

Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

Councillor Doug Pullen – Leader



Lichfield
District Council

Date:	10 December 2024
Agenda item:	Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations
Contact officer:	Fiona Bell / Christine Lewis
Tel number:	01543 308728 / 01543 308065
Email:	fiona.bell@lichfielddc.gov.uk / christine.lewis@lichfielddc.gov.uk
Key decision?	NO
Local ward members	All Wards

COUNCIL

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Council is required to complete a review of all parliamentary polling districts and polling places at least every five years.
- 1.2 A polling district is an area whose electorate are all invited to vote at the same polling place. A polling place is a location in which one or more polling stations are provided to allow the electorate to vote. A polling station is the room, or part of a room, where voting takes place.
- 1.3 The review is the function of the Council and not the Electoral Registration Officer or (Acting) Returning Officer.
- 1.4 This review must be completed before 31 January 2025.
- 1.5 The Review is conducted in accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983 and guidance issued by the Electoral Commission.
- 1.6 Consultation started on 10 September 2024 and concluded on 22 October 2024. 36 representations were received, including 1 from a Councillor, and are assessed in this report. These recommendations were brought to Regulatory & Licensing Committee on 19 November 2024 and views raised have been incorporated into the below recommendations.
- 1.7 The proposed new venues have been consulted to ensure they can accommodate us. Officers are awaiting confirmation from a number of venues, for which it is recommended we remain at the current polling place. Should these remaining polling places contact Lichfield District Council, Officers will consult relevant ward members before making any further changes.
- 1.8 All polling places are subject to accessibility requirements as per the Elections Act 2022.
- 1.9 The next compulsory review must be completed between 01 October 2028 and 31 January 2030.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The following recommendations are made:

Polling District	Current Polling Place	(A)RO Representation	Public Response	Regulatory & Licensing Committee Comments	Recommendation
AB	Fradley Village Hall	No change to polling station proposed. Split district due to high electorate.	None	In support of recommendation.	No change to polling station proposed. Split district due to high electorate.
AC	Mobile Polling Station, Worthington Road, Fradley	Propose move to Fradley Park Primary & Nursery School.	None	In support of recommendation.	Propose move to Fradley Park Primary & Nursery School. Officers have not heard back from premises.
AD	Streethay Primary School	Continue with current arrangements until Streethay Community Centre opens.	Suitable but concerns around using portacabin.	In support of recommendation.	Continue with current arrangements until Streethay Community Centre opens.
BA	Armitage & Handsacre Village Hall	Split district. BA2 station at new school (Rugeley Power Station site).	Village Hall suitable.	In support of recommendation.	Split district. BA2 station at new school (Rugeley Power Station site).
CC,CD	Boney Hay Primary Academy	Propose move to Boney Hay WMC.	Against using school, supportive of Boney Hay WMC being used.	In support of recommendation.	Propose move to Boney Hay WMC. Officers have not heard back from premises, therefore propose to remain at Boney Hay Primary Academy.
CE	Mobile Polling Station, Robinson Road, Burntwood	Propose move to Boney Hay WMC.	Mobile polling station suitable.	In support of recommendation.	Propose move to Boney Hay WMC. Officers have not heard back from premises, therefore propose to remain at mobile polling station.

CG	Mobile Polling Station, Chase Terrace Academy car park	Propose move to Grangemoor WMC.	None	In support of recommendation.	Propose move to Grangemoor WMC. Officers have not heard back from premises, therefore propose to remain at mobile polling station.
CK	St. John's Community Church	Propose move to 1st Chase Terrace Scout Hut.	None	In support of recommendation.	Split into CK and CK1 along Cannock Road due to County boundaries review. New CK1 to go to Burntwood LC for County election, but to go to 1 st Chase Terrace Scout Hut for other elections. Officers have not heard back from premises, therefore propose to remain at St. John's Community Church.
CR2	Burntwood Memorial Institute	Propose move to St Matthews Sports & Social Club.	None	In support of recommendation.	Propose move to St Matthews Sports & Social Club. Officers have not heard back from premises, therefore propose to remain at Burntwood Memorial Institute.
CS1,CS2	Springhill Academy	Propose move to St. Joseph's RC Church.	None	In support of recommendation.	Propose move to St. Joseph's RC Church. Officers have not heard back from premises, therefore propose to remain at Springhill Academy.
MA	Mobile Polling Station, Adj. Shoulder of Mutton P.H., Yoxall Road	Propose move to Church of St Michael and All Angels.	None	In support of recommendation.	Proposed venue advised against its use due to accessibility issues. Propose to remain as Mobile Polling Station, Adj. Shoulder of Mutton P.H.
RF	Mobile Polling Station, Collins Hill & Greencroft, