

**Title of meeting:** Governance and Audit and Standards Committee

**Date of meeting:** 26 September 2014

**Subject:** Review of polling districts and polling places

**Report by:** Electoral Services Manager

**Wards affected:**

**Key decision:** No

**Full Council decision:** Yes

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**1. Purpose of report**

To detail the outcomes of the review of polling districts and polling places recently undertaken and to invite members to consider the recommendations made.

**2. Recommendation**

**That the changes recommended in paragraphs 5.2 to 5.11 are approved and implemented on publication of the 2015 Register of Electors.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 The Council is required under section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended) to divide the area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each polling district. These regulations also require the Council to conduct periodic reviews of polling districts and polling places.
- 3.2 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a revised schedule for conducting periodic reviews and required a review to be completed within the period 1 October 2013 and 31 January 2015.
- 3.3 The Council completed a comprehensive review of polling districts and polling places in 2011.
- 3.4 A polling district is a sub-division of an electoral area (ward) into a smaller geographical unit comprising a number of streets/houses.
- 3.5 A polling place is a building or area in which polling stations will be designated by the Returning Officer.

- 3.6 A polling station is defined as the actual room or building where the poll is held.
- 3.7 The local authority is responsible for dividing each electoral area into polling districts and for designating polling places. The Returning Officer is responsible for defining the location of polling stations within a polling place, such as the room or part of the building.
- 3.8 The duties of the council in the review process are two-fold:
- a) To ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
  - b) To seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons
- 3.9 When designating polling places there are practical limitations such as the availability and suitability of venues that must be considered.
- 3.10 The consideration of changes to constituency boundaries or city council ward boundaries was not in the scope of the review.

#### **4. Representations received**

- 4.1 The Returning Officer submitted proposals for substantial changes to the polling districts and polling places (usual polling stations) in respect of St Thomas Ward and reconfiguration of the polling district boundaries in the northern part of Charles Dickens Ward. In addition, a polling place amendment is proposed to both Milton and Paulsgrove Wards.
- 4.2 A summary of proposed changes submitted by the Returning Officer as part of the review are shown in Appendix A.
- 4.3 One further representation was received and a copy of which is at Appendix B. The submission can be summarised as follows:
- a) Councillor Hugh Mason did not propose any changes at the current time for St Jude Ward.

#### **5. Outline of recommendations**

- 5.1 Having considered each of the representations received, the following recommendations are made:
- 5.2 That the polling districts in St Thomas Ward are redrawn to reflect the polling places now available and will be configured to include:
- a) A new polling district AA incorporating the western part of the current polling district and extending to include the south-western part of current polling

district AC and the eastern part of polling district AB. The polling place for this proposed polling district is Portsmouth City Museum.

- b) A new polling district AC incorporating the northern parts of the current polling districts AC and AD, plus Edgbaston House from polling district AE. The polling place for this proposed polling district is Somerstown Central.
- c) A new polling district AD incorporating the eastern parts of the current polling districts AA and AC and southern part of polling district AD. The polling place for this proposed polling district is Cottage Grove Primary School.

5.3 The existing arrangements for St Thomas Ward are shown at Appendix C.

5.4 The proposed arrangements for St Thomas Ward are shown at Appendix D.

5.5 That the Frank Sorrell Centre is designated as the polling place for polling district EE (Milton Ward). The facility is spacious, fully accessible and has ample parking available. This is to replace Cumberland Infant School.

5.6 That the polling districts GA, GB and GF in the northern part of Charles Dickens Ward are redrawn so that:

- a) The eastern part of polling district GA is incorporated into polling district GF.
- b) The northern part of polling district GB is incorporated into polling district GF.
- c) The polling place for polling districts GA and GF is designated as the Charles Dickens Activity Centre

5.7 The changes to Charles Dickens Ward will improve the balance of electorate allocated to each polling place and provide more convenient access for residents in the northern part of the current polling district GB by reallocation to polling district GF.

5.8 That Somerstown Central is designated as the polling place for polling district GD (Charles Dickens Ward). This new facility is modern, spacious, fully accessible and more conveniently located within the polling district. This is to replace St Luke's Church Hall.

5.9 The existing arrangements for Charles Dickens Ward are shown at Appendix E.

5.10 The proposed arrangements for Charles Dickens Ward are shown at Appendix F.

5.11 That the polling place for polling district LF be designated as the Hillside and Wymering Centre. Under the previous scheme, the entire polling district was designated as the polling place to allow flexibility during the reconstruction of the former Hillside Youth Centre site. Now that the new facility is fully operational it is appropriate that this be formally designated as the polling place.

5.12 A full schedule of polling districts and polling places incorporating these recommendations is set out under Appendix G.

**6. Equality impact assessment (EIA)**

6.1 The review of polling districts and polling places takes into consideration matters regarding accessibility as detailed in paragraph 3.8 and the recommendations made in this report are in line with this requirement.

6.2 When designating polling places there are also practical limitations such as the availability and suitability of venues that must be considered.

6.3 A preliminary Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed.

**7. Head of legal services' comments**

All legal issues are dealt with in the body of the report

**8. Head of finance's comments**

The above changes are not considered to have any material financial affect to the service. Any additional costs arising from these changes can be met from the existing budget.

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Signed by:

**Appendices:**

Appendix A	Summary of Returning Officer's proposals for changes to polling districts and polling places
Appendix B	Copies of representations received
Appendix C	Map showing the existing arrangements for St Thomas Ward
Appendix D	Map showing the proposed arrangements for St Thomas Ward
Appendix E	Map showing the existing arrangements for Charles Dickens Ward
Appendix F	Map showing the proposed arrangements for Charles Dickens Ward
Appendix G	Proposed schedule of polling districts and polling places

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Location</b>
Notice of Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places	Election Services Office
Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places - Returning Officer's Proposals	Election Services Office

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by ..... on .....

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 Signed by: