

REPORT OF SARAH PEARCE, LICENSING AND ELECTORAL SERVICES MANAGER

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report back to Members on the comments received from the recent consultation exercise in respect of the review of polling districts and polling places, done in accordance with section 18C(1) of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

2. SUMMARY OF BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council is required to undertake and complete a review of all polling districts and polling places at least once every four years. The first such review was done in 2007.
- 2.2 The review is the function of the Council and not the Electoral Registration Officer or Returning Officer, although the Returning Officer for each parliamentary constituency must be consulted.
- 2.3 The location of the polling districts and places are the responsibility of the local authority and the locations of the polling stations are the responsibility of the Returning Officer.
- 2.4 Notice was given of the review on 9th September 2011 and copies of the notice were sent to all potentially interested parties such as Members, local disability groups and local political parties. Notice was also given on the Council's website inviting electors within the parliamentary constituency to comment. A summary of the current arrangements was also made available.
- 2.5 The consultation period ran for a period of 6 weeks, ending on 21st October 2011 and 6 representations were received. These are summarised at **Appendix A**.

3. DEFINITION OF TERMS

- 3.1 **Parliamentary constituencies:** these cannot be changed by the review. The division of these constituencies into polling districts and places is the subject of the review.

Polling district: the area created by the division of a constituency or ward into smaller parts, within which a polling place can be determined which is convenient to electors.

Polling place: the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the Returning Officer.

Polling station: the room or building where the poll takes place.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Now the consultation period has ended the Council must produce final proposals for the new polling districts and places having taken into consideration all of the representations made.
- 4.2 Due to the nature of the proposals received it might be useful for the Acting Returning Officer and her team to put together more information for Members to consider before they make their final recommendations, including:-
- i. The total electorate being moved to an alternate polling place and whether it would need one or more polling stations to accommodate them,
 - ii. Whether the new polling places have suitable facilities, which involves checking access arrangements for all electors, particularly for those with disabilities.
 - iii. The potential effect on the operation of any new or changed arrangements such as schools.
- 4.3 There is no requirement to change any existing arrangements however any change or decision to make no change must be supported by a reason.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 It is recommended that alterations to polling districts be timed to coincide with the annual publication of the revised Register of Electors on 1st December. However due to the timing of Full Council meetings it would not be possible to get final approval to any changes made and the Electoral Registration Officer may need to republish the Register after 1st December.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 6.1 Following the conclusion of the local authority's review specified interested parties have a right to make representations to the Electoral Commission to reconsider any polling districts and polling places.
- 6.2 If, on receipt of such representations, the Commission finds that a local authority's review did not:
- meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency, or a body of them, or
 - take sufficient account of the accessibility for disabled persons of polling stations within a designated polling place

then it may direct the authority to make any alterations to the polling places that the Commission thinks necessary and, if the alterations are not made within two months, may make the alterations itself.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 To seek Members agreement that:-

- a. the proposed changes outlined at Appendix A to this report be explored and more detailed information on the proposals be brought to the next meeting on 8th February 2012 for Members to consider. Any changes agreed will then go forward to Full Council at the meeting on 21st February 2012 for final approval; and
- b. the remaining polling districts and polling places should be those currently in use.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

Respondent	In respect of	Comments
Ms N.A. Dawes, Acting Returning Officer for the Lichfield Constituency	<i>Lichfield Constituency</i>	In support of keeping the existing arrangements as they work satisfactorily. Recommends that changes should be kept to a minimum where possible, to alleviate electors confusion on polling day, although appreciates the need to consider all representations.
Cllr. Mrs. M. Stanhope	Alrewas Village Hall; Fradley Village Hall and Mobile at Worthington Road, Fradley <i>(Lichfield Constituency / Alrewas and Fradley Ward)</i>	The present polling station arrangements meet with approval.
Cllr. Mrs. E. Perkins and Elford Parish Council	The Howard C.P. School, The Square, Elford <i>(Tamworth Constituency / Mease and Tame Ward)</i>	Proposing the use of Elford Village Hall as a polling place instead of the School, in order to minimise disruption to the children's learning and inconvenience suffered by parents and teachers. For the reasons as given above and citing that the Village Hall has excellent facilities and is centrally located.
Lichfield and Tamworth Liberal Democrats	Polling District boundary for Leomansley Ward <i>(Lichfield Constituency / Leomansley Ward)</i>	Propose that polling district boundaries for Leomansley ward be revised so that all of Darwin Park - inside of but excluding Walsall Road/Friary Road (and Cul de Sacs off like Friary Gardens/Lanthorne Place/Victoria Gardens) becomes a new polling district with Darwin Hall as the new polling place.
Burntwood Town Council	St. John's Church, High Street, Chase Terrace <i>(Lichfield Constituency / Chase Terrace Ward)</i>	Propose that residents in and around Joseph Dewsbury Drive / Rugeley Road up to Spencer Drive, go to Chase Terrace Primary School rather than the Church. As the School is in Burntwood Central Ward this will mean designating it as the new polling place.