

COUNCIL

21 January 2019

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

Report of the Chief Executive

Strategic Aim:	All	
Exempt Information	No	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Mr O Hemsley, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Rutland One Public Estate & Growth, Tourism & Economic Development, Resources (other than Finance)	
Contact Officer(s):	Phil Horsfield, Deputy Director Corporate Governance	01572 758154 phorsfield@rutland.gov.uk
	Jeremy Barnes, Electoral Services Officer	01572 758385 jbarnes@rutland.gov.uk
Ward Councillors	All	

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council:

1. To seek approval of the changes of polling districts and places recommended by the Returning Officer and to conclude the review of polling districts and polling places.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Council approval of the recommendations of the Returning Officer shown below, and to conclude the review of polling districts and polling places.

2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 The Representation of the Representation of the People Act 1983 places a duty on the Council to divide the District into polling districts and to designate polling places for each district. The Council also has a duty to keep those arrangements under review.
- 2.2 The Electoral Registration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of

compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The last compulsory review was conducted in January 2015 and the next compulsory review is due to be conducted within the period of 16 months that start on 1 October 2018. Following the recommendations from Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) Boundary Review in 2017/8 we are required to ensure that boundary changes are implemented (along with any changes to polling districts and polling places) for use in the local government elections due in May 2019.

- 2.3 Between compulsory reviews, all polling places and polling stations used are kept under consideration, following each election.
- 2.4 For ease of reference Appendix A contains a definition of terms relating to polling place reviews taken from the Electoral Commission's guidance.
- 2.5 A change of polling place is required for the polling districts of Stretton and Thistleton due to the previous venue no longer being available. Full details can be seen in Appendix B.
- 2.6 The changes recommended following the results of the LGBCE Review are shown in Appendix C and summarised below. The Electoral Commission recommends a maximum of 2,500 electors be allocated to a single polling station.
- 2.7 The list of current polling districts, polling places and electorate figures is shown at Appendix D. All polling places currently designated are buildings within which polling stations are provided. The recommended revised list of polling districts, polling places and polling stations is shown at Appendix E, in which some polling places will be areas rather than just buildings, which will allow polling stations to be moved within them if required.

3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 Public notice of the review was given on 1 November 2018. The documents made available for public inspection included information about the review process, current electorate figures, ward maps showing the existing polling district boundaries and details of the current polling places and maps showing the recommended changes to polling districts. Details of venues and the consultation documentation were also posted on the Council website. A copy of the consultation letter and accompanying documentation is attached at Appendix F.
- 3.2 The same information was also supplied directly to specific consultees: relevant ward members, the Acting Returning Officer for the UK Parliamentary constituency, political parties, parish clerks and parish meeting representatives, third sector organisations, including groups representing the disabled and key holders of polling stations (to identify any development or refurbishment plans which might impact on the availability of premises).
- 3.3 No objections have been received from those specifically consulted, or from members of the public. All consultation responses have been collated at Appendix G. It was considered that suitability and convenience for the electors were the principal criteria when reviewing polling places.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 In the majority of cases the existing polling districts and polling places remain suitable and provide reasonable facilities for voting and are accessible to electors with disabilities.
- 4.2 In the polling districts of Stretton and Thistleton, the existing polling place is no longer available and therefore a new polling place and polling station is required. Details of the new polling stations and the alternatives considered are shown at Appendix B.
- 4.3 The changes resulting from the LGBCE Review, along with the alternatives considered, are documented in Appendix C.

5 SPECIFIC ISSUES

- 5.1 In conducting the review the council has sought to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and this includes ensuring wherever possible that:
- the polling place is accessible to electors with disabilities;
 - car parking is adequate and does not cause obstructions;
 - heating and lighting in the polling station is adequate;
 - emergency access and evacuation provisions are adequate.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Although there is an increase of one polling station the overall hire costs will not be adversely affected. The additional cost for the hire of the Oakham United Football Club building for the Barleythorpe Ward will be offset by the fact that there will be no charge for the hire of the council buildings for the Oakham South ward having previously paid for the hire of the polling station in the Oakham South West ward.
- 6.2 There will be an increase in cost at all-out elections as the additional polling station for the county will need to be staffed and the cost of staffing the Barleythorpe polling station would be approx. £500. There is provision in the Medium Term Financial Plan for the cost of local elections in 19/20 part of which it is planned for parishes to repay.
- 6.3 For parish by-elections all polling station costs will be met by the parish concerned. In the event of Ordinary elections, e.g. those in May 2019, parishes will be required to meet a share of costs for their elections – this is not covered by this report but has been covered separately in budget planning and parishes are fully aware of this.
- 6.4 For Parliamentary elections the council recovers the costs of hiring polling stations from the electoral claims unit and therefore there would be no increase in costs to the Council for parliamentary elections.

7 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 The review has been conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the guidance issued by the Electoral Commission.

8 DATA PROTECTION

8.1 No Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is required for this report.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening form has been completed and no adverse impacts were identified.

10 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Changes to the polling place for Stretton and Thistleton, and the adoption of a new polling station for the electorate, meaning that the polling place would remain in a location close to the previous one causing the minimum disruption to the electorate.

10.2 The remaining changes to existing polling places and stations have been necessitated by the LGBCE review and there are no adverse community safety implications. Adopting some revised polling places to comply with the review will mean that electors in some areas will have to use different polling stations. In identifying the revised arrangements every effort has been made to ensure polling places and stations are located centrally for the benefit of all.

11 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no major adverse health and wellbeing implications.

11.2 The polling place for the electorate in the Barleythorpe Road parish is closer for many than the current arrangement.

11.3 The revised polling arrangements for the voters in the ward of Oakham South will mean that for some electors previously in the ward of Oakham South West, the new polling station will be slightly further away than the previous one, however it remains central to the new ward boundaries. The move of polling place has also been requested by the Catmose Primary school which was the original polling place for Oakham South West. The school have had difficulties in accommodating a constant polling station, and it has been in a different location within the school premises for the last three electoral events. They have raised safeguarding concerns regarding use of the school by the electorate. On the last occasion the entrance to the school for electors was changed and this caused a number of complaints. The revised location should nullify these concerns and better service the full polling district in a more suitable, accessible venue.

12 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 It is considered that the majority of polling districts and polling places remain fit for purpose and represent the best possible solution for the electorate in most areas.

12.2 Electors in Stretton and Thistleton are no longer able to use the polling place and vote at the station previously used as the venue is no longer available. The only suitable venue was considered to be the public house, the Jackson Stops.

12.3 It is therefore recommended that the polling place for electors from Stretton and Thistleton be the Jackson Stops Inn, Stretton.

- 12.4 The recommendations of changes to polling districts, polling places and polling stations required following the LGBCE Review are as follows:

Barleythorpe ward. The polling place for this ward will be Oakham United Football Club. It is recommended that there be two polling districts, Barleythorpe Parish and the Barleythorpe Road Parish Ward of Oakham Town Council (OTC). Electors from both polling districts will vote in all elections at the Oakham United Football Club venue. The Barleythorpe Road Parish of OTC will comprise electors from Huntsmans Drive, Prince George Avenue, Ellingworth Close, Edwards Way, Mallard Court and College Close, areas that are currently part of the Oakham North West Parish Ward.

Braunston and Martinsthorpe Ward. The pre-existing wards of Braunston and Belton and Martinsthorpe will become one ward. It is recommended that the individual polling districts remain the same for each parish, along with the polling place and polling stations. Electors in the new ward will now vote for two councillors, instead of one.

Cottesmore Ward. The parish of Teigh currently part of Cottesmore Ward will become part of the Whissendine Ward. It is recommended that voters from Teigh retain their current polling district of Teigh but now use the polling place, the Memorial Hall, Whissendine as they are now part of that ward. All other electors in the Cottesmore Ward will retain their current polling places, polling districts and vote at the existing polling stations.

Oakham North East Ward. The polling place for this ward will be All Saints Church Hall and the polling district will remain Oakham North East. All electors, including those on the Ladywell estate moved from Oakham South East ward will vote at the All Saints Church Hall polling station in Church Street, Oakham.

Oakham North West Ward. The polling place for this ward will become the Scout/Guide Hut on Grampian Way, Oakham and the polling district will remain Oakham North West. All electors, including those that move in from the Oakham South West Ward will vote at the Scout Hut in Grampian Way, Oakham, however when required the guide hut can be used as an alternative polling station.

Oakham South Ward. The electorate from Oakham South West and Oakham South East will combine to form a single ward and polling district, both being called Oakham South. The Council buildings, Catmos Street will become the polling place and Oakham Library will be used as the polling station for the ward. Two polling stations will be situated in the library to cope with the increased electorate. To enable equal division of electors between the two polling stations, we will divide the polling district into two parts so that each half is allocated to a specific polling station.

Whissendine Ward

The parish of Teigh will become part of Whissendine Ward. The polling district of Teigh will remain, but it is recommended that the polling place for

all electors in the ward be The Memorial Hall, Whissendine.

- 12.5 The changes to boundaries made in the LGBCE review along with the consultation process and recommendations of the review were open to the public. Additionally, the communications team at Rutland County Council have been directed to ensure maximum publicity be given to this review. Poll cards for the local elections to be held in May 2019 will highlight changes to polling stations for those electors that are affected. The Council will also write to each elector within the wards that have had changes to their polling places/polling stations to ensure that voters are given as much notice as possible of the changes to voting arrangements for next year.

13 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1 There are no background papers.

14 APPENDICES

- 14.1 Appendix A – Definition of Terms.
- 14.2 Appendix B – Arrangements for electors in Stretton and Thistleton.
- 14.3 Appendix C – Changes resulting from LGBCE Review.
- 14.4 Appendix D – Existing polling districts, polling places and polling stations.
- 14.5 Appendix E – Recommended revised list of polling districts, polling places and polling stations.
- 14.6 Appendix F - Example letter to stakeholders and supporting documentation (includes copies of polling place/district evaluation checklists).
- 14.7 Appendix G – Comments from Stakeholders.

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.