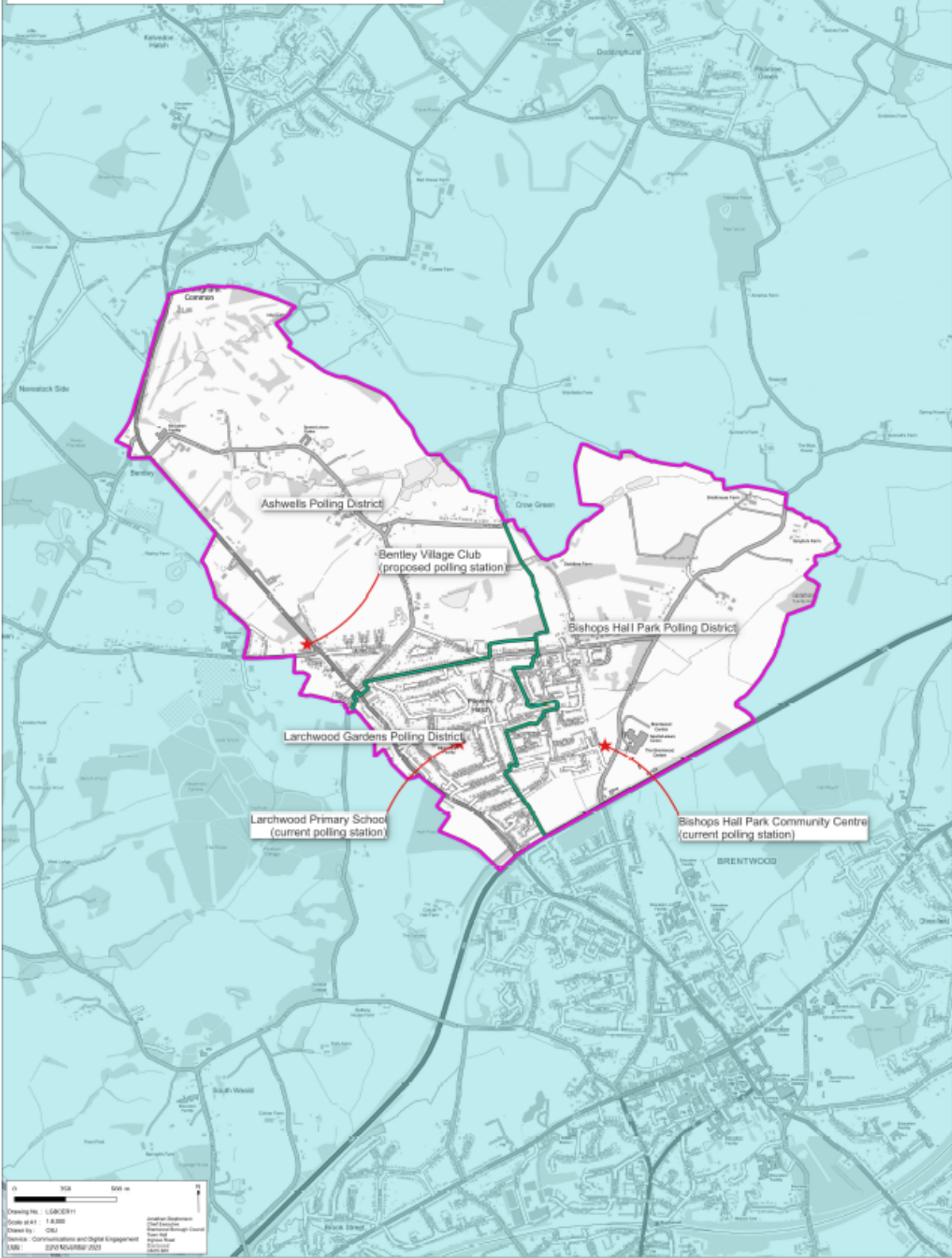
Future Ingatestone, Fryerning and Mountnessing Ward December 2023

- █ Future Ward Boundary
- █ Polling District Boundaries
- ★ Polling Station Locations



Future Pilgrims Hatch Ward December 2023

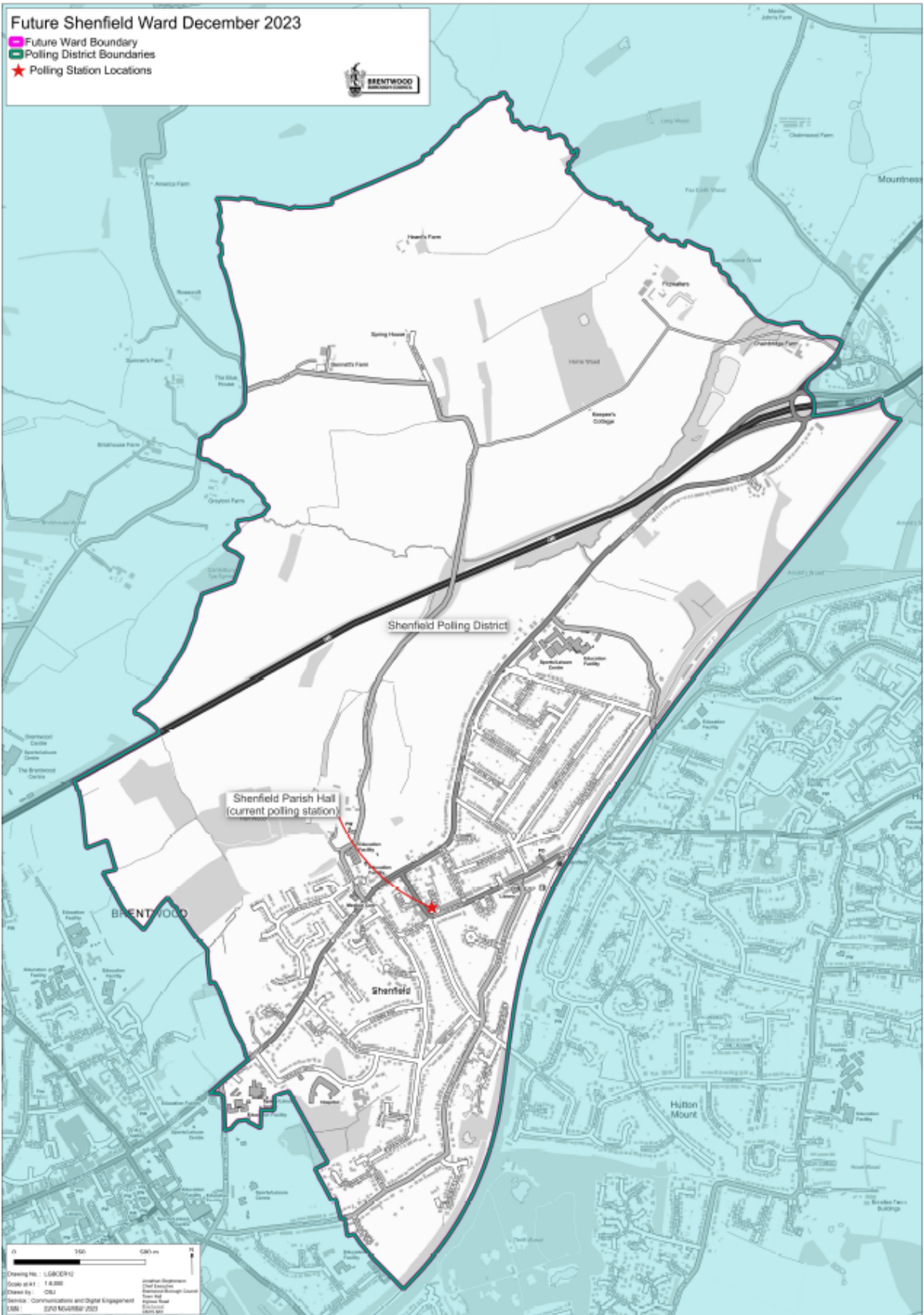
- Future Ward Boundary
- Polling District Boundaries
- Polling Station Locations



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Future Shenfield Ward December 2023

