

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL – TUESDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2018

Title of report	INTERIM REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES
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Purpose of report	To approve the final proposals for the interim review of polling districts and polling places.
Council Priorities	Homes and Communities
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	The average cost for hiring a building for use of a polling station is currently £164.30. The cost of providing a mobile polling station is significantly higher at approximately £1,920 which does not include the cost of the extensive time it takes in setting these up. The proposals see the removal of the two mobile polling stations thus creating a saving to the overall polling station budget and a saving in staff resource.
Link to relevant CAT	No direct implications.
Risk Management	Failure to undertake a compulsory review will see the Council failing in its duties under the Representation of the People Act 1983, as amended by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013. There is no risk attached to undertaking an interim review save for the duplication of work within a short timeframe.
Equalities Impact Assessment	In determining where polling places should be located, the Council must seek to ensure that all electors have reasonable facilities for voting and that as far as is reasonable and practical, polling places which are accessible to all electors. These issues were considered when making the recommendations.
Human Rights	No direct implications.
Transformational Government	No direct implications.
Comments of Head of Paid Service	Report is satisfactory

Comments of Section 151 Officer	Report is satisfactory
Comments of Monitoring Officer	Report is satisfactory
Consultees	Consultations were carried out with the MP, all elected members of the Council, polling station staff, parish councils and the electorate of North West Leicestershire.
Background papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 • Schedule of current polling districts and polling places • Draft recommendations for consultation
Recommendations	<p>IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT COUNCIL:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NOTES THE CONSULTATION RESPONSES MADE IN RESPECT OF THE REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES FOR NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE; 2. APPROVES THE FINAL PROPOSALS IN RESPECT OF THE REVIEW, AS SET OUT IN APPENDIX A TO THE REPORT; 3. DELEGATES AUTHORITY TO THE RETURNING OFFICER TO MAKE, WHERE NECESSARY, ALTERATIONS TO THE DESIGNATION OF ANY POLLING PLACE PRIOR TO THE NEXT FULL REVIEW IN CONSULTATION WITH WARD MEMBERS AND GROUP LEADERS.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In accordance with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, every council in England and Wales must undertake and complete a review of all of the polling districts and polling places in its area every five years.
- 1.2 Between compulsory reviews, all polling places and polling stations used should be kept under consideration, and an evaluation of their suitability carried out after each election. If any changes are identified as being desirable, the same steps should be followed as for conducting the compulsory review.
- 1.3 The council can carry out an interim review and change some of their polling districts and polling places before the end of the 5-year cycle, but the same processes should be undertaken for the affected areas as for the compulsory review. Without going through these processes, the council will have difficulty evidencing their decision making and explaining how they took into consideration the reasonable requirements of electors.
- 1.4 The next compulsory review is not scheduled to commence until after 1 October 2018 to be completed by no later than 31 January 2020. This does not allow sufficient time to have it completed in time for the local elections in May 2019.

- 1.5 Therefore at its meeting on 12 September 2017, the Council agreed to undertake an interim review this year for completion by November 2018.

2.0 TERMINOLOGY

- 2.1 **Polling district:** the area created by the division of a constituency, ward or European Parliamentary electoral region into smaller parts, within which a polling place can be determined, which is convenient to electors. In North West Leicestershire, each ward is divided into a number of polling districts which each have a two or three letter code e.g. AC, ABA based on the ward in which they are located.
- 2.2 **Polling place:** the location (normally the building) in which polling stations will be sited by the Returning Officer.
- 2.3 **Polling station:** the room where the poll takes place (e.g. community room), which must be located within the polling place. The polling station is chosen by the Returning Officer. It is publicised in the Notice of Situation of Polling Stations and communicated to electors via their poll cards and is also published on the Council's website.
- 2.4 Where possible, every polling district should have its own dedicated polling place and all electors in that polling district are assigned to vote at the polling station located in that place.
- 2.5 It should be noted that the terms 'polling place' and 'polling station' are often used interchangeably and most people consider the polling place (such as a community centre) to be the polling station. However, it is possible to have more than one polling station per polling place (e.g. two sets of staff, two ballot boxes, two electoral registers) and these double stations are often provided in polling districts with a large number of electors or where there is a high turnout or a large number of people voting at certain times of the day.

3. THE DESIGNATION OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

- 3.1 The designation of the district's polling districts and places is the responsibility of the Council.
- 3.2 The allocation of polling stations within polling places is not a Council function and is the responsibility of the Returning Officer for the election concerned. However, in practice, the location of likely polling stations is a key consideration when identifying polling places and the boundaries of polling districts, particularly in those areas of the district where there are no suitable premises e.g. community venues or schools.
- 3.3 Polling districts for local government elections are not automatically part of the statutory review. However, the Electoral Commission advises that the polling districts for UK parliamentary and local government elections should always be the same, and it therefore follows that any review of parliamentary polling arrangements should be conducted simultaneously with one of local government arrangements. Consequently, polling districts and polling places adopted by the Council for parliamentary elections will also be effective for local government elections.

4. AIMS OF THE REVIEW

- 4.1 In conducting a review the Council must:
- (a) seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;

- (b) seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places it is responsible for are accessible to all electors;
 - (c) have regard to the accessibility of disabled persons to potential polling stations in the polling place;
 - (d) other than in special circumstances, locate the polling place in the polling district it serves; and
 - (e) ensure the polling place is small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the polling district how they will be able to reach the polling station.
- 4.2 The focus of the review was to identify wherever possible polling places/polling stations which met set criteria, relating to:
- Location
 - Facilities
 - Accessibility
 - Health and Safety

5. INTELLIGENCE AND DATA COLLECTION

- 5.1 Significant preparatory work was undertaken in advance of the review to gather intelligence provided by officers including presiding officers and poll clerks. In addition, statistical information was collated about parliamentary and local electorates, voters in person, postal voters and polling station turnout at previous elections. Figures from the 2017 parliamentary general election are of particular importance, as parliamentary general elections are generally when the turnout is highest. Information about developments in the district was also all taken into consideration.
- 5.2 Public consultation took place between 30 October 2017 and 2 January 2018 and views were invited on the existing and alternative polling arrangements. A number of representations were received and these were all taken into account when compiling the draft recommendations.

6. POLLING PLACE/STATION VISITS

- 6.1 Officers undertook visits to polling places/stations between April and June 2018. The purpose of these visits was to assess the suitability of existing arrangements and to evaluate alternative polling stations in light of comments and representations received throughout the consultation process.
- 6.2 When assessing the suitability of polling places/stations an assessment of the following issues were taken into account:
- Location and accessibility to electors within the polling district
 - Size – can it accommodate more than one polling station if required?
 - Accessibility – is the building accessible to all those entitled to vote at the polling station?
 - Availability – is the building readily available in the event of an unscheduled election?
 - Facilities available in the venue including parking, heating, lighting, toilet facilities and security
 - Public buildings – the election rules allow the Returning Officer the free use of buildings maintained by the council including schools maintained by the local authority and free schools.
 - Private buildings – in the absence of suitable public owned buildings, churches, clubs and other private sector buildings conveniently located and accessible to electors are considered for designation as the polling place

- Mobiles – in the absence of any suitable public or private building in or adjacent to the polling district a mobile station will be considered for designation as a polling place. Given the difficulties of heating, lighting, security, comfort of staff and electors, the negative reaction from residents living close to the site of a mobile and the significantly higher cost of locating a mobile polling station, these are considered only as a last resort.
- The potential impact on election turnout of moving the polling station to a different location.

7. USE OF SCHOOLS AS POLLING STATIONS.

- 7.1 Some of the reasons used for seeking alternative premises for polling stations involve the use of schools and the need for them to close. We do try not to use them where there is a suitable alternative but often this is not possible. The recommendations would see the use of only six schools from 68 polling stations. To assist members, the advice of the Department for Education is set out below:-

“Under current legislation, Returning Officers (ROs) have the right to select schools as venues for polling stations. If there is an area which can be used with a separate entrance and isolated from the rest of the school, the school can continue to operate. If not, the school must close on the day of the poll. Schools which need to close as a result of being used as polling stations can move to alternative accommodation or make up the lost day by other means. The lost day could be made up at the beginning or end of a term, or a training day could be arranged on the day of the poll if the head teacher or governors so wish. There are currently no plans to change or amend this legislation which is found in the Representation of the People Act, 1983, Chapter 2, Schedule 1, Part III, paragraph 22. This paragraph effectively renders all mainstream schools liable for use by the RO of the local authority irrespective of how they were procured.”

8. RESPONSES TO DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 On 24 July 2018, the draft recommendations were considered by the Electoral Review Working Party and requests were made for further visits in order that they be satisfied that every potential alternative had been explored, particularly regarding the use of schools. The final proposed schedule is attached at Appendix A.
- 8.2 The outcome of the consultation and the views of the Electoral Review Working Party have been used to inform the final recommendations.

9. FURTHER REVIEWS

- 9.1 A statutory review needs to be undertaken between 1 October 2018 and May 2020.
- 9.2 On occasion, it may be necessary to change the designation of a polling place outside of the statutory review process. This can arise as a result of premises being closed, or where better facilities are identified.
- 9.3 The Council is requested to authorise the Returning Officer, in consultation with group leaders and ward members to make changes to the designation of polling places which occur outside of the formal review process.

Proposed Polling Places Schedule 2018

Ward No.	Ward	Polling District	Polling Place/ Station
1	Appleby	ABA	Church Hall, Church Street, Appleby Magna
		ABB	Old Schoolroom, Chilcote
		ABC	Church Hall, Church Street, Appleby Magna
		ABD	Parish Church, Snarestone
		ABE	Church Hall, Newton Road, Sweptstone
		ABF	Newton Burgoland Congregational Church
2	Ashby Castle	AC	Legion House, South Street, Ashby de la Zouch
3	Ashby Holywell	AHA	Beeches Public House, Burton Road, Ashby de la Zouch
		AHB	Beeches Public House, Burton Road, Ashby de la Zouch
4	Ashby Ivanhoe	AIA	Ashby Hill Top Primary School, Ashby de la Zouch
		AIB	Browns Court, Ashby de la Zouch
5	Ashby Money Hill	AM	Ashby Library, North Street, Ashby de la Zouch
6	Ashby Willesley	ASA	Willesley Recreation Ground Building, Ridgway Road, Ashby de la Zouch
		ASB	Ashby Hastings Scout HQ, Wilfred Gardens, Ashby de la Zouch
7	Ashby Woulds	AWA	Moirs Replan Offices, Ashby Road, Moira
		AWB	County Primary School, Occupation Road, Albert Village
8	Bardon	BAA	Bardon Hill Sports Club, Bardon Close, Coalville
		BAB	
9	Blackfordby	BLA	Blackfordby Village Hall, Sandtop Lane, Blackfordby
		BLB	Moira Sure Start Centre, Moira Primary School, Blackfordby Lane, Moira
		BLC	Blackfordby Village Hall, Sandtop Lane, Blackfordby
10	Broom Leys	BRA	Hall Lane Methodist Church, Hall Lane, Whitwick
		BRB	Greenacres Community Centre, Linford Crescent, Coalville
		BRC	
11	Castle Donington Castle	CA	Sure Start Centre, Mount Pleasant, Castle Donington
12	Castle Donington Central	CE	Community Hub, Bondgate, Castle Donington
13	Castle Donington Park	CP	Community Hub, Bondgate, Castle Donington
14	Castle Rock	CRA	Oak Storer Hall, Oaks in Charnwood
		CRB	Agar Nook Community Centre, Belgrave Close, Coalville
15	Coalville East	CTA	Broom Leys School, Broom Leys Road, Coalville
		CTB	
16	Coalville West	CWA	Community Room, Central Court, Avenue Road, Coalville
		CWB	Christ Church Hall, London Road, Coalville
17	Daleacre Hill	DHA	Village Hall, Nottingham Road, Kegworth
		DHB	Lockington Village Hall, Hemington Lane, Lockington
		DHC	Function Room the Jolly Sailor PH, 21 Main Street, Hemington
18	Ellistown & Battleflat	EB	Community Centre, Whitehill Road, Ellistown

Ward No.	Ward	Polling District	Polling Place/ Station
19	Greenhill	GR	Greenhill Community Church, Charnborough Road, Coalville
20	Hermitage	HE	Hermitage Leisure Centre, Whitwick
21	Holly Hayes	HH	Whitwick Methodist Church, Nr. Market Place, Whitwick
22	Hugglescote St John's	HJ	Hugglescote Community Centre, Grange Road, Hugglescote
23	Hugglescote St Mary's	HMA	Hugglescote Community Centre, Grange Road, Hugglescote
		HMB	Community Room, Central Court, Avenue Road, Coalville
24	Ibstock East	IEA	Meeting Room, Baptist Chapel, Chapel Street, Ibstock
		IEB	Battram Access Centre, Battram Road, Ellistown
25	Ibstock West	IW	The Schoolroom, Wesleyan Reform Church, Melbourne Road, Ibstock
26	Kegworth	KE	Kegworth Library, High Street, Kegworth
27	Long Whatton & Diseworth	LDA	The Guide Friendship Centre, Main Street, Long Whatton
		LDB	Village Hall, Hall Gate, Diseworth
		LDC	Belton Village Hall, School Lane, Belton
28	Measham North	MN	St Laurence Measham Church Hall, High Street, Measham
29	Measham South	MS	Measham Leisure Centre, High Street, Measham
30	Oakthorpe & Donisthorpe	ODA	Donisthorpe Woodlands Centre, Church Street, Donisthorpe
		ODB	Methodist Schoolroom, Acresford
		ODC	Leisure Centre, Measham Road, Oakthorpe
31	Ravenstone & Packington	RPA	The Pavilion, Ravenslea, Ravenstone
		RPB	Memorial Hall, High Street, Packington
		RPC	
32	Sence Valley	SEA	Heather Village Hall, Sweptstone Road, Heather
		SEB	The Schoolroom, Wesleyan Reform Church, Melbourne Road, Ibstock
33	Snibston North	SNA SNB	Ebenezer Baptist Church, Ashby Road, Coalville
34	Snibston South	SS	Full Gospel Mission Pentecostal Church, James Street, Coalville
35	Thornborough	TBA	Community Room, Howe Court, Howe Road, Whitwick
		TBB	Holy Cross Parish Rooms, Parsonwood Hill, Whitwick
36	Thringstone	TS	Thringstone Miners Social Centre, Homestead Road, Thringstone
37	Valley	VAA	Swannington Institute, Main Street, Swannington
		VAB	Viscount Beaumont Primary School, Ashby Road, Coleorton
		VAC	Village Hall, Church Lane, Osgathorpe
38	Worthington & Breedon	WBA	St Matthews Church, Church Street, Worthington
		WBB WBC WBD	C of E Primary School, School Lane, Newbold
		WBE WBF	C of E Primary School, Main Street, Breedon on the Hill
		WBG	Beaumont Centre, Nottingham Road, Peggs Green.