

Report to Council

Subject: Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

Date: 20 November 2019

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Purpose

For Council to approve a new scheme of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations following the statutory review process.

Recommendations

To:

- 1) Note and endorse the decisions made by the Chief Executive under delegated powers;**
- 2) Adopt the new polling districts, polling places and polling stations scheme as set out in the attached document at Appendix 2;**
- 3) Request that the Chief Executive formally publishes the notice of the conclusion of the review and its findings; and**
- 4) Note that the Chief Executive is authorised to designate an alternative polling place should one become unavailable at short notice before an election.**

1 Background

- 1.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 requires the Council to divide its geographical area into polling districts with a polling place identified for each polling district. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. All Councils were therefore required to carry out a compulsory review between 1 October 2013 and 31 January 2015. Gedling's last review took place in Autumn 2014. The Act then goes on to require that all Councils perform a follow up review at least once every five years. This report sets out proposals for

revised polling places following that review.

- 1.2 As required by the legislation, a public consultation period was held from Monday 5 August 2019 until Monday 7 October 2019 seeking the views and comments of electors, interested persons and any persons or bodies with expertise in access to premises or facilities for persons with any type of disability. The consultation also included all Borough Councillors, all Parish Councils, and the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) for the Sherwood Parliamentary Constituency which includes some areas within the Borough of Gedling.
- 1.3 Responses to the public consultation are included with this report at Appendix 1. A total of nine responses were received. The issues raised by the responses are addressed in the appendix.
- 1.4 For ease of reference the following definitions are helpful in understanding the recommendations:

A Polling District is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a constituency, ward or division into smaller parts.

A Polling Place is the building or area in which polling stations will be, selected by the Returning Officer.

A Polling Station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. There may be more than one Polling Station in a Polling Place and this is decided by the Returning Officer for the election.

- 1.5 Guidance from the Electoral Commission and best practice states that:
 - The council must seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
 - The Council must seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable every polling place is accessible to electors who are disabled.
 - Ideally, the polling place should be in its own polling district.
 - No polling place should be shared by two wards.
 - Where possible, “natural” boundaries should be used, e.g. railways, major roads, etc.
 - All properties in a minor road or estate should, ideally, be in the same polling district.

- 1.6 It should be noted that in the event a polling place becomes unavailable at short notice, the Chief Executive has delegated authority to find an alternative without the need to report to Council.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 Following collation of the feedback and information received at elections since the last review, the Electoral Registration Officer proposes to keep the polling districts the same for the Borough. No information has been received in the course of the review to consider amending the boundaries of any existing polling district.
- 2.2 The feedback gathered did make suggestions for altering some polling places. The specific feedback and the response to it is made in Appendix 1. In light of the feedback it is considered appropriate to make changes to a polling place in the Bestwood St Albans Ward and Trent Valley Ward. As Members are aware an unscheduled general election has been called which will take place on 12 December. In order that electors can be notified about their polling place in accordance with the timetable for that election, the polling card information had to be supplied to the print company on Monday 4 November. As a result an urgent decision needed to be made whether any changes to existing polling places should be made. The Chief Executive therefore considered the feedback from the review and made the following decisions:
- Bestwood St Albans Ward – Move the Polling Place in Polling District SA2 from Bestwood Community Centre to the very nearby Bestwood Miner's Welfare. The reason for this decision is that the Community Centre is unavailable. The Chief Executive has made the decision under the existing delegation to designate an alternative polling place should one become unavailable at short notice.
 - Trent Valley Ward – Move the polling place from the Burton Joyce Community Church to the nearby Village Hall. This decision has been made by the Chief Executive under the general delegation to officers to make urgent decisions and was taken in consultation with the Mayor. The reason for the change to the polling place is that access to the current polling place is via narrow pavements and there is insufficient parking on site. The new polling place at the Village Hall is a more appropriate facility, which is accessible and has better parking provision. The consultation responses recommended using the Parish Hall, however this was not supported as it is also used as a nursery on polling days so the

building owners are unwilling for it to be used for elections.

- 2.3 Following the review, it is proposed that Council notes and endorses the decisions made by the Chief Executive and approves the polling districts, polling places and polling stations as detailed in full at Appendix 2.
- 2.4 Should Council approve this report, formal notice of the conclusion will need to be published online and in paper form at the Civic Centre as required by legislation. It is proposed that the Chief Executive formally publishes this notice.
- 2.5 An equality impact assessment of the proposals has been carried out, and included at Appendix 3, which Council must have regard to when making its decision.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 There are limited financial implications associated with this report. If a revised or new polling station were required, it is anticipated that any increase in cost could be met from existing budgets.

4 Background papers

None identified

5 Appendices

- 5.1 Appendix 1 – Summarised consultation responses with response from the (Acting) Returning Officer.
Appendix 2 – Proposed new scheme of Polling Districts and Polling Places
Appendix 3 - Equality Impact Assessment.