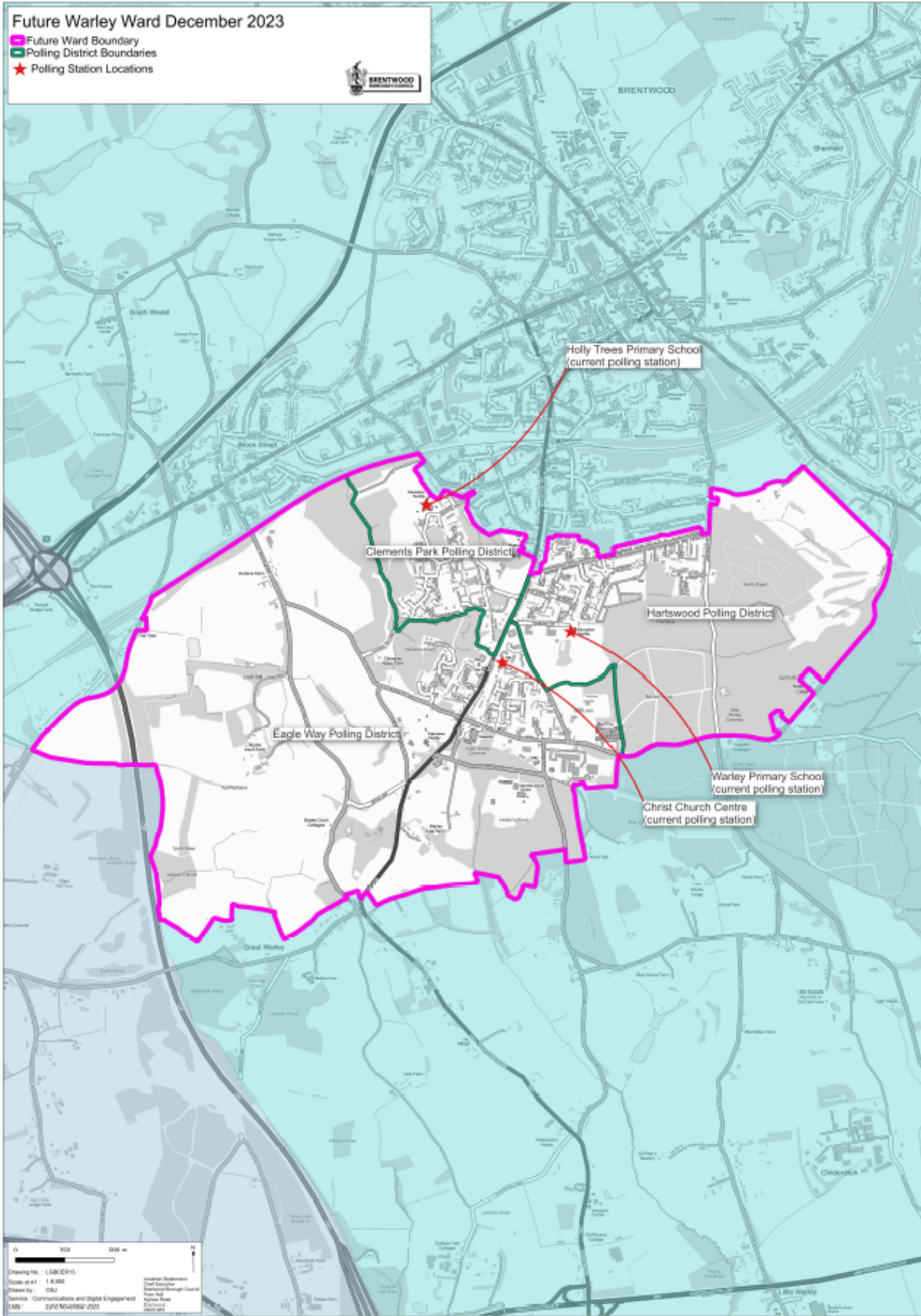
- Future Ward Boundary
- Polling District Boundaries
- Polling Station Locations



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L881 22/01/2023

Future Warley Ward December 2023

- █ Future Ward Boundary
- █ Polling District Boundaries
- ★ Polling Station Locations

Appendix B

Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations 2023 **Acting Returning Officer's recommendations for that part of the Brentwood & Ongar Parliamentary Constituency that falls within the Borough of Brentwood**

Introduction

This review is being undertaken in advance of the implementation of the new ward arrangements in May 2024. The all-out Borough Council elections on 2 May 2024 will be the first held under the revised schedule of polling districts, polling places and polling stations.

As Brentwood Borough Council seats are normally elected by thirds, the all-out elections in May 2024 present challenges on a number of levels. Not only is there a change from 15 wards to 13 wards, three seats will be contested in each ward. This will affect the total number of candidates, the length of the ballot paper and the voting process for electors.

The May 2024 local elections will be combined with the election of a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex, under the direction of the Police Area Returning Officer (PARO). A UK Parliamentary election is required to be held by January 2025 and there is the possibility that this could be combined with the local government elections in May 2024.

With the challenges ahead, it is important to ensure that the proposals adopted provide a stable basis for conducting the forthcoming elections. A few issues have been identified at polling stations used in May 2023 and this is an opportunity for them to be addressed or mitigated as part of the review. Wherever feasible, electors should continue to vote at their existing polling station and disruption should be kept to a minimum.

It is also important that electors are given advance notice of any changes to their polling station, so that they can make an informed decision about whether to apply for a postal vote or appoint a proxy. This could be combined with the Household Notification Letter that is due to be circulated to all households in January 2024. The timetable for a decision on the revised schedule at the Ordinary Council meeting on 13 December 2023 is therefore critical to the smooth delivery of next year's polls.

Recent elections have provided a robust test of the electoral arrangements within the Brentwood Borough. The Elections Act 2022 introduced new requirements and duties in 2023 which affect how polling stations function. The most notable change was the introduction of Voter ID requirements, necessitating new checking processes at the polling station and completion of statistical returns to central government. Arrangements were also made at polling stations for privacy

areas and female staff should face coverings need to be removed. In addition, the Elections Act 2022 introduced new duties relating to disabled access. There is a requirement for Returning Officers to take all reasonable steps to provide equipment to support disabled voters to vote independently and in secret at the polling station, and in doing so to have regard to any relevant guidance issued by the Electoral Commission.

Polling Station Inspectors and Presiding Officers gave feedback following the local election on 4 May 2023 and this information, combined with subsequent visits by officers, has allowed a thorough assessment of the existing premises.

In the main, the electoral arrangements have worked well within the Brentwood area and very little adjustment to the existing schedule of polling districts and polling places is needed, other than where they are affected by ward boundary changes. Where availability or suitability issues at polling stations have been identified, proposals for alternative arrangements have been set out.

On average, elector turn-out for Borough and County Council elections is 37-38% and for UK Parliamentary elections it is 71%.

In assessing the capacity of polling stations, account has been taken of known residential development projects, increased electorate from ward boundary changes, and the potential for single polling stations to be split into double stations within the same building.

There needs to be confidence that the polling station venue will be available at short notice for a UK Parliamentary election, which could be called at any time since the repeal in 2022 of the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011.

When designating polling districts, the council has a duty to seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. In addition, and unless there are special circumstances that lead the council to determine otherwise, each parish must be in a separate polling district.

The polling place for a polling district must be within the area of the district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area either wholly or partly outside of the polling district. The polling place must also be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the polling district how they will be able to reach their designated polling station.

It is the statutory responsibility of the Returning Officer for the particular election to provide a sufficient number of polling stations and allot the electors to those polling stations in such manner as he or she thinks the most convenient.

Comments on the Proposals under the 2023 review

Blackmore and Doddinghurst

This new ward is formed from existing polling districts based on parish council boundaries. No changes to the polling districts and polling stations proposed. No adverse comments.

Brentwood North

There is a reduction in geographical area due to the ward boundary changes. However, the division between the three polling districts and continued use of the three venues is supported.

A query had been raised regarding level access at Bardswell Social Club, but this has been investigated and the polling station meets requirements.

No changes to the polling districts and polling stations proposed.

Brentwood South

This new ward has been formed from parts of three existing wards and the resultant electorate distribution poses some challenges.

In particular, the capacity of the polling station at the Cathedral Small Hall is insufficient for the increased number of potential electors. This can be mitigated by diverting some electors towards the polling station at Hogarth Primary School, which is under-utilised at present. The proposed alterations to the Hogarth polling district would achieve this.

However, the size of electorate in the proposed Queens Road polling district would still be of concern for major elections and combined polls. Therefore, it is recommended that the polling station be relocated to the Cathedral Large Hall which has the capacity to accommodate a double station. Discussions should take place to secure this change at the earliest opportunity.

One particular concern is the lack of suitable premises within the Warley Mount polling district. Electors previously voted at the Brentwood Methodist Church. The location presented some difficulties, particularly relating to parking and disabled access, but proved to be the best available building within this polling district. Once it closed, electors were transferred to The Nightingale Centre on a temporary basis until the previous venue was reopened as the Brentwood Mosque Community Hall.

Unfortunately, recent subdivision of the hall has reduced the capacity of the room provide for polling, which was reported at the May 2023 election. Health and safety concerns raised at that time have been investigated further, resulting in a decision that the Brentwood Mosque Community Hall is no longer suitable for use as a polling station, in line with Electoral Commission guidance, on combined factors of health and safety, disabled access and capacity.

It has not been possible to identify a suitable alternative venue within the polling district. Although the nearby Essex Arms has a function room, it is too small for the electorate, access is poor with steep external steps and there is inadequate disabled access through the bar.

The proposal to change the location of the polling station to The Nightingale Centre would address these concerns and the building has the advantage of parking provision. It has previously been used as a venue for this electorate and the proposed change is supported.

Brentwood West

The geographical area of the ward has been reduced due to the ward boundary changes. There are no capacity issues at the three polling stations and no adverse comments were made at the May 2023 election. No changes to the polling districts and polling stations proposed.

Brizes, Stondon Massey and South Weald

This new ward is formed from existing polling districts based on parish council boundaries, plus the previous ward of South Weald.

A query had been raised regarding level access at Stondon Massey Village Hall, but this has been investigated and the polling station meets requirements.

At present, a very small electorate votes at The Belli Centre, at the rear of St Peter's Church, South Weald. This polling station is under-utilised and the electorate could easily be accommodated at South Weald Parish Hall, by combining the two existing polling districts of Weald Park and Brook Street.

This arrangement would provide savings and efficiency in the conduct of the election with minimal impact on voters. The ward as a whole would have a total of six polling stations, as Kelvedon Hatch operates as a double station. The proposals for this ward are supported.

Herongate, Ingrave and West Horndon

This ward is formed from polling districts based on parish council boundaries, plus an area transferred from the existing Warley ward.

It would be beneficial to create one additional polling district for the properties that have been added to the ward and to retain Little Warley and Childerditch Village Hall as the polling station. The increase in elector numbers can easily be accommodated at this venue.

A previous issue regarding disabled access at Ingrave Church Hall was overcome by temporary provision of a ramp at the May 2023 election. It is recommended that a suitable ramp be purchased by the Council for use at future polls. This would ensure compliance with the new access duties under the Elections Act 2022.

The proposals are therefore supported.

Hutton East

This ward has been modified by the transfer of some properties to Hutton North ward and additions from the previous Hutton Central ward.

It is recommended that a St Martins polling district be retained, with electors continuing to vote at Hutton Free Church. Due to the reduced electorate, this would operate as a single station.

The Haverings Grove polling station was relocated to the Adagio School of Dance for the May 2023 election. This building proved to be successful and has the added advantage of greater visibility on the main road. It is recommended that its use be continued.

The proposal for the electorate in Hutton Park polling district to continue to vote at Hutton Community Centre is supported. Although the venue is just outside the ward boundary, it has operated very successfully as a double polling station since 2015 and voters are familiar with it. There is a lack of any other suitable building within the polling district to serve this group of electors.

Hutton North

This ward has been enlarged by the addition of properties from Hutton East ward and a large proportion of the previous Hutton Central ward.

The existing polling stations within the ward do not have sufficient capacity to cope with the increased numbers and therefore it was necessary to examine alternatives. In addition, there have been issues with the use of Long Ridings Primary School relating to securing appropriate disabled access. This review provided an opportunity to move away from the venue.

The potential use of Bishops Hill ACL as a polling station has been explored. The location is central to the proposed new Poplar polling district and the main hall has sufficient capacity to operate as a double station. Disabled parking and access are also readily available.

The remainder of the ward would fall into the proposed Hutton St Peter polling district, with electors voting at St Peter's Church. As this would continue to operate as a double polling station, many electors would see no change to their voting arrangements.

The proposals are therefore supported.

Hutton South

The size of this ward has been increased by the transfer of two polling districts. However, for the majority of the electorate the existing polling station arrangements can be satisfactorily retained.

Concerns have been raised about disabled access at St Stephen's Church, which is the polling station venue for Thrift Park. An initial inspection of the exterior has identified issues that might be overcome by redirecting wheelchair users to a different approach. Additional directional signage should be provided to assist. The property will need to be monitored to ensure that it continues to be suitable for use as a polling station.

The polling station for the Three Arches polling district is currently at Maple Hall (Three Arch Bridge Community Hall). The site is planned for redevelopment but this is currently on hold. There remain concerns that the property is deteriorating due to lack of use and would not be available at short notice for a snap General Election. Therefore, a switch to another location is recommended.

An alternative venue has been identified at The Knights Way Centre. This is a modern building with good level access and disabled parking, two suitable halls and the necessary facilities. Although it is just outside the polling district boundary, it is in a prominent and convenient location. It also has the capacity to operate as a double station should St Stephen's Church become unavailable.

The proposed polling place description allows for a return to Maple Hall at a later date following redevelopment or if the circumstances there change.

Ingatestone, Fryerning and Mountnessing

The size of this ward has not been affected by the review of ward boundaries. However, the polling station in the Heybridge polling district has been unavailable for several years and electors from this area have been voting at the Ingatestone and Fryerning Community Centre on a temporary basis.

The previous polling station at the Catholic Church Parish Rooms is a very small building which does not meet modern access requirements. An alternative suggestion to use Ingatestone Library was therefore explored. Although the building itself could be made suitable, there is concern about its location immediately adjacent to a pedestrian crossing, the lack of disabled parking and limited space outside for queuing or tellers.

This polling district review provides an ideal opportunity to regularise the voter arrangements in Ingatestone. The proposals create an enlarged High Street polling district, incorporating Heybridge and properties in Tor Bryan. The Ingatestone and Fryerning Community Centre has demonstrated the capacity for two polling stations and, by merging the two unequal registers, the double station could be run more efficiently. The proposal is therefore supported.

It has also been suggested that the polling station for Mountnessing be moved from St John's Church Hall to Mountnessing Village Hall. This would overcome parking issues currently experienced and provide better disabled access. Mountnessing Village Hall provided good, modern facilities and would make an excellent polling station.

The proposed polling districts and polling stations are supported.

Pilgrims Hatch

This ward has seen a small increase in area and additional electorate from developments in Ashwells Road.

It is proposed to create a new Ashwells polling district in the north of the ward to address the increase in electorate and relieve the pressure on the double polling station at Larchwood Primary School. The Bentley Village Club has been identified as a suitable venue for a polling station, in a convenient location for this electorate, with good facilities, capacity, ample parking and disabled access.

The creation of the new Ashwells polling district, as outlined on the ward map, and use of the Bentley Village Club as its polling station is therefore recommended.

Shenfield

There are no changes proposed for this ward. The electorate currently votes at Shenfield Parish Hall, which operates well as a triple station. A view will be formed regarding a possible return to Shenfield Library once that development is complete.

No adverse comments.

Warley

This ward has been modified by the addition of the Clements Park polling district, the removal of the Warley Mount polling district and the loss of the southern part of the existing ward. It has also seen significant residential development.

The proposals seek to retain three polling districts and the existing polling stations. All have sufficient capacity for their projected electorates. There were no adverse comments following the May 2023 election.

The proposed polling districts and polling stations are supported.

Conclusion

Overall, the Proposed Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places (September 2023) is supported for the reasons given above.

The proposals would provide for 38 venues with a total of 50 polling stations within the Brentwood Borough, all having electorates within Electoral Commission guidelines.

Wherever feasible, it is recommended that electors continue to vote at their existing polling stations. This is important for ensuring that changes are minimised, allowing staff attention to be focused on new arrangements. This will contribute to the smooth running and delivery of the forthcoming elections.

It is also important to build in resilience, and the opportunity to make amendments that reflect changing circumstances should be grasped. In particular, it is recommended that additional ramps are purchased so that these can be deployed at short notice, to ensure disabled access at polling stations.

Communication of new voting arrangements to electors in advance of the elections, and increased signage on polling day in those areas affected by changes, will support the delivery of successful elections.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Stephenson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jonathan Stephenson
Acting Returning Officer
20 October 2023

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Appendix C

Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations Representation on behalf of Brentwood Access Group

From: Jim Hoare

Sent: Friday, October 13, 2023 12:38 PM

Subject: Re: Review of Polling Districts and Polling Stations

Thank you very much for sending this to us. We discussed this at our last meeting and asked all our members for feedback via our Facebook page.

We warmly welcome the approach of your team to the issue of accessibility at polling stations.

The feedback from our members is to ask that all polling places must have step free access and a lower booth for wheelchair access. Given the mix of urban and rural areas in the borough, clearly the need for parking close by, including designated Blue Badge bays is important and where possible public transport access.

One of our members who is visually impaired raised the issues she faces when voting. Her desire is to be able to cast her ballot secretly - as is the right of every voter. To assist visually impaired voters, she wondered if any alternate high tech voting methods are being developed? She made one suggestion which I thought was an excellent suggestion. Could there be some larger print voting cards (and perhaps Braille?) available to make it possible for people with some residual vision to vote without involving other people?

None of our members has raised a negative comment about any particular proposed polling place.

Thank you for consulting us. If we can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Best Regards

Jim Hoare

Chair

Brentwood Access Group

Facebook Group: [Access is Freedom!](#)

From: Abigail Wood
Sent: 17 October 2023 12:08
Subject: Polling station review comments

Dear Carol

Thank you for inviting the parish council to respond to the proposed polling station review. Following a council meeting, I have been asked to email you with our comments and **objection** to the planned permanent requirement for residents in the KB polling district to continue to use the Ingatestone Community Centre as their polling station.

Previously, voting for the KB polling district took place in the Roman Catholic Church in Ingatestone. Unfortunately this location has now been withdrawn as a polling station which resulted in a temporary move to the community centre at the other end of Ingatestone. For a resident living in Marks Close, walking to their polling station, the distance has increased from $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles each way to vote, which the parish council considers to be unacceptable.

Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council request that due consideration is given to using either the Library or the United Reformed Church Hall instead as a closer option to the KB polling district residents. Parking is available at the library and both locations are served by a local bus stop at the Furlongs. The Library is not open on a Thursday and the book shelves are totally moveable.

By considering one of the two locations instead, the journey distance for those voting will reduce to just under a mile (the locations are essentially opposite each other). IFPC consider it vitally important for the democratic rights of the residents of the KB polling district, that their polling station is as close as possible to where they live.

We hope that the above comments and objections will be taking into serious account when making your decision.

Kind regards
Abi

Abi Wood PSLCC, CertHE Community Governance, CiLCA, BA (Hons)
Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council



Address: Suite 2, 4 The Limes, Ingatestone, Essex, CM4 0BE

Tel: 01277 676759

<http://www.ingatestone-fryerningpc.gov.uk>

Opening Hours: Tuesday - Thursday, 9-5pm (an answer phone facility is available outside of these hours)



Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations Brentwood Labour Group Response

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this review. We have considered the maps and comments made across the Borough and have developed the feedback as outlined below.

1. Proposals where we have no objections

Blackmore & Doddinghurst

Brentwood North

Brentwood West

Brizes, Stondon Massey & South Weald

Herongate, Ingrave & West Horndon

Hutton East

Hutton North – Hutton St Peter

Ingatestone, Fryerning & Mountnessing

2. Proposals we support

Hutton North – Poplar

We support the new location and welcome the school no longer being used as a Polling Station.

Brentwood South – Hogarth

We support the alteration in polling district boundaries.

