



Committee and Date

Council
14th December 2023

Item

Public



Polling District, Polling Place and Polling Station Review 2023

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Cllr Gwilym Butler		

1. Synopsis

This report details the findings of the compulsory Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations in accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended) (“the Act”).

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The main purpose of the review is to ensure that all electors have reasonable facilities for voting within the North Shropshire, Shrewsbury & Atcham (Shrewsbury), Ludlow (South Shropshire) and Wrekin Parliamentary constituencies.
- 2.2. The following definitions are aimed to provide an understanding of the terms used within the report.
 - “Polling districts” are geographical electoral areas into which wards and constituencies may be sub-divided.
 - “Polling places” are the buildings or areas designated by the council where electors in a polling district go to vote in person.
 - “Polling stations” are the number of issuing desks in the building or area that is the designated polling place.

- 2.3. Electoral Commission guidance states that every parish should be in its own polling district, and that, where possible, polling places should be in their own polling district. By having a polling place, and polling station, located within a polling district ensures there is a suitable venue for electors to access. However, it may be necessary to identify a polling place outside the polling district if no suitable venue can be identified.
- 2.4. Local Authorities must comply with legislative requirements regarding the designation of the polling districts and polling places, ensuring that each parish is to be a separate polling district, unless special circumstances apply, and must designate a polling place for each polling district, unless size or other circumstances are such that the situation of the polling station does not materially affect the convenience of the electors.
- 2.5. Local Authorities must also seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That Council approve the following arrangements, in order for them to be implemented on or by 2 January 2024.

DIVISION	PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS
Polling District Reference: LAB Claverley	Delegated authority be given to the Electoral Registration Officer, in consultation with the local member, Councillor Taylor, to agree a replacement polling place for LAB Claverley.
Polling District Reference: LBA Bishops Castle LBB Colebatch LBE Lydham LBF Mainstone	SpArC Leisure Centre replace Bishop's Castle Public Hall as the designated polling place for LBA Bishops Castle, LBB Colebatch, LBE Lydham and LBF Mainstone, until such time as building works have concluded at Bishop's Castle Public Hall.
Polling District Reference: LCE Bridgnorth (Morfe Ward) (part of)	St Mary's Bluebird CE Primary School replace St James Hall as the designated polling place for LCE Bridgnorth (Morfe Ward) (part of). LCE Bridgnorth (Morfe Ward) (part of) be reduced to a single station.
Polling District Reference: LHB Church Stretton (North Ward) LHC Church Stretton (South Ward) LHD Church Stretton (Little Stretton Ward)	Church Stretton United Reformed Church Hall replace Silvester Horne Institute as the designated polling place for LHB Church Stretton (North Ward), LHC Church Stretton (South Ward) and LHD Church Stretton (Little Stretton Ward).

<p>Polling District Reference: LRD Rudge LRH Worfield (Hobbins Wood) LRI Worfield (North Ward)</p>	<p>Worfield Cricket Pavilion replace Worfield Village Hall as the designated polling place for LRD Rudge, LRH Worfield (Hobbins Ward) and LRI Worfield (North Ward).</p>
<p>Polling District Reference: NLC Gobowen (part of)</p>	<p>Gobowen Church and Gobowen Church Hall site be designated as the polling place for NLC Gobowen (part of).</p>
<p>Polling District Reference: NGD Oswestry (Carreg Llwyd Ward)</p>	<p>Holy Trinity CE Primary Academy (Main Hall) replace Hope Church Oswestry as the designated polling place for NGD Oswestry (Carreg Llwyd Ward).re</p>
<p>Polling District Reference: NQC Wem Rural (Roden Ward) NQD Wem (East Ward) (part of) NDE Wem (East Ward) (part of) NQF Wem (West Ward) (part of) NQG Wem (West Ward) (part of)</p>	<p>That delegated authority be given to the Electoral Registration Officer, in consultation with local members, Councillor Broomhall and Councillor Towers, to agree a replacement polling place for NQC Wem Rural (Roden Ward), NQD Wem (East Ward) (part of), NDE Wem (East Ward) (part of), NQF Wem (West Ward) (part of) and NQG Wem (West Ward) (part of).</p>
<p>Polling District Reference: SJB Shrewsbury (Harlescott Ward) (part of)</p>	<p>Riversway Elim Church (Severn Room) replace Mount Pleasant Primary School – Studio as the designated polling place for SJB Shrewsbury (Harlescott Ward) (part of).</p>

- 3.2. That delegated authority be given to the Electoral Registration Officer to find a suitable alternative, in conjunction with local members, should any polling stations not be available for a particular election.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. The Council is required to conduct a compulsory review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations every 5 years.
- 4.2. There is no anticipated environmental impact associated with the recommendations.
- 4.3. The recommendations are not at variance with the Human Rights Act 1998 and are 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.
- 4.4. Any amendments to the current polling districts, polling places and polling stations will take into account the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006), Elections Act 2022, Equalities Act 2010, and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 4.5. The council must seek to ensure all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- 4.6. 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.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Appendix 1 provides either decreased or increased costs where they have occurred based on the hire charges and staffing levels applied for the Local Elections in May 2021 and Parliamentary By-Elections in December 2021.
- 5.2. There will be a total decrease of £1219.42 for hire charges for future elections if all recommendations are accepted, however, it should be noted that charges are likely to increase year on year.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. There are no anticipated effects on energy and fuel consumption, renewable energy generation, carbon offsetting or mitigation or climate change matters from the proposed changes to polling places identified within the report.

7. Background

- 7.1. A review of polling districts, polling place and polling stations should be carried out on a regular basis, to ensure all locations remain appropriate, and suitable for electors.
- 7.2. A public consultation was undertaken from 2nd to 30th October 2023. Details were published on the Council's website, at the Council Offices, in library buildings, and at Town and Parish Council offices across the county. It was also circulated to relevant stakeholders and community groups. The consultation invited comments and proposals, from the Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Returning Officers as we are legally obliged to do (the roles of Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer being legally distinct), MPs for all parliamentary constituencies, Unitary Councillors, Town and Parish Councils, local political groups, the public and known local groups/organisations connected with disability groups.
- 7.3. A total of 51 responses were received during the consultation and were published on the Council's website and outlined in Appendix 1.
- 7.4. The Returning Officer's recommendations were published on the Council's website on 2 October 2023, and considerations invited during the formal consultation period.
- 7.5. The Electoral Registration Officers' proposals were published on 2 October 2023, and considerations invited during the formal consultation period.
- 7.6. Guidance issued by the Electoral Commission provides a staged approach to conducting a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations according to the relevant legislative requirements. This guidance has been considered and referred to during the review process.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1. The arrangements proposed in the review enable the Council to designate the most appropriate polling places and polling stations to enable electors, including disabled users, to access suitable facilities for voting which are practicable in the circumstances.
- 8.2. It is planned that any changes resulted from the review would be incorporated into the annual revised register when published on 2 January 2024.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Representation of the People Act 1983: Section 18

Electoral Administration Act 2006: Part 4 Section 16

Electoral Commission Guidance on Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

Local Member: All local members

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Schedule of Proposals
