

**To the Chair and Members of the
ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC
STRUCTURES COMMITTEE**

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. A review of polling districts and polling places is currently being undertaken. The purpose of the report is to provide the Committee with an opportunity to consider and comment on proposals for changes before the completion of the review.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Committee consider and comment on the proposals for polling districts and polling places so that their views can be considered prior to the finalisation of the review.

BACKGROUND

3. Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced changes to the provisions contained in the Representation of the People Act 1983 for authorities to review the polling districts and polling places used at elections. The amended provisions require that reviews must be undertaken every four years and as the first review took place in 2007 a further full review must now be undertaken before the end of a period of four years starting with the completion of the first review.
4. The review process was commenced during early September 2007 when notice of the commencement of the review was circulated to all Councillors, MP's, MEP's Political Parties/Groups and other interested groups inviting them to comment on the existing arrangements. Public notice was also given at this time inviting local people to contribute to the process. Parish Councils were also advised of the review.
5. Since that time all polling places and districts have been surveyed, consideration given to alternative locations and all comments received have also been considered. The proposals identified in the schedule have been made taking account of guidance on the identification of polling places and districts and to avoid the use of schools wherever possible to minimise the potential disruption of young people's education.

6. During the previous review a number of changes were made to polling districts however given the relatively short period of time since that review it has not been felt necessary to recommend changes to polling districts for this review and responses to consultation have addressed polling premises. The review has identified a number of proposed changes to polling premises and the outcome of this is summarised in a schedule attached at Appendix A which includes details of existing polling places, proposed changes, and the numbers of existing and proposed polling stations that the Returning Officer considers are necessary at each location. Maps showing the locations of all existing and proposed polling places and districts are available for inspection at Electoral Services, Copley House, Waterdale, Doncaster and will be available at the meeting.
7. The proposals have been circulated and publicised in the same way as the original notice of review was undertaken and comments invited with a closing date of the 20th December 2011

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

8. The conduct of the review is a statutory requirement which must be carried out every four years and completed by the 31st December 2011. Options for polling places and districts this has been considered to meet statutory procedural requirements and guidance taking into account comments received as part of the consultation.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

9. There are no alternative options.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY PRIORITIES

10. The polling district and polling place review does not impact directly on the Council's key priorities but contributes to the ability of citizens to participate in the democratic process which impacts upon these priorities.

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

11. The key risk associated with the review of polling districts is that failure to provide polling premises to the expectations of voters can negatively affect turnout. However this needs to be balanced against the practical issues including identifying suitable premises and the overall cost of provision.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12. The Representation of the People Act 1983 requires that the Council identifies polling districts and polling places for use at parliamentary elections and keeps these under review. The Electoral Administration Act 2006 within Section 16 amends the provisions of the 1983 Act and introduces a requirement for reviews to be undertaken every 4 years. The first review under the legislation was completed in 2007 and a further review is now required.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

13. The cost of the review has been met from within existing resources so there is minimal impact on the Electoral Services budget. Additionally in conducting the review alternatives have been identified for several high cost portable units reducing the cost of this provision significantly. There are ongoing cost pressures on the elections budget and these savings will assist in alleviating these.

CONSULTATION

14. Consultation is required as part of the statutory review process and is detailed in the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Review of Polling Districts.

REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

Tony Machin,
Head of Electoral Services and Democratic Renewal,
Corporate Governance
Tel: 01302 734649
E-mail: tony.machin@doncaster.gov.uk

Rob Vincent
Chief Executive and Returning Officer