Brentwood South – Queens Road

We support the altered and expanded polling district boundaries.

Pilgrims Hatch – Ashwells

We support the creation of a new polling district.

3. Proposals where we have comments or believe changes could be beneficial

Brentwood South – Warley Mount

We would appreciate further consideration of whether the Brentwood Mosque Community Hall is viable, rather than move the polling place outside the district and ward. Alternatively, could the Seaxe Room at the Essex Arms be considered, if reasonable adjustments were made for access.

Hutton South – Thriftwood and Thrift Park

We believe that the cluster of roads that comes from Brocksparkwood, as well as potentially Wendover Gardens and Victors Crescent would be better served as part of Thrift Park, geographically – with St Stephens Church a very large polling station, with parking available, a bus stop nearby and capable of managing this increased capacity.

Hutton South – Three Arches

We understand that any development on Maple Hall has now been postponed, which makes a move unnecessary at this point. Therefore, we recommend that this site is used, as has been the historic case.

If an alternative site is used, we believe options could include investigating buildings at Thriftwood, which is just outside the ward, or alternatively that if the decision is to move the polling station to a neighbouring district, St Stephens Church would be preferable rather than using the Knights Way Centre. Given they are only 340ft apart, we feel it would lead to considerable voter confusion if both stations existed; otherwise, we have a scenario where people on Knights Way would need to walk past a polling station, on their own road for a very short distance, to get to their own polling station.

This also removes the need for extra polling station costs.

Shenfield

In line with the example of Pilgrims Hatch, we question whether a new polling place should be viable towards the North of the Ward, potentially around Shenfield School, to enable a greater number of voters to have access on foot to a polling place.

04.10.2023

Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations
Liberal Democrat Group Representations

From: David Kendall

Sent: Saturday, October 21, 2023 7:04:57 AM

Subject: Re: Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

Thank you for your e-mail.

The one particular area I am aware the Lib Dem group have a problem with is the lack of a polling station for the Heybridge area of Ingatestone / Mountnessing. The Catholic Church / Hall on the Roman Road was previously used as a polling station but in recent years that has not been possible. Instead residents have had to go all the way down to the Ingatestone Community Club to vote which is at the other end of the village and is a considerable walk particularly for the elderly.

This has definitely deterred residents from voting in the past and the issue needs to be seriously addressed. Another venue needs to be found that is nearer to the Heybridge estate including a possible portable option to ensure that more people have an opportunity to vote. I am concerned that as a Council we are not covering all the bases in terms of access and equality issues if we continue with the existing arrangements. Please could this matter be looked at again?

Thank you

Regards

David

Cllr David Kendall

Chair - FAIR Committee

Brentwood Borough Council

From: Darryl Sankey

Sent: Saturday, October 21, 2023 5:21 PM

Subject: Re: Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

Dear all, fyi, the Ingatestone & Fryerning Parish Council have requested the library or the United Reform Church, both in Ingatestone High Street and considerably closer than the Community Centre.

Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations
Representations from local residents

From: Ann Hill

Sent: 07 October 2023 13:52

Subject: Hutton North Proposed Polling Station Changes

I do not agree with closing St Peters as a polling station but think it would be a good idea to close Long Ridings School as a polling station and transfer that responsibility to Bishops Hill AC, together with some of the requirements currently handled at St Peters. Bishops Hill has easier parking which would help alleviate some of the congestion at Long Ridings and Claughton Way.

St Peters should continue as a voting location as to close it would require in longer distance for those in the very north of the catchment (I live in the middle by the way) and some people do not have a car and need to attend the polling station on foot.

Regards

Ann Hill

From: Susan Hickman

Sent: 20 October 2023 11:36

Subject: Ward Boundaries / Polling Districts

To place Great Warley village in the polling district of Herongate, Ingrave and West Horndon is a complete and utter nonsense.

Great Warley forms part of the Warley community, where local shops, public transport and leisure facilities are all available and in close proximity.

The boundary lines of the previous ward of Warley made complete sense and require no change, simply for change sake.

Susan Hickman
Bird Lane
Great Warley.
CM133JU

Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations
The Conservative Group Representation

Please find below representation from The Conservative Group in respect of the 2023 Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations:

1. New Brentwood North Ward – Location, Health & Safety and Impact of Use

The Polling Station at Doddinghurst Road Church should be reviewed to see if there is a more suitable site available to serve for the Sawyers Hall Polling District located in the Swayers Hall Lane area that would better serve the needs of local residents, the majority of whom live in that area. There is a wide choice of public authority buildings in the area that should be capable of serving to facilitate such a polling place / station.

The Polling District boundary should reflect the individual local community be reshaped so if the above is possible then we would suggest that Doddinghurst Road and offshoots (e.g. Rushdene Road and St Kildas Road) should be included in the St Georges Polling District. This would mean that residents in the Doddinghurst Road area would be able to vote at same polling station as their close neighbours from nearby roads such as Kimpton Road and Robin Hood Road.

We believe these changes have the potential to provide more convenient and safer locations for the majority of residents and this would encourage increased participation in the democratic process.

2. New Hutton North Ward – Location, Health & Safety & Impact of Use

Long Ridings School should be retained as a polling station. It is a convenient and well known location within the area and has been used as a polling station since the estate was first built in the 1950s.

The draft proposals of just two polling stations do not recognise the significantly increased size of the ward and the geographical separation of the three distinct neighbourhoods located within it.

Due to the indirect road access between the Long Ridings estate and Rayleigh Road we believe the suggestion of removing Long Ridings School as polling station is unacceptable and will reduce participation in the democratic process by local residents.

Rayleigh Road is not a suitable location for many residents living on the Long Ridings estate, presents safety concerns and would deter people from accessing their polling station. Access via the woodland walk in Hutton Poplars does not meet accessibility requirements and would not be safe for all residents, particularly in the hours of darkness. It does not have lighting or a prepared tarmac surface so walking using this route does not meet the health and safety requirements of residents as many of them (especially women) will feel unsafe using it.

Rayleigh Road suffers from significant traffic congestion problems at peak times and we believe this will deter those who might consider driving to the Adult Learning Centre polling station and this will similarly reduce participation in the democratic process.

We note the comment re: suitability of the Long Ridings Polling Station and we believe that meaningful discussions with Long Ridings Primary School could address any concerns there may be over accessibility (e.g. choice of classroom and/or temporary ramp). We propose retaining the Long Ridings polling place/station (making any improvements to access needed), together with the St Peters Polling Station and the newly proposed Adult Learning Centre for residents living around the Rayleigh Road and Hutton Poplars area.

The Polling Districts should be suitably modified to accommodate these three polling stations.

3. New Hutton South Ward – Location, Impact of Use

We do not support the replacement of the Three Arch Bridge Community Hall with a polling place at Knights Way Centre, which is outside of the polling district. Instead we believe that the Three Arches estate residents should be able to vote at a polling station set-up at King George's Playing Fields (KGPF) - which is within the Polling District, centrally located, accessible and has ample parking.

Having two Polling Stations as close as Knights Way Centre and St Stephens adds to confusion for voters and would lead to road congestion at busy times in an area with little parking provision – the effect of this would be to discourage participation.

King Georges Playing Fields is readily accessible for residents with the entrance centrally located on Ingrave Road, with good pedestrian access from multiple directions and plenty of parking available on site with free parking for 30 minutes which is perfectly adequate for voting.

4. New Warley Ward – Location, Impact of Use

The Clements Park polling district should be expanded to include residents at "The Galleries". Residents would then be able to vote with the rest of the local community within Clements Park at Holly Trees polling station. The draft proposal boundary creates an unjustified division between close neighbours and can lead to local unnecessary confusion over polling places.

Christ Church Centre polling station to be moved to Eagle Way (Trampoline Centre/Keys Hall) to accommodate the large number of residents living around the original Eagle Way housing estate, the old Ford Head Office and new residential developments. The draft proposal does not reflect the optimal location given the increased geographical distribution of residents in this area and is not offering a central location readily accessible to the majority of voters in the polling district.

We are content with the proposals for the other nine wards. Please feel free to call to discuss us should any points require clarification or alternatively if you wish to meet us to discuss.

Regards,

Cllr Keith Barber
Hutton North Ward, Brentwood Borough Council

(on behalf of The Conservative Group – Brentwood Borough Council)

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**ORDINARY COUNCIL
27 SEPTEMBER 2023**

REPORT TITLE:	Request for Dispensation for Attendance
REPORT OF:	Claire Mayhew - Monitoring Officer

REPORT SUMMARY

To advise Members of a request for a dispensation for two members who are currently unable to attend Councils meeting due to ill health and ask that Members of the Council endorse the request.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. That a dispensation is granted to Cllr Andy Wiles for the period 26th June 2023 to 2nd May 2024 for non-attendance of Council meetings due to ill health.**
- R2. That a dispensation is granted to Cllr Mark Lewis for the period 29th September 2023 to 2nd May 2024 for non-attendance of Council meetings due to ill health.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 Section 85 Local Government Act 1972 provides that if a member of a local authority fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance at any meeting of the authority, they shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the authority.
- 1.2 This report seeks the Council's agreement to grant a dispensation for Cllr Wiles and Cllr Lewis who have been unable to attend council meetings on health grounds.

1.3 Group Leaders have been consulted.

REPORT AUTHOR: **Name:** Claire Mayhew
 Title: Joint Acting Director of People and
 Governance and Monitoring Officer
 Phone: 01277 312471
 Email: claire.mayhew@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
None	