

Title of meeting:	Governance and Audit and Standards Committee
Date of meeting:	20 September 2023
Subject:	Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places
Report by:	Electoral Services Manager
Wards affected:	All
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	Yes

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. Recommendations

- 1) That the changes to the current polling scheme recommended in paragraphs 5.2 to 5.5 are approved and implemented on publication of the 2024 Register of Electors**
- 2) That it be reconfirmed that the Returning Officer has delegated authority to make such variations to polling places as may be necessary arising from the availability of premises for use at a particular election**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council is required under section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended) to divide each electoral ward into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each polling district. These regulations also require the Council to conduct a review every five years and at such other times as may be necessary to make adjustments to the existing scheme.
- 3.2 This review has been undertaken to make adjustments to the Council's polling arrangements due to some circumstances that have arisen since the last review undertaken in 2022.
- 3.3 Definitions:



- i) A polling district is a sub-division of an electoral ward into a smaller geographical unit comprising a number of streets and properties
- ii) A polling place is a building or location in which polling stations will be designated by the Returning Officer
- iii) A polling station is the actual room or building in which the poll is held

3.4 The duties of the Council in the review process are:

- a) To ensure that all electors 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 are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a polling place, have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons

3.5 Certain practical limitations such as the availability and suitability of venues must also be considered when designating polling places.

3.6 The next statutory review is scheduled to be undertaken in summer 2024 and must be completed by January 2025.

4. Representations received

4.1 A six-week consultation period was undertaken between 10 July and 21 August. A summary of the representations received is shown in Appendix A.

4.2 The Returning Officer is a statutory respondent to the review and submitted proposals which include the reconfiguration of polling district boundaries in Fratton ward and a small number of polling place amendments in other parts of the city to reflect the current availability of polling venues.

4.3 A counter proposal for Fratton ward was received from Councillor Stuart Brown. This made some small modifications to the Returning Office's suggested boundary amendments, particularly in the George Street/Penbridge School area. The current Fratton ward scheme, the Returning Officer's proposals and Councillor Brown's counter proposal are shown in Appendices B, C and D respectively.

4.4 A further proposal was developed in consultation with the Copnor ward members regarding arrangements in the southern part of Copnor ward. The Returning Officer had recommended that the polling place for polling district 'JD' be relocated to St Albans' Church. However, Councillor Swann raised concerns at this proposal as it would require some residents in the lower part of the area to cross Copnor Road.



Further consideration of available options was undertaken and an alternative proposal was put forward which realigned the polling district boundaries for polling districts 'JC' and 'JD' and designated the Portsmouth Seventh Day Adventist Church as the polling place for polling district 'JD'. This option was supported by Councillor Dent, Councillor Gosling and Councillor Swann.

The current Copnor ward scheme and proposed scheme are shown in Appendices E and F.

- 4.5 Each of the representations received has been carefully considered and reflected in the recommendations made.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 The following are recommended changes to the current polling scheme:

- 5.2 The modified polling arrangements for Fratton ward as proposed by Councillor Brown and shown in Appendix D should be adopted. A revised scheme is necessary as the designated venue, St Wilfrid's Church, is no longer available.

It is proposed that North End Baptist Church (Powerscourt Road) is designated as the polling place for polling district 'FB' and that Age UK (The Bradbury Centre, Kingston Road) is designated as the polling place for polling district 'FC'. The revised scheme provides accessible polling station facilities and the reconfigured polling districts follow main roads where possible as natural boundaries.

- 5.3 The revised polling arrangements for Copnor ward as shown in Appendix F should be adopted. The proposal makes amendments to the polling district boundaries in the lower part of Copnor ward and introduces Portsmouth Seventh Day Adventist Church (Chichester Road/Burlington Road) as a new polling place. This new location will provide convenient and accessible facilities for voters for the revised polling district alignment.

The recommended scheme applies the polling district identifiers 'JA' to 'JD' in a north to south geographic order as shown in Appendix F. The Seventh Day Adventist Church is the proposed polling place for polling district 'JC' and North End Baptist Church is the proposed polling place for polling district 'JD'.

- 5.4 In addition, the following individual polling place amendments arising from changes in the availability of previously designated venues should be confirmed:

- a) The Good Companion (Eastern Road) is designated as the polling place for polling district 'HF' (Baffins ward) replacing Moorings Way Infant School which is no longer available.



b) St Nicholas' Church (Battenburg Avenue) is designated as the polling place for polling district 'JA' (Copnor ward) replacing Mayfield School.

5.5 A full schedule of polling places incorporating these recommendations is set out in Appendix G.

6. Integrated impact assessment

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

6.2 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached at Appendix H.

7. Legal implications

The relevant recommendations are in line with legislation as noted within the body of this report.

8. Director 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 portfolio budget.

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Signed by:

Appendices:

- Appendix A - Summary of representations received
- Appendix B - Map showing the existing scheme for Fratton
- Appendix C - Map showing the Returning Officer's proposal for Fratton
- Appendix D - Map showing the recommended scheme for Fratton

- Appendix E - Map showing the existing scheme for Copnor
- Appendix F - Map showing the recommended scheme for Copnor
- Appendix G - Proposed schedule of polling places
- Appendix H - Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

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:

Title of document	Location
Review of polling districts and polling places 2023; Returning Officer's comments and proposals	Published on website and hard copy available at the Election Services Office

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

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Signed by: