



Committee and Date

Council
12th December 2024

Item

Public



Interim Polling District, Polling Place and Polling Station Review 2024

Responsible Officer:	Andy Begley		
email:	Andy.begley@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 258915
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Cllr Gwilym Butler, Finance & Corporate Support		

1. Synopsis

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

2. Executive Summary

The main purpose of the review is to ensure that all electors have reasonable facilities for voting with the following polling districts:

- Wheathill
- Oswestry (Castle Ward) (part of)
- Shrewsbury (Bagley Ward) (part of)
- Shrewsbury (Porthill Ward) (part of)
- Shrewsbury (Copthorne Ward) (part of)
- Shrewsbury (Monkmoor Ward) (part of)

The polling places included in the interim review have been identified from various sources as requiring review as they are either no longer suitable or available as a polling station.

- 2.1. 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.
- 2.2. 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 within it.
- 2.3. 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.
- 2.4. 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 1 February 2025.

DIVISION	PROPOSED AMENDMENTS
Polling District Reference: NHB Oswestry South	Following Unitary, Town and Parish elections to be held on 1 May 2025 replace Horeb Welsh Methodist Rooms with Oswestry Cricket Club pavilion as the polling place for NHB Oswestry (Castle Ward) (part of)
Polling District Reference: SBA Bagley	Greenfields & District Bowling Club replace Bagley Sports and Social Club as the polling place for SBA Shrewsbury (Bagley Ward) (part of)
Polling District Reference: SIA Cophorne	Shropshire Education and Conference Centre replace Army Reserve Centre as the polling place for SIA Shrewsbury (Cophorne Ward) (part of)

Polling District Reference: SOA Monkmoor	Abbots Wood Day Centre replace Belvidere Primary School as the polling place for SOA Shrewsbury (Monkmoor Ward) (part of).
Polling District Reference: SPB Porthill	Shrewsbury School Cricket Centre replace Army Reserve Centre as the polling place for SPB Shrewsbury (Porthill Ward) (part of).

- 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 place not be available for a particular election.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. The Council is obliged to conduct a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations on a regular basis.
- 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 place 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 decrease or increased costs where they have occurred based on the hire charges and staffing levels applied for the Police and Crime Commissioner Election in May 2024 and UK Parliamentary General Election in July 2024.

- 5.2. There will a total reduction of £906 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 places and polling stations should be carried out on a regular basis, to ensure all locations remain appropriate, and suitable for electors.
- 7.2. The proposed polling places have been identified following consultation with local members and partner organisations, and a full review on their suitability has been conducted.
- 7.3. A public consultation was held from 23 September to 21 October 2024. Details were published on the Council's website, at the Council Offices, in library buildings in the affected areas, and at Town and Parish Council offices in the affected areas. It was also circulated to relevant stakeholders and community groups. The consultation invited comments and proposals from Shropshire's Returning Officer as we are legally obliged to do (the roles of Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer being legally distinct), MPs for Parliamentary constituencies, Unitary Councillors in the affected divisions, Town and Parish Councils in the affected areas, local political groups, the public and known local groups/organisations connected with disability groups.
- 7.4. A total of 8 responses were received during the consultation and were published on the Council's website and outlined in Appendix 1.
- 7.5. The Electoral Registration Officers' proposals were published on the Council's website, and considerations were invited during the form consultation period.
- 7.6. The Returning Officers' recommendations were published on the Council's website, and considerations were invited from 23 October to 6 November 2024.
- 7.7. 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.
- 7.8. Following further consultation with members of Wheathill Parish Council, it was confirmed the request to review the existing polling place arrangements had been withdrawn. As no further submissions have been received, the existing arrangements would remain in place.

- 7.9. As Members will note from the information contained in Appendix 1, the Local Member for each polling place is either supportive or does not oppose the recommended changes.

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 resulting from the review would be incorporated into the revised register when published on 1 February 2025.

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 Places and Polling Stations.

Local Member:

Councillor Garry Burchett
Councillor Gwilym Butler
Councillor Julian Dean
Councillor Simon Harris
Councillor Duncan Kerr
Councillor Pam Moseley
Councillor Robert Tindall
Councillor Rob Wilson

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Schedule of Proposals