

<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES</b>	
<b>Presented by</b>	Councillor Keith Merrie Infrastructure Portfolio Holder	
<b>Background Papers</b>	<a href="#">The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013</a>	<b>Public Report:</b> Yes
<b>Financial Implications</b>	The average cost for hiring a building for use as a polling station is currently £295.80. The cost of providing a mobile polling station is significantly higher at approximately £3,000. The proposals do not include the use of any mobile polling stations, thus if approved, there are no financial implications.	
	<b>Signed off by the Section 151 Officer:</b> Yes	
<b>Legal Implications</b>	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.	
	<b>Signed off by the Monitoring Officer:</b> Yes	
<b>Staffing &amp; Corporate Implications</b>	None were identified.	
	<b>Signed off by the Head of Paid Service:</b> Yes	
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To approve the final proposals for the review of polling districts and polling places.	
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p><b>THAT COUNCIL:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. APPROVES THE FINAL PROPOSALS IN RESPECT OF THE REVIEW, AS SET OUT IN APPENDIX A TO THE REPORT;</b></li> <li><b>2. 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. 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 and the next review must be completed by January 2025.

- 1.2 As the District is currently undergoing a review of its Electoral warding arrangements by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), which will result in some changes to the Polling Districts and the UK Parliamentary General Election (UKPGE) now having been held, the Returning Officer is carrying out a light touch review. A further review will be carried out once the final recommendations have been received from the LGBCE in Spring 2025. The further review will be based on the new District wards and intended to come into effect from May 2027.
- 1.3. Following the Police and Crime Commissioner elections held on 2 May 2024 and the UKPGE held on 6 July 2024, any comments made by the electorate, the staff, candidates and agents were captured and the current arrangements, as agreed in 2019 were subject to a consultation exercise between 2 September to 27 September 2024. Notices about the consultation were placed in the local papers and on the council's website inviting members of the public to submit comments. All town and parish council's were also written to seeking comments.
- 1.4 The Electoral Review Working Group met on 13 September 2024 to comment on the current arrangements and it met again on 11 October 2024 to consider the consultation response, the actions taken and the consequential recommendations.
- 1.5 The outcome of the consultation and the views of the Electoral Review Working Party have been used to inform the final recommendations attached at appendix A. It is recommended that five polling stations will change due to either the previous building no longer being available or more suitable buildings being found and all others will remain the same.

## 2. 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.
- 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, guidance from the Electoral Commission states that 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. FUTURE REVIEWS**

- 5.1 The next statutory review needs to be undertaken before January 2030. However, as detailed in paragraph 1.2, the Returning Officer will be required to complete a further review following the outcome of the LGBCE review.

- 5.2 However, 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.
- 5.3 The Council is, therefore, 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.

<b>Policies and other considerations, as appropriate</b>	
Council Priorities:	A well-run council Communities and housing
Policy Considerations:	None
Safeguarding:	Attempts are made to avoid the use of schools. Where unavoidable, close liaison with the schools ensures a clear separation between the children and the polling station.
Equalities/Diversity:	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 are accessible to all electors. These issues were considered when making the recommendations.
Customer Impact:	The key aims of the recommendations are to meet the needs of our customers as identified through the consultation process.
Environment, Climate Change and Zero Carbon	No issues identified.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Consultations were carried out with all elected members of the Council, parish councils and the electorate of North West Leicestershire.
Risks:	No risks identified.
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