

**Cabinet Decision:**

Thursday 16 November 2023

**Title of Item/Report**

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2023

**Record of the Decision**

Consideration was given to a report that set out the proposed changes for polling districts and places taking into account the submission of the Acting Returning Officer and feedback received from the consultation. The consultation ended on 29 October 2023.

Each Local Authority was required to carry out reviews of Polling Districts and Polling Places in its area.

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 changed the timing of these reviews and reviews must be held within a 16-month period starting on 1 October every fifth year after 1 October 2013. Ward boundaries were unaffected by the review.

The Council's last statutory review was carried out in 2018 and an interim review was held in 2022 when a number of changes were made as a result of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England Ward Boundary Review. The changes approved by Council on 23 November 2022 were implemented and in place for the May 2023 local elections held in the Borough.

A Council's area was 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. The Council must identify the polling districts and polling places within the Borough. The (Acting) Returning Officer is responsible for identifying the polling stations within the polling place.

The Electoral Commission Guidance was detailed within the report.

Polling districts changes had been considered to include existing and future Parliamentary boundaries. This would be achieved by merging into appropriate adjoining polling districts as identified in the 2022 review and keeping some small polling districts that due to the geography of the Parliamentary Boundary were unsuitable to combine with neighbouring polling districts. The review considerations were outlined within the report.

During the 2023 Elections, the opportunity was taken to complete the Electoral Commission's evaluation templates in order to assess the suitability/ accessibility of the polling place/ station. Presiding Officers were also

asked to record any complaints/comments received.

The Boundary Commission had undertaken electorate projections as part of the Parliamentary Boundary Review 2023 and the Local Government Ward Boundary Review 2022. The recommendations take into consideration these predictions as well as the increase in postal voters that we have seen since 2021.

The Returning Officer's submission summarised the existing arrangements, key issues identified from the 2023 Elections, any notable projected changes in electorate and makes proposals for changes to polling districts / places.

Mobile polling stations continued to be used where no alternative venues could be found. Mobiles stations were expensive and unpopular with voters and suggestions for alternative venues were always welcomed. The use of some schools as polling stations continued to be a problem when the safeguarding of children cannot in the view of the schools be assured, and in these circumstances alternative venues had been identified. The proposals considered Electoral Commission Guidance that the number of electors allocated to a particular polling station should not exceed 2,250 and also the introduction of Voter Identification which was more resource intensive on polling day.

Any further feedback and comments from the 2024 Elections in relation to the suitability of existing polling stations would be considered in the planning for future electoral events and statutory reviews.

The consultation was published on 1 October 2023 with a closing date for comments of midnight on 29 October 2023. The Acting Returning Officers submission summarised the existing arrangements and their proposals to reduce the number of polling districts by 8, by merging a number of polling places that use the same polling place and keeping 5 smaller polling districts due to the changes in Parliamentary Boundaries.

RECOMMENDED to Council the changes to Polling Districts and Polling Places, as outlined in the Acting Returning Officers recommendations, incorporating the responses to the comments laid out in the table within the report.

## **Reasons for the Decision**

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.

**Alternative Options  
Considered and Rejected** None.

**Declared (Cabinet Member)  
Conflicts of Interest** None.

**Details of any Dispensations**

**Date and Time by which Call  
In must be executed** Midnight on

Date of Publication: Monday 20 November 2023