



<u>Committee and date</u>
Council
27 February 2014
10.00 a.m.

<u>Item No</u>
<b>15</b>
Public

## REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS 2014-15

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### 1. Summary

- 1.1 To commence a review of the polling districts, polling places and polling stations according to the relevant legislative requirements in accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006).

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Council approves the completion of a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations throughout the county in advanced of the General Election in 2015.

## REPORT

### 3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 The Council is obliged to conduct a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations on a regular basis and to undertake such Community Governance Reviews as are required to keep the electoral arrangements within its area up to date.
- 3.2 The Electoral Commission can challenge how the review has been carried out by the Authority if they receive representations from specific sources who state that the Authority has failed to conduct a proper review. The Commission will investigate the manner in which the review as carried out and may direct the Authority to make appropriate alterations.
- 3.2 There is no anticipated environmental impact associated with the recommendations in the report.

- 3.3 The recommendation is not at variance with the Human Rights Act 1998 and is unlikely to result in any adverse Human Rights Act implications. The recommendations are in line with relevant legal procedures prescribed by the Act and with guidance issued by the Home Office.
- 3.4 Any amendments to the current polling districts, polling places and polling stations will take into account the provisions of the Equalities Act, Representation of People Act 1983 (as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006), and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 3.5 The Council must seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- 3.6 The Council must seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The financial implications associated with the recommendations are limited to employee costs associated with undertaking the consultation exercise, and any costs involved in promoting the review.

#### **5. Background**

- 5.1 Every Local Authority must complete a review of each polling district, polling place and polling station within its area every five years. The most appropriate time to commence such a review is immediately after a district-wide election so that there is up to date information about the current arrangements, and sufficient time to implement any necessary improvements before the next district-wide event.
- 5.2 The main purpose of the review is to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting and that all polling stations are accessible to electors who are disabled. The guidelines also state that every parish should be in its own polling district and that every polling place should, where possible, be in its own polling district.
- 5.3 Guidance issued by the Electoral Commission stipulates how reviews should be conducted in four stages. The first stage requires the Council to give public notice of its intention to conduct the review. The second requires the Council to review the existing polling arrangements to determine their suitability, or otherwise. The third stage requires the Council to consult widely. This includes local electors, interested groups and bodies, including political parties, elected Members and organisations experience in assessing the needs of people with disabilities.

5.4 The final stage relates to the consideration of proposals for changes to polling district boundaries and polling places by the Council, as these can require alterations to be made to the electoral register. It is planned that any changes resulting from the review would be incorporated into the annual review and published on 1 December 2014 in advance of the General Election the following May.

<b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b> Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended) Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
<b>Cabinet Member</b>
<b>Local Member</b> All
<b>Appendices</b> None