

Report To:	COUNCIL	Date:	29th NOVEMBER 2018
Heading:	POLLING DISTRICT AND POLLING PLACES REVIEW		
Portfolio Holder:	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL		
Ward/s:	ALL WARDS		
Key Decision:	NO		
Subject to Call-In:	NO		

Purpose of Report

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

Recommendations

- (i) That the Council approves the recommendations of the Review Working Group as set out in the minutes of the meetings held on 22nd May, 5th September and 7th November 2018. (Appendices “A”, “B” and “C” refer)
- (ii) That subject to the above, the Council approve the final proposals report setting out the changes to the polling districts and polling places (Appendix “D” refers)
- (iii) 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.
- (iv) Should a polling place be unavailable in the run up to an election, the (Acting) Returning Officer be 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 requiring 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

(with reasons why not adopted)

None. Failure to publish proposals within the compulsory review period would result in the Council not fulfilling its statutory obligations.

Detailed Information

Introduction

In accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council has a duty to divide the District into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each of these districts. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 also requires every local authority 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 2018.

Review Process

The Council appointed the Polling Place Review Working Group to conduct the review and report on its final recommendations to this meeting of the Council. The Polling Places Review Working Group (the Working Group) met on three occasions and the minutes of those meetings are attached. (See Appendices "A", "B" and "C").

The Council approved a timetable for the review process and the Working Group has conducted the review in accordance with that timetable. A public consultation period was held between 1st October and 29th October 2018, seeking the views and comments of electors, interested persons and any persons or bodies with expertise in access to premises or facilities for persons with any type of disability. The consultation also included all District and County Councillors, MPs and the Acting Returning Officer for the Sherwood Parliamentary Constituency which includes some electoral areas within the Ashfield District.

During the consultation period, maps showing the existing and proposed polling districts and polling places were published on the Council's website. Additionally, the Acting Returning Officer published proposals for new polling districts and polling places largely based on the recommendations of the first two meetings of the Working Group.

Requirements of the Review

When undertaking a review the Council is required to give 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 outside the district where there is no suitable polling place in the district and in these circumstances regard should be had to the convenience of electors
- Where possible each parish (and each parish ward) should be a separate polling district

- 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.

Each of these responses has been considered by the Working Group to determine if changes are necessary as part of the review process and their recommendations in respect of each response are set out in the minutes of the meeting held on 7th November, 2018.

Following consideration of consultation responses, the Working Group determined that the existing polling place arrangements in Leamington, Selston and Underwood wards provide the most reasonable facilities for voting in the circumstances. As such the final proposals document has been updated to reflect these arrangements.

In addition, after the commencement of the review period, the polling place for JCK1 in Jacksdale ward, which was previously Westwood United Reform Church has become unavailable. The final proposals document has been updated to include The Royal Oak public house as the polling place, which has been determined as providing reasonable facilities for voting.

Final Proposals and Schedule of new polling districts and polling places

If the proposed changes as recommended by the Working Group are approved then it is necessary to publish the final proposals and a new schedule of designated polling places and polling districts, together with the relevant maps.

A copy of the final proposals incorporating all of the recommendations of the Working Group is attached for consideration by the Council. (See Appendix “D”)

Appeals Process

Following the conclusion of the local authority’s review certain persons have a right to make representations to the Electoral Commission. The Commission will only consider representations that the review process has not been conducted correctly and has 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 2018.

Finance:

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	The costs for providing adequate polling facilities are met within existing budgets, including costs of writing to affected households
General Fund – Capital Programme	None
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	None
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	None

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Confusion for electors in the event of drastic and unnecessary change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances • 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
Failure to approve final proposals by Council would result in not meeting statutory requirement to review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out review within compulsory review period

Human Resources:

There are no direct issues arising out of the report

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

Background Papers

Interim Review of Polling Places Report to Council – 6 October 2016

Interim Review of Polling Places Report to Council – 21 July 2016

Revision of Schedule of Polling Places Report to Council – 11 February 2016

Polling District and Polling Places Review Report to Council – 12 January 2015

Review of Polling Places and Polling Districts Report to Council – 9 October 2014

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