

## **Report to Council**

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

**Date:** 21 February 2024

**Author:** Democratic Services Manager

### **Purpose**

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

### **Recommendations**

#### **That Council:**

- 1) Notes the responses to the consultation; and**
- 2) Approves and adopts the new polling districts, polling places and polling stations scheme as set out in the attached document at Appendix 3; and**
- 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 and required every local authority to start and complete a review of its polling districts and polling places every five years. The last statutory review across the borough of Gedling was in 2019, even though a small interim review was done in early 2023 to review stations for the local and parish election held in May 2023. The next statutory review must take place between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025 (inclusive) and this report sets out proposals for revised polling districts and places following that review.

1.2 As required by the legislation, a public consultation period was held from Monday 4 December 2023 until Monday 22 January 2024 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, polling station staff, local community and voluntary groups, and the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) for the Sherwood Forest Parliamentary Constituency which includes two wards within the Borough of Gedling.

1.3 During the consultation period, the Acting Returning Officer's proposals and maps of the proposed polling districts were published on the Council's website. To increase understanding of the proposals across all potential respondents, an interactive map of the borough was used to plot out the new polling districts and places. This tool allowed those responding to the consultation a chance to see each polling district and proposed station in details whilst also being able to see borough, parish, and parliamentary ward boundaries.

1.4 Responses to the public consultation are included with this report at Appendix 1. A total of 18 responses were received from a variety of stakeholders and the issues raised by the responses are addressed in the appendix.

1.5 For ease of reference the following definitions clarify 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.

1.6 The following guidance was considered when reviewing polling districts and polling places. The first two points are required by electoral law and the others are best practice:

- 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 as 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.

1.7 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 consultation feedback and information received at elections since the last review, changes are proposed to amend polling districts as below:

- Amend name of two of the polling district references in Bestwood St Albans to show they now come under the Gedling parliamentary constituency
- Amend both polling district references in Dumbles to show they now come under the Gedling parliamentary constituency
- Combine current polling districts GP1 and GP4 to make one district GP1
- Combine current polling districts GP2 and GP3 to make one district GP2
- Combine current polling districts GQ2 and SQ4 to make one district GQ2 – change is due to SQ4 now coming under Gedling parliamentary constituency
- Amend name of one of the polling district references in Redhill to show they now come under the Gedling parliamentary constituency
- Split the current polling district GT2 into two separate polling districts, to be named GT2 and GT3, to allow for rapid growth on the Magenta Way site

A full explanation of each change can be found in appendices 2a and b.

2.2 The feedback gathered did make suggestions for altering polling places further than what the ARO had originally proposed and the specific feedback and the responses to these are shown in appendix 1.

Considering the feedback, changes are proposed to polling places as below:

- Change the GA3 polling place to be Emmanuel Church Hall
- Change the GL1 polling place to be 1<sup>st</sup> Gedling Scout Group hut
- Change the GM1 polling place to be St Goerge's Centre
- Change the GP1 polling place to be Marion Murdoch Court
- Change the GP2 polling place to be Phoenix Farm Methodist Church
- Change the GS2 and GS3 polling place to be Redhill Young Persons Centre
- Change the GT1 polling place to be Burton Joyce and Bulcote Village Hall
- Change the GT2 polling place to be Stoke Bardolph Community Room
- Add a new polling place for GT3 to be the Rivendell Pavilion
- Change the SB4 and SB6 polling place to be the Calverton Village Hall

A full explanation of each change can be found in appendices 2a and b.

- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 An equality impact assessment of the proposals has been carried out, and included at appendix 4, which Council should have regard to when making its decision.

### **3 Alternative options**

- 3.1 The ARO has reviewed all options given as part of the consultation and these are at appendix 1 of the report.
- 3.2 Members could choose to not accept the recommendations and suggest alternative arrangements, but this would mean we would not be able to conclude the review within the time set out in the notice of review published on 4 December 2023.

### **4 Financial implications**

- 4.1 There are positive financial implications associated with the recommendations within this report as we would no longer need to spend over £1,000 on a portacabin for GP1 in Phoenix ward. We would also reduce the need for between three to five polling stations, depending on

the election being ran.

- 4.2 If a revised or new polling station were required, it is anticipated that any increase in cost could be met from existing budgets, but this would depend on the nature of the change.

## **5 Legal implications**

There are no direct legal implications. The report supports compliance with the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.

## **6 Equalities implications**

There is a requirement under the Elections Act 2022 for authorities to give due regard to the accessibility of polling places to ensure electors with disabilities can vote in person should they desire to do so. This report and its recommendations bring about positive implications as it means electors with disabilities can voter at more accessible stations with better facilities.

## **7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications**

There are positive carbon considerations associated with the recommendations within this report as it means a reduction of venues being utilised, which in turn means less electricity and gas supplies being used. The removal of the need for the portacabin will massively contribute to this.

## **8 Background papers**

None identified

## **9 Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Summarised consultation responses with response from the (Acting) Returning Officer.

Appendix 2a and 2b – (Acting) Returning Officer proposals for Gedling and Sherwood Forest constituencies

Appendix 3 – Proposed new scheme of Polling Districts and Polling Places

Appendix 4 - Equality Impact Assessment