

**NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL – 11 NOVEMBER 2014**

Title of report	<b>REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES</b>
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Purpose of report	To approve the final proposals for the statutory review of polling districts and polling places.
Council Priorities	Homes and Communities
<p>Implications:</p> <p>Financial/Staff</p> <p>Link to relevant CAT</p> <p>Risk Management</p> <p>Equalities Impact Assessment</p> <p>Human Rights</p> <p>Transformational Government</p>	<p>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 approximately £1,920. The proposals see a possible introduction of two mobile polling stations instead of hiring buildings which will have an overall impact on the budget of an increase of approximately £3,500 which will be met from existing budgets and Government funding.</p> <p>No direct implications.</p> <p>Failure to undertake the 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>No direct implications.</p> <p>No direct implications.</p>

Comments of Head of Paid Service	The report is satisfactory.
Comments of Section 151 Officer	The report is satisfactory.
Comments of Deputy Monitoring Officer	The 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"> <li>• <a href="#">The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Schedule of current polling districts and polling places</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Consultation responses</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Polling station survey feedback from polling staff</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Draft recommendations for consultation</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Location maps including street lists</a></li> </ul>
Recommendations	<p><b>IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT COUNCIL:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. NOTES THE CONSULTATION RESPONSES MADE IN RESPECT OF THE REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES FOR NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE;</b></li> <li><b>2. APPROVES THE FINAL PROPOSALS IN RESPECT OF THE REVIEW, AS SET OUT IN APPENDIX A TO THE REPORT;</b></li> <li><b>3. REQUESTS THAT THE ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER MAKES THE NECESSARY AMENDMENTS TO POLLING DISTRICTS TO TAKE EFFECT FROM PUBLICATION OF THE ELECTORAL REGISTER ON 1 DECEMBER 2014;</b></li> <li><b>4. 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.</b></li> </ol>

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 amended the Representation of the People Act 1983 by including a new provision altering the timing of statutory reviews of Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. This means that all local authorities have a duty to complete a statutory review of their polling districts and polling places between 1 October 2013 and 31 January 2015. These reviews will then take place on a five yearly cycle, reflecting the move to fixed term parliaments.
- 1.2 Given that this Council was undergoing a local ward boundary review and European Parliamentary elections were held in May, followed directly by the transition to IER from

July 2014 onwards, the review commenced as soon as possible within the new cycle to enable changes to be put in place in advance of the deadline.

## **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.

## **3.0 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.

## **4.0 AIMS OF THE REVIEW**

- 4.1 In conducting a statutory 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

## **5.0 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. In particular, turnout figures from the elections between 2010 and 2014 were considered. Figures from the 2010 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 Monday 9 June and Friday 18 July 2014 and views were invited on the existing and alternative polling arrangements. A number of representations were received from elected members and parish councils and these were all taken into account when compiling the draft recommendations.

## **6.0 POLLING PLACE/STATION VISITS**

- 6.1 Officers undertook visits to polling places/stations during July and August 2014. 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.

## 7.0 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 ten schools from 69 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.”

## 8.0 RESPONSES TO DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 On 12 August 2014, the draft recommendations were published and views on these were sought from those who had already made representations together with all parish councils and elected members.

The following comments were received:-

Response by	Comments	Officer response
Cllr Wyatt	I would not support and I'm sure many locals will not support the Agar Nook Community Centre being a polling station. I believe using this may affect turnout due to access and location. I believe it would be best to leave the polling station at the school.	We do try, where possible, to avoid the use of schools to minimise any disruption. Sometimes this is not possible if suitable alternative premises cannot be identified. However, in this case, it was found that the Community Centre has sufficient facilities to act as a polling station and is in close proximity to the school. It is therefore recommended that no change be made to the proposal to use Agar Nook Community Centre.
Chris Smith on behalf of NWL Labour group	Thank you very much for the final recommendations. I can see you have been busy and been able to take on many of the suggestions. I'll study them carefully and I'm sure I'll have some further comments.	

	<p>I particularly like the ward coding system. You might wish to consider swapping Ashby Willesley and Ashby Woulds, and changing Sence Valley to SE so that the coding is in the same alphabetical order as the ward names.</p>	<p>The suggested minor changes to the coding system are logical and the changes have been made accordingly.</p>
<p>Chris Smith on behalf of NWL Labour group</p>	<p>As promised some further comments on the polling district review:</p> <p><b>Ashby Ivanhoe</b> - You intend to use the Beeches for Ashby Holywell. Would it be feasible to also use the Beeches for the old DA polling district in Ashby Ivanhoe? This would be much closer for electors in DA. The reference to not being able to contact a keyholder - was this Browns Court?</p> <p><b>Ashby Willesley</b> - It is disappointing that it has not been possible to avoid closing the Willesley School, particularly as a mobile was used until recently. I'm surprised you state that no suitable location could be found for a mobile when one was previously used. I would be interested to know the specific reasons why the Willesley cabin is unsuitable.</p>	<p>Thank you for your feedback which has been noted and will be considered by the Returning Officer when preparing the report for Members consideration at the Council meeting on 11 November 2014.</p> <p>Please find answers to your comments below.</p> <p>At the time of preparing the final recommendations we had been unable to make contact with the owners of Brown Court. We have now spoken with the site manager who, 'in principle' does not see a problem with the use of the community room as a polling station. However, this would be subject to agreement by the residents of Brown Court if Council agrees the recommendations. Using The Beeches for the old polling district DA would mean taking the electors out of their ward to vote which can only be considered if there is no other suitable venue within the ward.</p> <p>It would be helpful if you could clarify the location of the Willesley Cabin that you are referring to. When undertaking visits around the District to look at various buildings we looked at the cabin on Western Park but did not consider that it was suitable for use a polling station due to its location and accessibility especially for pedestrians due to the lack of lighting on the driveway approach.</p> <p>Up to the last polling places review there was a mobile polling station located in the grounds of Loudoun House which was used for part of the Ivanhoe ward. However, the area for siting the mobile was not ideal and we did receive a number of adverse comments about the polling station at various elections which included the size and location of the building as well accessibility into the building. Looking back at old records it has been noted that during this period there was also a polling station located at Willesley School.</p> <p>At the last election the average cost for hiring a building for use of a polling station was £164.30. The cost of providing a mobile polling station will be in excess of £1920 each. Although mobile buildings as polling stations are very costly to provide and not ideal, there are times when no alternative suitable premises can be found so they have</p>

	<p><b>Ashby Willesley</b> – Thanks very much for the information. The Willesley Cabin is at the far end of Ridgway Road. It is run by the Willesley Residents Association. The Town Council would have contact details.</p> <p><b>Coalville East</b> - Including Broom Leys school seems to be an unnecessary addition, particularly if it requires closure of the school. I'm sure a mobile could be sited to cover the whole ward. If not possible, using the polling stations where voters currently vote would be preferable to closing a school.</p> <p><b>Oakthorpe &amp; Donisthorpe</b> - I notice that the Acresford polling station has been retained. As mentioned in our initial response,</p>	<p>to be used as a last resort and this has been acknowledged by the recommendation to locate a mobile polling station for part of the Ashby Holywell and Coalville East wards. However, for this particular ward there is a suitable venue at Willesley School.</p> <p>We are more than happy to work with any school to try and find a room that it suitable for use as a polling station so that the school may remain open if it wishes and this option has been discussed with Willesley School in the past (and agreed but they then decided to close and hold staff training instead).</p> <p>A visit has been made to this proposed polling place and it meets all the criteria. This will now be included in the report which is to be considered by Council on 11 November.</p> <p>The reasons for recommending two polling stations within Coalville East is:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of staff for a polling station is determined by the Electoral Commission taking into account the number of electors and the number of combinations. A mobile polling station will not be large enough to accommodate the number of staff needed for the total electorate of the whole ward.</li> <li>• Coalville East falls within two county electoral divisions hence the recommendation of 2 polling districts and 2 polling stations to prevent causing any difficulties during county elections.</li> <li>• A mobile unit will not be large enough to accommodate 2 individual polling stations – equipment and staff</li> </ul> <p>Although the Returning Officer has a right under legislation to use a school as a polling station free of charge, any decision to close a school on polling day is not that of the Returning Officer but the Headteacher/school governors. We are always happy to work with a school to try and find a room that is suitable for use as a polling station so that the school may remain open if it wishes.</p> <p>Sending the electors to their previous polling station would mean them voting outside the ward which should only be considered if there is no other suitable venue.</p> <p>The recommendation to retain the polling station at Acresford has been made as there is no suitable alternative venue for use as a polling station for the electors of Acresford</p>
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	<p>there is no justification for this. If there is any suggestion that the improvements you propose are not possible because of cost considerations, then clearly this is an area where cost savings could/should be made.</p>	<p>and to take them to another station would be unjustified given that a local venue is available. There are other villages that have a small electorate with their own polling stations where the same applies so to close this one would not be consistent across the district.</p> <p>The cost of using of building would not be a primary consideration for whether a polling station is used or not. The main factors are location, suitability for staff and electors and % turnout. This polling station meets all these requirements. As mentioned above, mobile polling stations cost a lot more to provide than other buildings but it is acknowledged that in some instances there is no alternative.</p>
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## 9.0 PROPOSALS

