

Wards Affected:
General

Council – 25th July 2019

Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

Corporate Issues

1. Purpose of Report

To note the review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations and agree to the arrangements as set out in the report.

2. Advice

That it be RESOLVED:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the outcome of the Review be noted.2. That the arrangements regarding Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations in Daventry District as detailed in the report now submitted be agreed.3. That the Governance and HR Manager, in consultation with the Returning Officer, be granted delegated authority to make such amendments to Daventry District Council's Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places Order as considered appropriate from time to time prior to the next full review scheduled for 2023-2025.
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3. Introduction

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 laid down the timing of compulsory reviews of UK parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The last review was completed in December 2014. The next compulsory review must be started and completed within the period of 16 months commencing 1st October 2023.

The Act describes the Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Station in the following way:

Polling Districts: A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub division of a UK Parliamentary Constituency for the purposes of a UK Parliamentary election. In England, each parish is to be a separate polling district.

Polling Place: The building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the Acting Returning Officer. A polling place within a polling district must be

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designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district. The Electoral Commission are aware that some authorities designate the whole polling district as the polling place. However, Section 18B(4)(e) of the RPA Act 1983 states that “the polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station”. It is therefore considered that polling places should always be defined more specifically than simply the polling district i.e. by designating the name of the polling place (normally a particular building or area).

Polling Station: A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the local authority, polling stations are chosen by the relevant Returning Office for the election.

Any changes to the above will be reflected in the publication of the register of electors on 2nd December 2019.

4. Information

The requirements to be undertaken as part of a review are set out in Schedule A1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983. Local authorities must:

- Publish a notice of the holding of a review
- Seek representations from such persons as it thinks have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.
- On completion of the review give reasons for its decisions and publish all correspondence, minutes of meetings concerning the review and details of the designation of polling districts and polling places within the local authority area as a result of the review.

Access Requirements

Local authorities have a duty to review the accessibility of all polling places to disabled voters and ensure that every polling place, and prospective polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to disabled voters so far as is reasonable and practicable. Some of the main physical access issues are:

- Polling stations with steps into the entrance
- Lack of space which does not allow for motorised wheelchair manoeuvrability
- Lack of low level polling booths
- Location – not close to electors, poor parking facilities, no public transport
- Uneven ground unsuitable for those with mobility problems

5. Consultation

The review commenced on 8th March 2019. A questionnaire was sent to booking agents for their comments, availability of stations etc. Comments were invited from County, District and Parish councillors together with members of the Peoples Panel and the Disability Access Group. Notice of the review was published in the local papers and on the Daventry District Council website,

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inviting comments from all electors. All were asked for suggestions for alternative polling stations.

Initial gathering of information was concluded on 12th April 2019 and all comments considered. The Returning Officer's proposals were published and consultees were invited to comment.

The consultation period ran from 14th May 2019 and ran until 18th June giving five weeks for comments to be made.

The final proposals to change polling stations, including consultation responses, are set out in Appendix 1.

All proposals for no change are set out on the table in Appendix 2.

6. Proposed Changes

Changes are proposed for three polling stations, the details and considerations are set out in Appendix 1 and summarised below.

Daventry

Daventry Court Hotel, Sedgemoore Way, Daventry – Electors on the Monksmoor estate to use a new polling station at Monksmoor Park CE Primary School. This provides a more convenient location for voters. The school will remain open on polling day with child safety being the highest priority. Using the school will be a temporary measure until a new Community Building has been constructed on the Monksmoor development over the next few years. Hopefully, this will take place before the school is at full capacity (the school houses one year group at present).

The change will bring about a new polling district and polling place as well as a new polling station. The electorate as at 28th June 2019 was approximately 870 and this is expected to rise as the new development is completed. (See Appendix 1).

Woodford Halse

Woodford Halse Social Club - Electors to continue to vote at the Social Club which is now under new management and will continue to be available. The Memorial Hall, whilst a perfect venue, was deemed to be too close to the other Woodford polling station at Dryden Hall and not as convenient to voters. The Memorial Hall can still be utilised in emergencies. (See Appendix 1).

Harlestone

Harlestone Village Institute - Electors in Harlestone to continue use the Harlestone Village Institute. However, would now move to vote in the larger of the two rooms (still within the same polling place). This room provides direct disabled access from the car park. (See Appendix 1).

7. Other Considerations

Whilst reasonable efforts are made to avoid the use of schools it should be noted that electoral legislation provides the Returning Officer with an entitlement to use schools as polling stations. At present, no schools are closed on polling day and safeguarding actions are put in place.

The new unitary authorities for Northamptonshire are expected to be established in 2021 and Councillors will be elected to the area that is currently covered by Northamptonshire County Council. Once the unitary authorities have been established it is expected that the Boundary Commission will reduce the number of Members in the wards and could make changes to those ward boundaries and therefore the polling districts. However the polling places and stations would most likely remain the same.

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

It is expected that the minor changes proposed will have minor additional costs which will be met from existing budgets.

8.2 Personnel

There are no personnel implications as a result of the proposals.

8.3 Legal/Constitutional

These have been identified in the report.

8.4 Environmental

There are no environmental implications as a result of the proposals.

8.5 Policy

There are no implications to policy as a result of the proposals.

8.6 ICT

There are no ICT implications as a result of the proposals.

8.7 Crime and Disorder

There are no Crime and Disorder implications as a result of the proposals.

8.8 Human Rights

Article 3 of the First Protocol of the Human Rights Act commits signatories to hold free elections by secret ballot under conditions which will allow the free expression of all voters. This gives electors the right to vote and an obligation on the Returning Officer to make such arrangements as are necessary to maximise opportunities for voting.

8.9 Equalities

Information relating to access for voters with disabilities has been collected in relation to all polling stations and considered as part of the review.

9. Conclusions

In line with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 a review of the Council's Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations has been undertaken. Full consultation was carried out with stakeholders. The Returning Officer therefore proposes changes to arrangements at two polling stations with a third that was consulted on remaining the same. The remainder of the Council's designated polling stations remain unchanged.

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Background papers:

Electoral Commission 'Reviews of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations'.

Electoral Commission 'Overview of the legislative requirements of a polling district/polling place review.

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