

South Northamptonshire Council

Council

18 December 2019

Polling District and Polling Places Review 2019

Report of Returning Officer

This report is public

Purpose of report

To agree the recommendations of the Council's Polling District and Polling Place Review 2019.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To agree the recommendations for Polling Districts and Polling Places within South Northamptonshire as set out at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 To note that the Constitution gives delegated authority to the Returning Officer "To amend the Council's Polling Districts and Polling Places Order as necessary".

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 laid down the timing of compulsory reviews of UK parliamentary polling districts and polling places setting out that a compulsory review be carried out between 1 October 2013 and 31 January 2015. Subsequent compulsory reviews must be started and completed within the period of 16 months that starts on 1 October of every fifth year after 1 October 2013.
- 2.2 South Northamptonshire completed the last full review in December 2014, which came into effect in 2015. A partial review covering Wicken and Brackley was subsequently concluded in December 2016. This current review must be completed by 31 January 2020.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 provides that the requirement to review polling districts and polling places relates solely to Parliamentary elections. Constituency boundaries are not the subject of the review,

which is confined to the division of Parliamentary constituencies into polling districts and polling places.

3.2 The Act provides the following definitions:

- Polling district: a geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency for the purposes of a UK Parliamentary election.
- Polling place: the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer.
- Polling station: the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place.

3.3 The review requires us to seek to ensure that: all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and, as far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places we are responsible for are accessible to all electors, and when considering the designation of a polling place, we must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.

3.4 The changing of any district ward boundaries is not considered as part of the review as this can only be done by statute following an electoral review carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission. This review is concerned only with the administrative subdivision of a ward into polling districts which are then assigned polling places.

3.5 The changing of polling districts in areas which are also aligned with parish boundaries cannot be amended during this review (these can only be amended during a Community Governance Review).

3.6 The review was undertaken in accordance with the relevant legislation and guidance. The proposals are set out in full at Appendix 1.

3.7 There are five changes proposed to polling stations as set out below. Appendix 2 sets out the reasons for the proposed changes.

Current Polling Station	Proposed Polling Station
Roade Village Hall	Roade Library
Civic Hall at Brackley Town Hall	Electors who will be within the new Brackley Town Council – North ward to be allocated to new polling station, Egerton Hall, Juno Crescent, Brackley.
St Leonard's Church, Yardley Gobion	Yardley Gobion, Silver Jubilee Village Hall
Greens Norton Village Hall,	Greens Norton Community Centre
Mobile Station Grand Union Housing Group Car Park, Burcote Road, Towcester	Electors in polling district SFTB2 attend the Sports and Social Club polling station as a triple station until such time as the proposed community hall at The Furlongs at Towcester Grange is constructed

- 3.8 Any changes to Polling Districts and Polling Places will be reflected in the publication of the revised register of electors on 1 February 2020 and effective from elections after this date.
- 3.9 In accordance with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 the next compulsory review must be started and completed within the period of 16 months commencing 1 October 2023. It is anticipated that the West Northamptonshire Unitary Council will be in existence at that time and that council will therefore be responsible for carrying out the polling place review across the whole unitary area.
- 3.10 If changes are required between reviews, if a polling place becomes unavailable, or a more suitable place is found within the district, the Constitution delegates authority to the Returning Officer “To amend the Council’s Polling Districts and Polling Places Order as necessary”.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 It is a legal requirement to undertake the polling district and polling place review. The recommendations are based on what will provide the best service and experience to the voters going forward.

5.0 Consultation

The Notice of Review of Polling Districts and Places was published on 31 July 2019 which invited public comments and submissions on the existing polling arrangements by 6 September 2019.

The (Acting) Returning Officer’s proposals for proposed and existing polling places was published on 30 September 2019 and a further opportunity was provided to comment until 1 November.

All consultation responses are available on the council’s website: [Polling Place Review 2019](#)

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: To agree the recommendations as set out.

Option 2: To amend the recommendations. This is not recommended as the review has been conducted in accordance with the Electoral Administration Act 2013 and Representation of the People Act 1983 and the proposals are deemed the most appropriate.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any additional or changes to polling stations can be met from existing budgets.

Comments checked by:

Martin Henry, Executive Director Resources, 0300 003 0206,
martin.henry@southnorthants.gov.uk

Legal Implications

- 7.2 The Review has been carried out in accordance with the Electoral Administration Act 2013 and Representation of the People Act 1983.

Comments checked by:

Andrew Hunkin, Executive Director: Resources, 0300 003 0202,
andrew.hunkin@southnorthants.gov.uk

Risk Implications

- 7.3 The council is required to carry out the compulsory review and there are reputational risks if this were not completed. These risks will be managed as part of the operational risk register and escalated to the leadership risk register as and when necessary.

Comments checked by:

Geoff Kent, Assistant Director Customer and Corporate Services, 0300 003 0115,
Geoff.kent@southnorthants.gov.uk

Equalities Implications

- 7.4 Every eligible voter must have the same opportunity to vote in secret, there should be no discrimination due to disability, age, race, gender etc.

Comments checked by:

Geoff Kent, Assistant Director Customer and Corporate Services, 0300 003 0115,
Geoff.kent@southnorthants.gov.uk

8.0 Decision Information

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

None

Lead Councillor

None

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	(Acting) Returning Officer Recommendations
2	Proposed Polling Station Changes
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager
Contact Information	01295 221589 democracy@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk