

<b>Report To:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>27 NOVEMBER 2023</b>
<b>Heading:</b>	<b>POLLING PLACES AND POLLING DISTRICT REVIEW</b>
<b>Executive Lead Member:</b>	<b>LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</b>
<b>Ward/s:</b>	<b>ALL WARDS</b>
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Subject to Call-In:</b>	<b>NO</b>

## **Purpose of Report**

This report sets out proposals for the revision of some polling districts and polling places following the statutory review required by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013. The proposals are based on the recommendations of the Polling Places Review Working Group.

## **Recommendation(s)**

- a) that the Council approve the recommendations of the review Working Group as set out in the minutes of the meetings held on 7 August, 21 August, 11 September and 6 November 2023. (Appendices "A", "B", "C" and "D" refer).
- b) that subject to the above, the Council approve the final proposals report, setting out the changes to the polling places and polling districts, having considered any representations received during the consultation period and included therein (Appendices "E" and "F").
- c) that the Chief Executive be requested to formally publish the notice of conclusion of the review, its findings, the responses from consultees and all other relevant documentation.
- d) that the Council note, in the event of a polling place being unavailable in the run up to an election, the (Acting) Returning Officer has delegated authority to select an appropriate alternative and formal retrospective approval be sought by Council following the election, should this be a permanent proposed change.

## **Reasons for Recommendation(s)**

To comply with the legislation which requires the Council to undertake periodic reviews of polling districts and polling places.

To ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and that, as far as is reasonable and practicable, polling places are accessible to disabled electors.

## **Alternative Options Considered**

None, failure to publish proposals within the statutory period would result in the Council not meeting the requirements as prescribed in the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 and therefore failing to meet its obligations.

## **Detailed Information**

### **Introduction**

In accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council has a duty to divide the electoral area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each of those districts. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 also requires every local authority to start and complete a review of its polling places and districts at least once every five years within a designated 16 month period.

### **Review Process**

The Polling Place Review Working Group, as appointed by the Council have conducted the review and the final findings of the group are included in the report for consideration by the Council. The Polling Places Review Working Group (the Working Group) met on four occasions, the minutes of those meetings are attached. (See appendices "A", "B", "C" and "D").

The public consultation period commenced on 2 October 2023 for a period of 4 weeks, ending on 31 October 2023. During this period views and comments were sought from electors, interested individuals and local bodies with expertise in accessibility for disabled persons. Additionally feedback was invited from all District and County Councillors, MP's and the Acting Returning Officers for both the Parliamentary constituencies of Mansfield and Newark and Sherwood, which include some electoral areas within the Ashfield District.

Maps showing the existing and proposed polling districts and polling places, as a result of the work undertaken by the Working Group, were published on the Council's website and hard copies were available for inspection upon request.

Upon agreement by the Council that the proposals be approved, details of the new polling places and polling districts must be made available to the public, including relevant maps. Those changes will then be incorporated into the register when it is published on 1 December 2023.

## **Requirements of the Review**

In undertaking the review the Council must have 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 situated outside of the polling district where there is no suitable polling place within the polling district, and in these circumstances regard should be had to the convenience of electors
- Where possible each parish (and each parish ward) should be separate polling districts
- Where boundaries for different elections are no longer co-terminous the areas no longer co-terminous must be made into separate polling districts

## **Consultation Responses**

Attached at Appendix "E" is a summary of the responses received during the consultation period.

The Working Group considered each of these representations at its meeting on the 6 November to determine if changes were necessary because of those representations having been made. The recommendations in respect of the consideration of the response by the Working Group are set out in the minutes of the meeting as appended to this report at Appendix "D".

## **Final Proposals and Schedule of Agreed Polling Districts and Polling Places**

A copy of the final proposals incorporating all of the recommendations of the Working Group is attached for consideration by the Council at Appendix "F".

## **Appeals Process**

Following the conclusion of the local authority's review, certain persons have the right to make representations to the Electoral Commission. The Commission will only consider representations that the review was not conducted correctly and therefore failed to meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency or has failed to take sufficient account of accessibility to disabled persons to the polling stations within a polling place.

## **Implications**

### **Corporate Plan:**

Enable thriving, prosperous and self-sufficient communities where people shape their own futures. Ensure effective community leadership, through good governance, transparency, accountability and appropriate behaviours.

### **Legal:**

Every local authority is required to start and complete a review of its polling districts and polling places at least once every five years. The compulsory review period commenced on 1 October 2023. [RLD 15/11/2023]

**Finance:** No additional financial implications. [PH 15/11/2023].

<b>Budget Area</b>	<b>Implication</b>
General Fund – Revenue Budget	Costs arising from the review can be met from existing budgets.
General Fund – Capital Programme	None.
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	None.
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	None.

**Risk:**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Confusion for electors in the event of a drastic and unnecessary change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances</li><li>• 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</li></ul>
Failure to comply with legislative requirements to review its polling district and polling places every 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of polling places and polling districts to ensure that thorough consideration has been given to support accessibility for all electors and to comply with legislative requirements</li></ul>

**Human Resources:**

There are no issues arising out of the report.

**Environmental/Sustainability:**

None.

**Equalities:**

The proposals have taken into account the accessibility needs of disabled persons and provides reasonable facilities to vote as far as is practicable.

**Other Implications:**

None.

## **Reason(s) for Urgency**

None.

## **Reason(s) for Exemption**

Not applicable.

## **Background Papers**

None.

## **Report Author and Contact Officer**

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