

AGENDA ITEM
REPORT TO CABINET
15 NOVEMBER 2018
REPORT OF THE RETURNING
OFFICER

COUNCIL DECISION

Leader – Lead Cabinet Member – **Councillor Bob Cook**

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2018

1. Summary

This report sets out the existing arrangements for polling districts and places and proposed changes taking into account the submission of the Returning Officer and feedback from public consultation.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet are asked to consider and recommend changes to Polling Districts and Polling Places to Council on 12 December 2018.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

To meet a statutory requirement requiring Councils to carry out a Polling District and Places Review every five years; to take account of feedback from electoral events, electorate projections and consultation feedback.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or

- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting

upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code).

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2018

SUMMARY

This report sets out the existing arrangements for polling districts and places and proposed changes taking into account the submission of the Returning Officer and feedback from public consultation.

RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet are asked to consider and recommend changes to Polling Districts and Polling Places to Council on 12 December 2018.

DETAIL

1. Each Local Authority is required to carry out reviews of Polling Districts and Polling Places in its area.
2. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 changed the timing of these reviews and the next review must be held between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive) with subsequent reviews held within the 16 months that starts on 1 October of every fifth year after 1 October 2013. Ward boundaries are unaffected by the review.
3. The Council's last review was held in 2014 when a number of minor changes were made.
4. A Council's area is divided into polling districts with one or more districts making up a ward, with a polling place being the area or building within a polling district in which a polling station is situated.
5. The review considered:
 - The boundaries of polling districts – for example, are they well defined? Do they follow natural boundaries? Are there suitable transport links? Are there any obstacles to crossing polling district boundaries?
 - Polling Places – the location, size and accessibility of the polling place and its availability now and in the future
 - Polling Stations – the suitability and accessibility of the room or area for use as a polling station
6. In addition the Presiding Officers who worked on the elections in 2017 were asked to complete the Electoral Commission's evaluation templates in order to assess the suitability/ accessibility of the polling place/ station. Detailed comments from the recent Elections in relation to the suitability of existing polling stations will be taken into account in the planning for future electoral events.

7. Tees Valley Combined Authority also provided electorate projections for the current polling district boundaries in each year and up to December 2023. This takes into account new housing and demolitions.

8. The Returning Officer's submission was published on 1 October 2018 and summarised the existing arrangements, key issues, any notable projected changes in electorate and made proposals for changes to polling districts/ places.

9. The proposals sought to combine polling districts where electorate was low, identify more appropriate polling places where adverse comments have been received on the location/ suitability of current venues and identify alternatives to using mobile stations which are expensive and unpopular with voters. The proposals took into account Electoral Commission Guidance that the number of electors allocated to a particular polling station should not exceed 2,500 not including postal voters.

10. The Returning Officers proposals resulted in an overall reduction of four polling districts and has also resulted in the overall increase of four mobile polling stations.

CONSULTATION

11. The Statutory Notice publicising the review was displayed on/ sent to:

- Libraries
- Community Centres
- Website
- All Members
- MP's
- Parish Clerks

12. In addition, the Statutory Notice and the Returning Officer's submission was displayed/ sent to:

- Municipal Buildings
- Website
- All Councillors
- MPs
- Parish Councils
- Disability Groups/ BME/faith community

13. All correspondence/ comments sent to the Returning Officer as part of the review has been published on the Council's website. The table below contains a summary of the comments received and comments/revised proposals in response to the consultation feedback.

Ward/Polling District	From	Comment	Returning Officer Response
Billingham West	Councillor	Move the following properties into BW2 from BW1:- Cambrian Road Grosmont Drive Lammermuir Road Porlock Road 5 to 33 Roseberry Road 1 to 69 and 2 to 76 Sidlaw Road Flat The Swan, 53 to 99 Wolviston Road	Agreed

Ward/Polling District	From	Comment	Returning Officer Response
Grangefield Ward GF3	Councillor	The driveway to Grangefield Youth & Community Centre is dark for electors to walk up when it is dark. Suggested using a Mobile Polling Station on Oxbridge Lane prior to Phoenix Gardens	Agreed
Hardwick & Salters Lane	Councillor	Suggested using Hardwick Green Primary School as a polling station	The school ceased accommodating the polling station post 2015 as they could no longer accommodate us and this is a common issue particularly with concerns around safeguarding which detracts a lot of resource unnecessarily on polling day
Hartburn HB2	Councillor	Would like a mobile polling station to be sited near to Holy Trinity to school and suggested the new lay by rather than using The Penny Black Pub	Agreed
Mandale and Victoria MV4	Councillor	Support use of Robert Atkinson in place of Thornaby Academy	Agreed
Newtown NT2/NT4	Councillor	For ease of voters move the following properties into NT4 from NT2:- Bilsdale Road 1 to 53 Bishopton Avenue 130 to 202 Bishopton Road Commondale Avenue Bransdale Close Del Strother Avenue Elmwood Grove Farndale Green Glaisdale Avenue Kirkdale Close Lingdale Close Marshall Grove Newham Grange Avenue Patterdale Avenue Staindale Gardens Westerdale Avenue	Agreed
Norton North NN2 & NN3	Councillor	Leave NN2 and NN3 as separate polling districts. NN3 site a mobile polling station on the corner of Somerset Road	Agreed

Ward/Polling District	From	Comment	Returning Officer Response
Norton South	Councillor	Leave NS1 and NS2 as separate polling districts as a busy road divides the two polling districts NS4 – it is dark outside the polling station	Agreed
Norton West Ward NW3	Councillor	Concern regarding the use of grass verge to site a mobile polling station. Suggested using Crooksbarne Car Park to sit the mobile	The school couldn't accommodate the station last year in the hall because of safeguarding concerns which is a common issue with schools and one that diverts a lot of resource unnecessarily on polling day. We have had similar problems with school car parks and gates needing to be closed which some ward councillors have complained that it puts voters off. It is usual practice for mobiles to be sited on grass and this hasn't caused any particular issues previously. Mobile site to be agreed.
Norton West Ward	Councillor	Last time the use of the Glebe Community Centre was problematic with the two groups tangling with each other in some confusion. Two possible solutions- a divider can be pulled across to create two rooms- one large and one small. Alternatively large signs could be mounted on the walls one sayings Glebe area and the other Junction Road area. As you say Crooksbarne School was a disaster with people pushing past people voting. We must certainly do better than that next time or close the school.	Polling Station Staff Training will re-inforce the requirement to separate the stations and the Polling Station Inspector will check on their first visit. As above
Parkfield & Oxbridge PO2	Councillor	Would like a mobile polling station sited in the Lower Hartburn/Queensgate area so the electors do not have to go to PO1 polling district to vote	Agreed
Roseworth –	Member of	St Gregory's School - I'm a	Use a mobile polling station

Ward/Polling District	From	Comment	Returning Officer Response
RW1	Public	concerned parent who has serious reservations regarding my child's school being used as a polling station whilst the school remains open. I understand absolutely the need for polling stations so people can exercise their right to vote and whole heartedly support this but what I do not agree with is using schools especially when the children are in the building, in this day and age and in light of all that has happened especially recently I'm sure you can understand my concerns having my child in school and people in and out of the same building throughout the day, I have looked up rules so am aware that it needs to be in a room separate from the others etc. but once in a school you're in so to speak and I think this is extremely dangerous in light of all that has and is currently going on at the moment.	due to: - 1. Safeguarding concerns 2. To ensure electors are voting within their polling district
Stockton Town Centre	Councillor	Can you please give me more information about Stockton Town Centre ward and numbers for STC4 and STC5	STC 4 has 1048 voting in the station and STC5 has 644
	Councillor	Leave STC4 and STC5 as separate polling districts	Agreed
Village Ward	Councillor	Residents of the Dales estate had gone to Christ the King Polling station to vote which was closer but their polling station was Meadowfield House	Advised to come in and look at the maps as the polling district define where people need to go and vote.

REVISED PROPOSALS

14. Existing arrangements for all wards and the final proposals of the Returning Officer following consultation are attached at **Appendix 1**. The Returning Officers proposals resulted in an overall reduction of four polling districts and one polling place. It has also resulted in the overall increase of three polling stations

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

15. These proposals will contribute to the running of an efficient election.

Legal

16. To review is required in order to comply with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.

RISK ASSESSMENT

17. This report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

18. The proposals take in account user and consultation feedback and Electoral Commission Guidance that the number of electors allocated to a particular polling station should not exceed 2,500 not including postal voters.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

19. The suitability of each polling place for disabled access was assessed as part of the review.

CONSULTATION

20. Consultation took place as set out in paragraphs 11 to 13 of the report.

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<u>Background Papers:</u>	None
<u>Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:</u>	Not Ward Specific
<u>Property Implications:</u>	None