

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2023</b>
<b>DIRECTORATE:</b>	<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK</b>
<b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b>	<b>CHERYL EVANS, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND ELECTIONS MANAGER</b>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To report the outcome of the consultation carried out in respect of the Polling District and Polling Place Review and recommend to Council a schedule to Polling Districts and Polling Places for approval.

## **2. Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places**

- 2.1 Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council has a duty to divide its area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each polling district.

- 2.2 The following definitions may be helpful when reading the report and appendices:

- “Polling districts” are geographical electoral areas into which wards and constituencies may be sub-divided.
- “Polling places” are the buildings or areas designated by the council where electors in a polling district go to vote in person.
- “Polling stations” are the number of issuing desks in the building or area that is the designated polling place.

- 2.3 The Electoral Administration Act 2006, as amended, introduced a duty on all local authorities in Great Britain to review their polling districts and polling places at least once every five years.

- 2.4 Under section 18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983, the next compulsory review must be undertaken within a 16-month window between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025. The Council commenced its statutory consultation on polling places on Monday, 2 October 2023.

- 2.5 The intention of the legislation was for reviews to be completed by the January before a UK parliamentary general election. However, since the repeal of the Fixed Term Parliaments Act 2011, there is no longer any certainty as to when the next general election will be.

- 2.6 The Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022 means:

- the UK Parliament can be dissolved by the King on request of the Prime

Minister, at any time within the five years of the life of the Parliament;

- the next general election must take place before Tuesday 28 January 2025, but it could happen at any point before then;
- there is no longer a link between the timing of the compulsory polling district and places review falling in a 16-month period ending 3 months before a scheduled general election.

2.7 In addition, the Boundary Commission for England is currently undertaking a review of parliamentary constituency boundaries. The Commission has now published its final recommendations, and Orders for the new parliamentary constituency boundaries will be made by 1 November 2023. Once the Orders for new parliamentary constituencies have been made, the new boundaries will be used for the next general election. If a parliamentary by election is called in the meantime, it would be run on existing boundaries.

2.8 These issues mean it is important that the polling district and places review is carried out as early as possible, so that Council has agreed polling districts and places to be used for the next parliamentary election, in addition to the scheduled local elections and the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May 2024, and has a polling scheme in place which reflects the new constituencies.

2.9 When undertaking a review the authority must:

- publish a notice of the holding of a review
- consult the (Acting) Returning Officer ((A)RO) for every parliamentary constituency which is wholly or partly in its area
- publish all representations made by an (A)RO within 30 days of receipt by posting a copy of them at the local authority's office and in at least one conspicuous place in their area and, if the authority maintains a website, by placing a copy on the authority's website
- 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. Such persons must have an opportunity to make representations and to comment on the representations made by the (A)RO(s).

2.10 The review formally commenced on 2 October 2023 and interested parties were able to submit comments as part of a public consultation up to 30 October 2023. The following individuals and organisations were consulted:

- electors via the City Council's website and social media;
- political parties;
- all City Council elected members;
- the Member of Parliament for Lincoln;
- representatives of people with disabilities via the Voluntary Centre Services.

2.11 A schedule of current Polling Districts and Polling Places was made available to all parties who were consulted, together with those Polling Stations used at the last local elections held in May 2023. The schedule also provided details of any

proposed changes to Polling Districts and Polling Places. The (A)RO, as part of the consultation, confirmed that she did not intend to make any changes to the proposals outlined.

- 2.12 **Appendix A** attached to this report outlines the responses received to the consultation in respect of certain Polling Districts and Polling Places, together with comments in respect of those responses.

- 2.13 Councillor Calum Watt submitted a response supporting the proposed change in the FA Polling District, with the use of the University of Lincoln being reintroduced.

Councillor Watt also submitted a response relating to the KC Polling District, suggesting alternatives to the currently used Birchwood Leisure Centre, on the grounds that the venue was not currently in polling district and located within a different ward, which included: the use of Woodlands School or the Barrel Pub, which was also located outside the polling district, albeit closer than the leisure centre.

Councillors Thomas Dyer, Bill Mara and Hilton Spratt, as Witham Ward councillors, submitted the following responses:

HA, HB, HE and HF Polling Districts - strongly welcome these proposals. St Columba's Church Centre has proven to be an effective location with good parking and is centrally located.

HC and HD Polling Districts - concerns were raised around the frequency that polling stations have been changed within these districts. Whilst there are no major objections to the use of Swallowbeck Methodist Church or St Christopher's School new outbuilding, concerns were raised around the availability of parking and the accessibility of the location via foot. Ruston's Sports Centre was suggested as a suitable alternative, with ample parking and good footpath links.

- 2.14 The list of Polling Districts and Polling Places proposed by officers to be used from 1 December 2023, taking into account the comments received as part of the consultation, is attached at **Appendix B** to the report.

### **3. Strategic Priorities**

#### **3.1 Let's reduce inequality**

The review of Polling Districts and Polling Places seeks to ensure that Polling Stations in the City of Lincoln are reasonably accessible to all electors.

### **4. Organisational Impacts**

#### **4.1 Finance**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

#### 4.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

#### 4.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

Each Polling Place proposed as part of this report has been considered in line with Electoral Commission guidance on a range of issues in respect accessibility and disabled access. All proposed Polling Places and associated Polling Stations meet the relevant criteria and regulations enabling them to be used for further elections. It has not been necessary to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment.

### 5. Risk Implications

5.1 There are no direct risk implications arising as a result of this report.

### 6. Recommendation

6.1 That the proposals for Polling Districts and Polling Places for future elections, as detailed in Appendix B to the report, be approved.

6.2 That the Chief Executive and Town Clerk, as (Acting) Returning Officer, be authorised to make alternative arrangements should any of the proposed Polling Places become unavailable for any future election.

**Is this a key decision?**

No

**Do the exempt information  
categories apply?**

No

**Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny  
Procedure Rules (call-in and  
urgency) apply?**

No

**How many appendices does  
the report contain?**

Two

**List of Background Papers:**

None

**Lead Officer:**

Cheryl Evans, Democratic Services and Elections  
Manager  
Telephone (01522) 873439