

To the Chair and Members of the

ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2014/15

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report sets out the existing arrangements for polling districts and places and proposed changes taking into account the submission of the Returning Officer and feedback from public consultation.
2. The statutory responsibility for reviewing UK Parliamentary polling districts and places rests with each relevant local authority. As set out in the Council's Constitution, the decision on polling districts and polling places is the responsibility of the Elections and Democratic Structures Committee.
3. The proposals sought to identify more appropriate polling places where adverse comments have been received on the location and/or suitability of current venues, to enable schools to remain open on election day, to identify alternatives where usual stations are no longer available and to avoid using mobile stations which are expensive to hire and site and are unpopular with voters and residents in the surrounding area.
4. The Returning Officer must comment during any review of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places on both existing polling stations and the polling stations that would likely be used if any new proposal for polling places were accepted.
5. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the local authority, polling stations are chosen by the Returning Officer.
6. To comply with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act the review must be completed by 31 January 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS

7. The Committee is asked to approve the report and the proposed changes to Polling Districts and Polling Places.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

8. Polling districts and places are reviewed regularly to;
 - seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances

- seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

BACKGROUND

9. Each Local Authority is required to carry out reviews of Polling Districts and Polling Places in its area.
10. A Council's area is divided into polling districts with one or more districts making up a ward, with a polling place being the area or building within a polling district in which a polling station is situated.
11. The review considered:
 - The boundaries of polling districts – for example, are they well defined? Do they follow natural boundaries? Are there suitable transport links? Are there any obstacles to crossing polling district boundaries?
 - Polling Places – the location, size and accessibility of the polling place and its availability now and in the future
 - Polling Stations – the suitability and accessibility of the room or area for use as a polling station
12. In addition to the above considerations, during the European Elections 2014, the opportunity was taken to complete the Electoral Commission's evaluation templates in order to assess the suitability/ accessibility of the polling place/ station. Presiding Officers at the European Elections 2014 were asked to record any complaints/ comments received.
13. Electorate projections for the current polling district boundaries in each year and up to December 2018 were taken in to consideration. This takes into account new housing and demolitions.
14. The review had regard to the new boundaries due to come into force. The new warding arrangements allowed the move of some areas into a more convenient polling district.
15. The Notice of Review was published on 8 December 2014 and maps and a summary document relating to current electoral arrangements were available for inspection. The summary document included key issues identified from the recent European Elections, any notable projected changes in electorate and made proposals for changes to polling districts/ places.
16. The Returning Officer's provisional proposals sought to identify more appropriate polling places where adverse comments have been received on the location/ suitability of current venues and identify alternatives to using mobile stations which are expensive and unpopular with voters. The proposals take into account proposals from elected members and Electoral Commission Guidance that the number of electors allocated to a particular polling station should not exceed 2,500 not including postal voters.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

17. This review is a statutory duty and must be carried out in accordance with statutory requirements.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

18. Details of existing arrangements for all wards and the final proposals of the Returning Officer following consultation will be available at the meeting for members' consideration.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY PRIORITIES

Priority	Implications
We will provide strong leadership and governance, working in partnership.	The revision of Council size and Ward boundaries intends to provide good, electoral equality across the borough.

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

19. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

20. The arrangements detailed in this report are designed to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

21. The review will be carried out within existing budgets.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

22. The suitability of each polling place for disabled access was assessed as part of the review.

CONSULTATION

23. Maps and information relating to current electoral arrangements were available for inspection on our website and at the following offices:

The Civic Office, Waterdale, Doncaster DN1 3BU
Doncaster Central Library, Waterdale, Doncaster DN1 3JE
Adwick Town Hall
Mexborough Library

24. The Statutory Notice publicising the review was sent to:

Members of Parliament
All Councillors
Parish Councils
Key Disability, BME and Faith groups

25. In addition, Members of Parliament and Councillors' were invited to workshops held on;
Tuesday 16 December 10am – 11.30
Wednesday 17 December 17.30 – 19.00

BACKGROUND PAPERS

26. Elections and Democratic Structures Committee report of 25 November 2014

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