

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**REPORT BY RETURNING OFFICER**

<b>TO:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>31 MARCH 2009</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>EUROPEAN ELECTIONS - 4 JUNE 2009 - POLLING PLACES IN BATTLE WARD</b>		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	<b>CLLR LOVELOCK</b>	<b>AREA COVERED:</b>	<b>LEADER</b>
<b>SERVICE:</b>	<b>ELECTORAL REGISTRATION</b>	<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>BATTLE</b>
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**1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT**

- 1.1 Further to Minute 30 of the Council meeting on 16 October 2007, this report updates Council on the process for this year's European elections and count, and seeks confirmation of a change of polling place for polling district AB in Battle Ward. Due to building work, the agreed polling place at Battle Library is unlikely to be available and arrangements are therefore being made to re-locate the polling place, this year, to Emmanuel Methodist Church Hall, 448 Oxford Road, Reading. It also notes the change of name of the polling place for the Battle A polling district.

**2. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

- 2.1 That the arrangements for the 2009 European election and count be noted;
- 2.2 That the polling place for polling district AB in Battle Ward for the 2009 European elections be Emmanuel Church Hall if Battle Library is not available.
- 2.3 That the change of name of the polling place for the Battle A polling district, from the Reading Education Centre to the Cranbury Centre, be noted.

**3. POLICY CONTEXT**

- 3.1 It is the Council's policy to encourage residents to involve themselves in the democratic processes and the proposals in this report are aimed at providing

voters with places to vote, which are as convenient as possible within the resources available to the Council.

- 3.2 However, if any voter is unable to reach the correct designated polling place, s/he is entitled to have a postal vote on demand provided an application for such a vote is made within the statutory time limit for the election in question.

#### **4. 2009 ELECTION PROCESS**

- 4.1 The European elections will be held in the UK on Thursday 4 June 2009. The Notice will be published on Monday 27 April 2009. As in previous years, Reading will be in the constituency of the South-East Region. The Regional Returning Officer (RRO) will be Mark Heath, the Returning Officer of Southampton City Council.

- 4.2 The count for the European elections will be undertaken on a local authority basis rather than by parliamentary constituencies. The sealed ballot boxes will be returned to the Civic Offices at close of poll (10.00 pm), and the votes will be verified in the Council Chamber during the morning of Friday 5 June 2009.

- 4.3 The count for the European Elections will be held at Rivermead on the evening of Sunday 7 June 2009. This will start at 6.00pm, by order of the RRO. Many European countries will be voting on the Sunday, and the result cannot be declared until after close of poll in Europe, ie 9.00pm.

#### **5. POLLING PLACES**

- 5.1 The Council reviewed its polling districts and polling places in October 2007, when it reaffirmed the use of Battle Library as the polling place for the Battle AB polling district. This polling district has one polling station.

- 5.2 Battle Library is currently closed to the public whilst building works are undertaken, funded by a successful Lottery grant. These are due for completion in late May / early June 2009, but in anticipation of their not being completed we have made alternative arrangements for the polling station, this year, to be moved to the nearby Emmanuel Methodist Church.

- 5.3 Whilst the polling place for Battle A polling district has not changed location, the venue's name has been changed, from the Reading Education Centre to the Cranbury Centre. This polling place has two polling stations. The premise has been refurbished and now has improved disabled access, from Cranbury Road.

#### **6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

- 6.1 The Council seeks to achieve its strategic aims through promoting the participation of Reading people in local democracy.

#### **7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 7.1 The poll cards that are sent to all voters in Battle AB will include a map showing the polling station and will carry notification that the polling station may have changed. Additional signage will be provided at Battle Library.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1983 require that every Parliamentary Constituency must be divided into polling districts and that each District Council must divide its area into polling districts for that part of the Constituency within its area. Reading falls within the area of two Parliamentary Constituencies - Reading East and Reading West.
- 8.2 In exercising its powers, the Council is required to give all electors "such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances". In addition, in choosing polling places, only places which are accessible to electors who are disabled must be chosen so far as is reasonably and practicable.
- 8.3 Unless there are special circumstances, the polling place for any polling district should be located in the district itself.
- 8.4 A polling place is usually the building to which people go to vote and polling stations are the locations within the building at which electors obtain their voting papers.
- 8.5 The Returning Officer is required to provide a sufficient number of polling stations in each polling place and to allocate electors to the polling stations in such manner as he or she thinks most convenient.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Electoral Registration service has a budget of £7,000 for the hire of polling places.

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1 Report to Council, October 2007.