

This matter is not a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has not been included in the relevant Forward

Report of the Chief Executive

Polling District and Station Review 2014

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To give consideration to final proposals arising from a Review of polling districts and polling station provision which the Council is required to undertake under the Electoral Administration Act (EAA) 2006.
- 1.2 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act (ERAA) 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The current ongoing compulsory review is required to be started and completed between 1st October 2013 and 31st January 2015.
- 1.3 Subsequent compulsory reviews must be started and completed within the period of 16 months that starts on 1st October of every fifth year after 1st October 2013. In other words a further review will need to be undertaken after October 2018.
- 1.4 It is important that the current ongoing compulsory review is completed to coincide with the publication of the new Electoral Register on 1st December 2014.
- 1.5 This report follows a consultation exercise following the approval of draft proposals by the Council at its meeting on 25th September 2014.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That the Council approve the proposed amendments by the Electoral Registration Officer to existing polling station locations within the Metropolitan Borough of Barnsley as set out in Appendix 1 and which have been the subject of statutory consultation**
- 2.2 **That the representations received in response to the consultation exercise as set out in Appendix 2 be noted and the extent to which it is recommended by the Electoral Registration Officer to give effect to such representations and that the Council approve such additional changes to existing polling station locations**

- 2.3 That the comprehensive list of polling station locations as set out in Appendix 3 be noted and implemented as the approved polling places for the Metropolitan Borough of Barnsley for implementation on 1st December 2014 and for all electoral events up to 30th September 2018
- 2.4 That the Chief Executive in their capacity as Electoral Registration Officer be authorised to consider further the outstanding issues relating to the future use of certain locations as polling places as identified in Appendix 2 and to make any further changes which may prove to be necessary in consultation with local ward members
- 2.5 That in the event that any further reconsideration of polling places is required due to any subsequent unavailability of any of the above locations as polling stations the Chief Executive in their capacity as Electoral Registration Officer be authorised to make appropriate arrangements for alternative locations in consultation with local ward members.

3. Background

- 3.1 As required by Section 16 of the EAA 2006 a statutory Review of polling places commenced with the publication of a public notice following the approval of draft proposals by the Council at its meeting on 26th September 2014. The Notice provided information on the Review and requested representations to make changes to the draft proposals.
- 3.2 These draft proposals reflected essentially the current arrangements (as operated for the May 2014 polls) for polling districts and polling stations together with some further limited changes. The closing date for response to the consultation was 24th October 2014.
- 3.3 Informal consultation had already commenced with Elected Members together with the following groups. These groups were consulted again as is required by the legislation as part of the statutory consultation.
- Members of Parliament for Barnsley Central, Barnsley East, Penistone & Stocksbridge and Wentworth & Dearne
 - Members of the European Parliament
 - Town and Parish Councils
 - South Yorkshire and Local Councils Association
 - Constituency Associations
 - Other Political Groups
 - Returning Officers and Electoral Services Managers at Rotherham MBC and Sheffield City Council
- 3.4 Notice was also be given to all council social network sites, to the Council's Connects Centres/Libraries and various display points as well as via the council's website.

- 3.5 A limited number of representations have been received principally from elected members giving potential alternative proposals and these have been summarised in Appendix 1 to the report. Due consideration has been given to these representations.
- 3.6 Section 18 of the Representation of People Act (RPA) 1983 provides that the Authority must seek to ensure that all electors in its area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and that is so far as it is reasonable and practicable, only buildings which are accessible by persons with disabilities are designated as polling stations. These criteria have been considered in the assessment of suitability for polling wherever alternatives have been put forward.
- 3.7 All premises in areas where alternative options have been proposed have been the subject of a site visit and the views of experts have been sought where necessary.
- 3.8 There are currently 151 polling districts with 151 polling stations spread over 145 polling locations, split between the 21 Council Wards.

4. Proposal and Justification

- 4.1 Appendix 1 is a summary document listing only the proposed changes to the existing Scheme approved in December 2011 put forward by the Electoral Registration Officer for ease of reference which have been the subject of statutory consultation. These changes essentially reflect changes which were introduced as part of the arrangements for the operation of the May 2014 elections.
- 4.2 Appendix 2 identifies the responses to the consultation and extent to which the Electoral Registration Officer recommends that any proposed changes arising from the consultation should be given effect to. Where it is not recommended to give effect to any proposed changes an explanation is given.
- 4.3 Appendix 2 also identifies some outstanding issues with regard to certain locations which need further consideration such as where premises are no longer available and alternative premises still need to be determined. It is recommended that the Electoral Registration Officer be authorised to resolve these outstanding issues and consult local ward members in respect of any further changes to locations which may prove necessary.
- 4.4 Appendix 3 is the comprehensive list of all proposed Polling Districts (in Ward Order) which will comprise the new Scheme to operate up to October 2108 with details of the current polling station designation and details of any proposed change or if no changes have been submitted.

- 4.5 Changes to arrangements have required the amendment to certain polling district references.
- 4.6 In considering these proposals or making any further suggested changes by way of additional proposals Members need to give due consideration to section 18 of the RPA 1983 as outlined in paragraph 3.5.
- 4.7 Overall the extent of any changes to the existing Scheme approved in December 2011 is relatively limited and most of the changes have been tested operationally in the May 2016 elections.

5. Implications for Local People / Service Users

- 5.1 The Review impacts on all area of the Borough for which Local members (amongst others) have been consulted on. Any proposals for change have been developed to seek to maximise accessibility of polling stations for electors with the objective of enhancing participation in the electoral process and wider community engagement.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no additional budget implications associated with the implementation of this report. Any costs associated with providing improved access to polling stations will be met from within existing electoral budgets. Members need to be mindful that if any alternative proposals are submitted which require significant additional expenditure such as the use of temporary mobile polling stations there may be additional pressures on electoral budgets which would be a material consideration in giving consideration to such alternative proposals.

7. Employee Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct employee implications arising from this report.

8. Communications Implications

- 8.1 Refer to 3 above.

9. Consultations

- 9.1 Refer to 3 above.

10. List of Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix 1 - Summary list of all proposed changes from Electoral Registration Officer

- 10.2 Appendix 2 - Representations received in response to consultation and outstanding issues requiring further consideration.
- 10.3 Appendix 3 - Comprehensive list of all Polling Districts, with details of current polling station designation and details of any proposed changes.

11. Background Papers

- 11.1 The ERAA 2013, EAA 2006 and RPA 1983. Copies are available on request from Electoral Services.
- 11.2 Maps supporting the review are available on request from Electoral Services.

12. Officer Contact

- 12.1 Mary Kilroy Telephone No 01226 773059 Date 19th November 2014

Financial Implications / Consultation
(To be signed by senior Financial Services officer where no financial implications)