

Report To:	COUNCIL
Date:	24 JULY 2023
Heading:	POLLING PLACES AND POLLING DISTRICT REVIEW WORKING GROUP
Executive Lead Member:	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
Ward/s:	ALL
Key Decision:	NO
Subject to Call-In:	NO

Purpose of Report

The report outlines proposals to ensure that the Council fulfils its statutory obligation to review polling places and polling districts.

<p>Recommendation(s)</p> <p>Council is request to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the establishment of a Polling Places and Polling District Review Working Group • The Working Group to consist of 7 Members in accordance with Political Balance. • Appoint the members of the Working Group and appoint the Leader of the Council as Chairman • The draft timetable as detailed in the report be approved.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

To comply with legislation requiring the Council to undertake a periodic review within the compulsory review period.

Alternative Options Considered

None considered .

Detailed Information

In accordance with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 the Council is required to complete a review of its polling districts and polling places at least once every 5 years. The next compulsory review period commences on 1 October 2023, which is when the review recommendations should be published for public consultation before a final report to Council on the 27 November 2023.

Formal Review Process

The length of the review process is not prescribed. However, it must allow sufficient time for public consultation on the existing and proposed polling places and polling districts, usually a period of 4 weeks in total. It should also provide sufficient time for the Council to consider any representations received and determine the new arrangements. During the consultation period the Acting Returning Officer's proposals on the existing and proposed arrangements must also be published.

Administration of the Review and Draft Timetable

In order to administer the process of the review efficiently and effectively, it is proposed that the Council delegates the detailed work of the review to a Working Group to provide guidance and consider all representations.

At the end of the review process, the Working Group will make its recommendations to a meeting of the Council for ratification, following which the new polling districts and polling places will be formally designated.

Polling Places Review Working Group	Week commencing 31 July 2023
Polling Places Review Working Group	Week commencing 21 August 2023
Polling Places Review Working Group	Week commencing 11 September 2023
Notice of Review & Recommendations Published <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ARO to publish proposals on polling places and polling districts	29 September 2023
End of Consultation Period	27 October 2023
Polling Places Review Working Group <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To finalise recommendations to the Council for the new polling places and polling districts	Week commencing 6 November 2023
Full Council Meeting	27 November 2023
Publication of review result (Subject to Council approval)	4 December 2023

Representations

The Council is required to seek views or comments from electors and any persons or bodies with expertise in access to premises or facilities for persons with any type of disability. Representations will also be sought from the Acting Returning Officer for both Parliamentary constituencies. Local political parties, councillors and parish councils will also be consulted. Comments may relate to existing polling districts and polling places or any proposed polling districts or polling places.

Overview of Legislative Requirements

When undertaking the review the Council is required to give due regard to the following considerations:-

- It must seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
- It must seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled
- Where possible the polling place should be in its own polling district. Special circumstances apply which allow for the polling place to be outside the district where there is no suitable polling place in the district and in these circumstances regard should be had to the convenience of electors
- Where possible each parish (and each parish ward) should be a separate polling district
- Where boundaries for different elections are no longer co-terminous the areas no longer co-terminous must be made into separate polling districts.

Completion of the Review

Once the Council has agreed the proposals, details of the new polling districts and places must be made available to the public. This will be published on the website and at the Council's Offices. The reasons for choosing each polling place and districts must be given.

In addition, the Council must also publish:-

- All correspondence sent to the ARO in connection with the review or sent by the ARO to persons with particular expertise on access issues
- All representations made by any person in connection with the review
- The minutes of any meeting held by the Council or the Working Group
- Details of where the results of the review have been published.

Appeals Process

Following the conclusion of the review, specified persons have the right to make representations to the Electoral Commission. If, on receipt of the representations, the Commission find that the review did not:-

- meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency or a body of them; or
- take sufficient account of the accessibility for disabled persons of a polling station/polling stations with a designated polling place

then the Commission may direct the Council to make any alterations to the polling places as they think necessary and if the alterations are not made within two months, make the alterations themselves.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

- Ensure effective community leadership, through good governance, transparency, accountability and appropriate behaviours
Put our residents at the heart of what we do and inform, consult and engage with them

Legal:

Legal requirements contained in the report.

Finance:

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	Review can be kept within existing budgets
General Fund – Capital Programme	
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
No tolerance. Failure to complete review within timescales will lead to impact on preparation for PCC/Mayoral elections in 2024.	Project managed through corporate structure to ensure timelines are met and can be incorporated into the register of electors publication in December 2024.

Human Resources:

The administration of the review can be carried out by electoral services in view of there being no scheduled elections in 2023.

Environmental/Sustainability:

None identified.

Equalities:

The review will have regard to equality of access and the needs of voters at polling places by ensuring that there are reasonable facilities to vote where practicable. It will also incorporate any changes required through implementation of the Elections Act.

Other Implications

None identified

Reason(s) for Urgency

Not applicable

Reason(s) for Exemption

Not applicable

Background Papers

None

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