

**HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Title/Subject Matter:** Polling Districts and Polling Places Review  
**Meeting/Date:** Corporate Governance Committee – 25th July 2019  
**Executive Portfolio:** Executive Leader – Councillor G J Bull  
**Report by:** Elections and Democratic Services Manager  
**Ward(s) affected:** All

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**Executive Summary:**

The Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006 require each authority to undertake a review of all of the polling districts and polling places in its area on a regular basis and the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires each authority to complete and carry out a review in a 16 month period beginning on 1st October of every fifth year after 1st October 2013.

The last full review was undertaken in October 2013 and an interim review undertaken in 2016 following the completion of the review of electoral arrangements by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) of Cambridgeshire County Council and Huntingdonshire District Council. It is now necessary to carry out the next scheduled review which needs to be completed by 31st January 2020 so that any changes can be reflected in the new Register of Electors to be published on 1st December 2019.

**Recommendation:**

The Committee is

**RECOMMENDED**

to note the process involved in the review of polling districts and polling places, proposals and timetable for consultation.

## 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to acquaint members with details of the process involved with a review of polling districts and polling places as required by Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006 require each authority to undertake a review of all of the polling districts and polling places in its area on a regular basis. The last such review was completed in 2013 and an interim review in 2016 following the completion of the review of electoral arrangements by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) of Cambridgeshire County Council and Huntingdonshire District Council. Following an amendment in the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, it is now necessary to carry out the next scheduled review in a 16 month period beginning on 1st October of every fifth year after 1st October 2013.
- 2.2 All wards within Huntingdonshire are divided into polling districts which form the basis upon which the register of electors is produced. Most are defined by parish boundaries, but there are exceptions. The Council is responsible for dividing its area into polling districts and for keeping polling districts under review. The Council must also define a polling place for each of its polling districts within which the polling station is located.
- 2.3 In undertaking the review, the Council must –
- publish a notice indicating the holding of a review;
  - consult the Returning Officer for each Parliamentary Constituency which is wholly or partly within its area;
  - enable any such Returning Officer to make representations to the authority and publish them in a prescribed manner;
  - seek the views of interested groups or bodies including electors, candidates and agents, political parties and members of the Council; and
  - seek representations from such persons that it thinks has particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons with different disabilities.
- 2.4 On completion of the review, the Council is required to give reasons for its decisions in respect of the designation of both polling districts and polling places and publish other such information as prescribed in the Act and Regulations.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 A **polling district** is a geographical sub-division of an electoral area, e.g. UK Parliamentary Constituency, a European Parliamentary Electoral Region, a Ward or an Electoral Division. The Council is responsible for dividing its area into polling districts for UK Parliamentary Elections and for keeping the polling districts under review. Although there is no requirement to sub-divide local government electoral wards into polling districts, it is recognised good practice to do so. When doing so, every effort must be made to ensure that the polling

district scheme for local government elections mirrors as closely as possible that agreed for Parliamentary Elections.

- 3.2 In addition, and unless there are special circumstances that lead the Council to determine otherwise, each Parish must be in a separate polling district.
- 3.3 A **polling place** is a geographical area in which a polling station is located. However, as there is no legal definition of what a polling place is, the geographical area could be defined as a specific room within a particular building or as widely as the entire polling district.
- 3.4 A **polling station** is the actual area where the process of voting takes place and must be located within the polling place designated for the particular polling district.
- 3.5 It is worth noting that the Council is responsible for designating polling places whereas the Returning Officer is responsible for determining where the polling stations are situated. Whilst polling stations are not formally part of this review, it is essential that the Returning Officer have regard to the adequacy and suitability of premises used.

#### **4. AIM OF THE REVIEW**

- 4.1 In carrying out this statutory review, the Council must demonstrate that they have, as far as is practicable, met the criteria in the legislation and in doing so must —
  - (a) seek to ensure that all the electors in the Constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and
  - (b) seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.
- 4.2 A schedule of existing polling districts and polling places together with details of existing polling stations used is set out in Appendix A.
- 4.3 It has been the practice to respond to feedback from Presiding Officers and Polling Station Inspectors on the adequacy and suitability of polling stations when elections are held. This is taken into account on an ongoing basis at each scheduled election. In May 2019 Polling Station Inspectors carried out a further survey of all polling stations in the District. The results of the survey will be considered as part of the review.

#### **5. CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The Council is required to undertake a consultation on the existing and any proposed arrangements for polling districts and polling places and that commenced on 3rd July 2019, running until 14th August 2019 with all electors and interested parties and the full consultation is hosted on the Council's website. Details have also been sent to all County and District Councillors, MPs and Town and Parish Clerks, as well as Returning Officers for the Constituencies of Huntingdon and Peterborough, the Returning Officer for

Cambridgeshire County Council, political agents/parties and local disability groups.

- 5.2 Following receipt and consideration of any representations, final proposals for polling districts and polling places will be presented to Council for adoption at their meeting on 9th October 2019 and a revised register of electors produced on 1st December 2019.

## **6. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS**

- 6.1 Failure to consider all representations fully and complete the review to decide on the most appropriate polling districts and polling places may not allow the Returning Officer to run effective elections.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no significant legal implications other than the review is a legal requirement and must be completed by 31st January 2020.

## **8. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 8.1 In accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983, Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2006 and Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006, the Council must undertake a review of the polling district and polling places within a period of 16 months that starts on 1st October of every fifth year after 1st October 2013. The adequacy and suitability of polling stations is regularly reviewed to ensure that premises remain suitable and accessible for electors.

- 8.2 The Council is required to approve the Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places to ensure the effective delivery of elections.

## **9. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED**

Appendix A – Schedule of Existing Polling Districts and Polling Places

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Website Consultation Document – Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2019

Review of Polling Districts, polling places and polling stations guidance – The Electoral Commission

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

Lisa Jablonska, Elections and Democratic Services Manager

Tel No: (01480) 388004

Email: [lisa.jablonska@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.jablonska@huntingdonshire.gov.uk)