- 9.1 The outcome of the consultation has been used to inform the final recommendations attached

## 10.0 FURTHER REVIEWS

- 10.1 Once the review is completed, another review must take place within the next five years. However, the Council has discretion to review polling districts and places before that time if necessary.
- 10.2 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.
- 10.3 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

Ward No.	Ward	Polling District	Polling Station No.	Polling Place/ Station
1	Appleby	ABA	1	Church Hall, Church Street, Appleby Magna
		ABB	2	Old Schoolroom, Chilcote
		ABC	3	Church Hall, Church Street, Appleby Magna
		ABD	4	Cof E Primary School, Main Street, Snarestone
		ABE	5	Church Hall, Newton Road, Swebstone
		ABF	6	Newton Burgoland Congregational Church
2	Ashby Castle	AC	7	Legion House, South Street, Ashby
3	Ashby Holywell	AHA	8	Mobile situated in Marlborough Way (Smisby Road end)
		AHB	9	Beeches Public House, Burton Road
4	Ashby Ivanhoe	AIA	10	Ashby Hill Top Primary School
		AIB	11	Brown Court, Ashby
5	Ashby Money Hill	AM	12	Ashby Library, North Street, Ashby
6	Ashby Willesley	ASA	13	Willessley Recreation Ground Building, Ridgway Road
		ASB	14	Ashby Hastings Scout HQ, Wilfred Gardens, Ashby
7	Ashby Woulds	AWA	15	Replan Offices, Ashby Road, Moira
		AWB	16	County Primary School, Occupation Road, Albert Village
8	Bardon	BAA	17	Bardon Hill Sports Club, Bardon Close, Coalville
		BAB	18	Bardon Hill Sports Club, Bardon Close, Coalville
9	Blackfordby	BLA	19	Blackfordby Village Hall, Sandtop Lane, Blackfordby
		BLB	20	Moira Sure Start Centre
10	Broom Leys	BRA	21	Hall Lane Methodist Church, Hall Lane, Whitwick
		BRB	22	Greenacres
11	Castle Donington Castle	CA	23	Sure Start Centre, Mount Pleasant, Castle Donington
12	Castle Donington Central	CE	24	Orchard CP School, Grange Drive, Castle Donington
13	Castle Donington Park	CP	25	Orchard CP School, Grange Drive, Castle Donington
14	Castle Rock	CRA	26	Oak Storer Hall, Oaks in Charnwood
		CRB	27	Agar Nook Community Centre
15	Coalville East	CTA	28	Broom Leys School
		CTB	29	Broom Leys School (Possible use of a mobile if a suitable location can be found)
16	Coalville West	CWA	30	Community Room, Central Court, Avenue Road, Coalville
		CWB	31	Christ Church Hall, London Road, Coalville
17	Daleacre Hill	DHA	32	Village Hall, Nottingham Road, Kegworth
		DHB	33	Lockington Village Hall, Hemington Lane, Lockington
		DHC	34	Function Room the Jolly Sailor Ph, 21 Main Street, Hemington
18	Ellistown & Battleflat	EB	35	Community Centre, Whitehill Road, Ellistown
19	Greenhill	GR	36	Greenhill Community Church, Charnborough Road, Coalville
20	Hermitage	HE	37	Hermitage Leisure Centre

