

NOTICE OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES REVIEW 2023

BACKGROUND

Every Council is required to regularly undertake and complete a review of all polling districts and polling places within its administrative boundary at least once every four years. The last full review was completed in 2019. A new review must take place within 16 months of October 2023. It is prudent to undertake the review early to ensure readiness for a potential short notice Parliamentary Election.

Definitions

- A **polling district** is a geographical sub-division of an electoral area. 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 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. In addition, and unless there are special circumstances that lead the Council to determine otherwise, each parish must be in a separate polling district.
- A **polling place** is the geographical area within which a polling station is located. In the absence of any legal definition, this can be regarded as widely as the entire polling district or as narrowly as the actual building used as a polling station.
- A **polling station** is the premises where voting takes place and must be located within the polling place designated for the particular polling district.

Although the review is of polling districts and polling places it is accepted that polling stations are inexorably linked to the review and comments are invited regarding those stations currently used and/or any suggested alternatives ensuring that:

1. Electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and
2. As far as is reasonable and practicable, that polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when designating a polling place, have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.

As a result, we are now looking for your thoughts and views about our existing arrangements to help us decide what, if any, changes should be made in this review.

Attached is the Polling District Schedule showing the existing polling districts, polling places and polling stations for the entire District. This gives the location of our current polling stations that we plan on using at all forthcoming elections.

Scope of the Review and Proposed Changes

It should also be noted that polling stations are not a formal part of the review, it is essential that the Council and Returning Officer have regard to the adequacy and suitability of premises used, particularly in relation to accessibility by disabled electors. The Polling District Schedule identifies areas where there are currently issues with the polling station, or else the polling station is located outside of the polling district. The Returning Officer is also always interested in hearing from residents about how polling in Huntingdonshire can be improved. Please let us know if you have any thoughts on your local polling station that you would like to share.

The following changes are proposed to the current schedule of polling districts, places and stations. Feedback on these proposals is particularly welcomed.

a) Update arrangements for Brampton

Creation of a new polling district for Lady Olivia Centre, Brampton to accommodate the growth in housing and electorate surrounding this polling station to improve accessibility for electors in the area.

b) Merging polling districts FG and FK - Stow Longa

Merging of polling districts FG and FK to reflect new parliamentary constituency boundaries. Areas previously split across two parliamentary constituencies. These changes will have no effect on polling arrangements for electors in these polling districts.

c) Merging of polling districts DZ and EA - St Ives North

Merging of polling districts DZ and EA to reflect new parliamentary constituency boundaries. Areas previously split across two parliamentary constituencies. These changes will have no effect on polling arrangements for electors in these polling districts.

d) Update arrangements for St Neots East

Consider the creation of a new polling district for Wintringham Park, St Neots to accommodate future electorate growth.

e) Update arrangements for Godmanchester

Consider the creation of a new polling district for Bearscroft, Godmanchester to accommodate future electorate growth.

Accessibility of Elections and the Elections Act 2022

New requirements and guidance on the accessibility of elections were introduced as part of the Elections Act 2022. As a result of these new rules the Council are in the process of undertaking a full audit of the accessibility of our preferred polling stations around the District.

Where polling stations are not fully accessible, there may be on occasion an alternative to be available. In these circumstances the Council and Returning Officer ensures that additional time and effort is undertaken to work with polling station staff to ensure we offer fair access to our elections for all voters.

The Council and Returning Officer welcomes feedback on the accessibility and suitability of our polling stations for disabled voters, particularly where alternative facilities might improve the service to voters.

Review Timetable

Consultation commences formal consultation	2 October 2023
End of formal consultation	27 November 2023
Outcome report taken to Corporate Governance Committee (CGC)	24 January 2024
Recommendations of (CGC) to Council	21 February 2024
Republish register of electors of affected polling districts	1 March 2024

How to respond

Full details of this review (along with maps of all District Wards split into polling district) can be viewed on our website at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/elections

A schedule of the existing polling districts, polling places and polling stations can also be viewed at Appendix A. The results of our accessibility questionnaire can be viewed at Appendix B.

It is important that we consult as widely as possible on future arrangements and any comments on the existing structure or proposed changes would be most welcome. Comments should relate to -

- The suitability and appropriateness of existing polling districts and polling places (see Appendix A);
- The suitability and appropriateness of proposed changes to polling districts and places (see *Scope of the Review and Proposed Changes* section above);
- The suitability and appropriateness of existing polling stations,

particularly with respect to the accessibility of stations for disabled voters or the identification of alternative and potentially better venues (see appendix B);

- Constructive suggestions on how to improve existing arrangements, or positive comments in relation to current polling arrangements.

The easiest way to respond to this consultation is by completing our online form, which can be found on the polling district review pages on our website at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/elections

Responses can also be sent to Electoral Services, at the address below or emailed to elections@huntingdonshire.gov.uk Please make the subject of your email POLLING DISTRICT REVIEW.

You can also write to –

Electoral Services
Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon
Cambs
PE29 3TN

Or you can contact us on (01480) 388129

Please ensure responses are received by no later than 27 November 2023.

Anybody making representations should be aware that, upon completion of the review, all correspondence and representations received must, by law, also be published alongside reports to the Corporate Governance Committee and Council and will help inform decisions made by those bodies.

Consultation issued by

Michelle Sacks
Electoral Registration Officer, Returning Officer and Chief Executive

2 October 2023