

REPORT FOR DECISION



DECISION MAKER:	Council
DATE:	22 January 2020
SUBJECT:	Polling District and Polling Places Review 2019
REPORT FROM:	Chief Executive/(Acting) Returning Officer
CONTACT OFFICER:	Jayne Hammond – Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services
TYPE OF DECISION:	Council
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:	This paper is within the public domain
SUMMARY:	This report sets out proposals to enable the Council to comply with its statutory duty to review all polling districts and polling places in Bury
OPTIONS & RECOMMENDED OPTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Review proposals for polling districts and polling places, as set out in Appendix A to this report be approved by Council. 2. That authority is delegated to the (Acting) Returning Officer to identify and approve the use of alternative suitable buildings that could be used as a polling place if necessary; and in the event that any approved polling place becomes unavailable for use on the date of the election.
IMPLICATIONS:	
Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:	Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes
Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:	<p>Costs are met from existing resources. Additional resources would be required to manage and run any additional polling stations. European, National, Police ballots and referendums are not funded by the Council as costs are reclaimed from the responsible body. The Council is responsible for its own elections.</p> <p>There are no risks directly associated with this report.</p>
Equality/Diversity implications:	<p>Yes</p> <p>The polling places have been inspected and assessed having regard to equality and diversity requirements. Any feedback from use of these during the recent General Election in December 2019, will be addressed for the local and Mayoral elections in May</p>

	2020.	
Considered by Monitoring Officer:	Yes This review is necessary to comply with statutory timescales.	JH
Wards Affected:	All	
Scrutiny Interest:	None	

TRACKING/PROCESS

Chief Executive

Chief Executive/ Strategic Leadership Team	Cabinet Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners
√			
Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet/Committee	Council	
		√	

1.0 Introduction and purpose of Report

To consider the Council's proposals for the statutory review of polling districts and polling places.

2.0 Background

- 1.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of polling districts and polling places. This review had to be completed between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 inclusive. It was originally timed to have effect on the publication of a revised register of electors due on 1 October 2019, but due to a by election and the General Election this date is now 1 February 2020.
- 1.2 Section 18B (4) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 states that in conducting a review of polling places the Council must:
- a) seek to ensure that all electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and;
 - b) seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled; and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.
- 1.3 In addition, a polling place for every polling district must be designated unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area either wholly or partly outside of the polling district.

2.0 Issues

- 2.1 The polling place must be agreed by the Council, whilst the allocation of polling stations is the responsibility of the (Acting) Returning Officer. In designating polling districts and polling places there are a range of practical issues that must be considered and there are also practical limitations, such as suitability of premises and availability as to use for electoral purposes.
- 2.2 In designating polling places, the Council utilises its powers under the Representation of the People Act 1983 when dividing constituencies into polling districts and also in dividing wards into polling districts at local government elections. Polling districts for local government elections are not automatically part of the statutory review. However the Electoral Commission advises that polling districts for UK parliamentary and local government elections should always be the same. It therefore follows that any review of parliamentary polling arrangements should be conducted simultaneously with one of local government arrangements, and with those for any other type of election for which provision is made for the designation of polling districts and polling places, for example, the Combined Authority Mayoral Election.

3.0 The Review

- 3.1 Notice of the review was given on 12 July 2019 and information about the review, including details of the current polling stations, was published on the Council's website, at Councils libraries and at the Town Hall reception.
- 3.2 As part of the consultation process all Councillors were contacted, as were the MP's for Bury North and South
- 3.3 The Returning Officer is a statutory respondent to the review and published draft proposals at the start of the consultation period. Proposals following consultation which took place in 2019 (from July to October) are attached at Appendix A.
- 3.4 Elections officers undertook visits to polling places during the consultation to assess the suitability of existing arrangements and consider alternatives where required. This process was also undertaken prior to the General Election in December 2019. Suitable buildings for use considered the following factors:
 - Location and accessibility to electors within the polling district
 - Size – can it accommodate more than one polling station if required
 - Accessibility – is the building accessible to all those entitled to vote at the polling station
 - Availability – is the building readily available in the event of an unscheduled election
 - Facilities available in the venue including parking, heating, lighting, toilet facilities and security
 - Public buildings -the election rules allow the Returning Officer the free use of buildings maintained by the council including schools maintained by the authority and free schools. These will be identified in the first instance.
 - Private buildings – in the absence of suitable public owned buildings, churches, clubs and other private sector buildings conveniently located and accessible to electors

3.5 The responses to the consultation were limited, with some respondents confirming the proposals for some polling districts. Representations were received regarding the polling districts for Besses (from Councillor Whitby), Elton (from Councillor Susan Southworth) and Radcliffe North (from Councillor Cropper). These are included in the attached Appendix A. These comments have been considered and will be used to consider availability and assess suitability of appropriate premises for future elections, along with feedback from residents, Members and staff following experience at the recent General Election.

4.0 Completion of the Review

4.1 Once a decision has been made, details of the polling districts and polling places will be made available at the Council's offices and on the Council's website.

5.0 Recommendation

5.1 That Council approves the Returning Officers proposals published in draft in October 2019 in Appendix A to this report. To mitigate any risk of disruption to the election process, the Council is also recommended to authorise the Chief Executive as (Acting) Returning Officer to identify alternative polling places to be used if necessary for any other polling stations unavailable on the date of the election.

List of Background Papers:-

Ward Maps/Polling Arrangements

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