Ward No.	Ward	Polling District	Polling Station No.	Polling Place/ Station
21	<b>Holly Hayes</b>	HH	38	Whitwick Methodist Church, Nr Market Place, Whitwick
22	<b>Hugglescote St John's</b>	HJ	39	Hugglescote Community Centre, Grange Road, Hugglescote
23	<b>Hugglescote St Mary's</b>	HMA	40	Donington Manor House, Donington le Heath
		HMB	41	Community Room, Central Court, Avenue Road, Coalville
24	<b>lbstock East</b>	IEA	42	Meeting Room, Baptist Chapel, Chapel Street, lbstock
		IEB	43	Batram Access Centre, Batram Road, Ellistown
25	<b>lbstock West</b>	IW	44	The Schoolroom, Wesleyan Reform Church, Melbourne Road, lbstock
26	<b>Kegworth</b>	KE	45	County Library, High Street, Kegworth
27	<b>Long Whatton &amp; Diseworth</b>	LDA	46	The Guide Friendship Centre, Main Street, Long Whatton
		LDB	47	Village Hall, Hall Gate, Diseworth
		LDC	48	Belton Village Hall, School Lane, Belton
28	<b>Measham North</b>	MN	49	Measham Village Hall, Queens Street, Measham
29	<b>Measham South</b>	MS	50	Measham Leisure Centre, High Street, Measham
30	<b>Oakthorpe &amp; Donisthorpe</b>	ODA	51	Donisthorpe Woodlands Centre, Church Street, Donisthorpe
		ODB	52	Methodist Schoolroom, Acresford
		ODC	53	Leisure Centre, Measham Road, Oakthorpe
31	<b>Ravenstone &amp; Packington</b>	RPA	54	The Pavilion, Ravenslea, Ravenstone
		RPB RPC	55	Memorial Hall, High Street, Packington (separate polling district required for parish meeting)
		SEA	56	Community Hall, Heather/ St Johns Football Club, St Johns Park, Ravenstone Road
32	<b>Sence Valley</b>	SEB	57	The Schoolroom, Wesleyan Reform Church, Melbourne Road, lbstock
		SNA	58	Snibston Discovery Museum, Ashby Road, Coalville
33	<b>Snibston North</b>	SNB		
34	<b>Snibston South</b>	SS	59	Full Gospel Mission Pentecostal Church, James Street, Coalville
35	<b>Thornborough</b>	TBA	60	Community Room, Howe Court, Howe Road, Whitwick
		TBB	61	Holy Cross Parish Rooms, Parsonwood Hill, Whitwick
36	<b>Thringstone</b>	TS	62	Thringstone Miners Social Centre, Homestead Road, Thringstone
37	<b>Valley</b>	VAA	63	Swannington Institute, Main Street, Swannington
		VAB	64	Viscount Beaumont Primary School, Ashby Road, Coleorton
		VAC	65	Village Hall, Church Lane, Osgathorpe
38	<b>Worthington &amp; Breedon</b>	WBA	66	County Primary School, Main Street, Worthington
		WBB WBC WBD	67	C of E Primary School, School Lane, Newbold
		WBE WBF	68	C of E Primary School, Main Street, Breedon on the Hill
		WBG	69	Griffydam School, Griffydam.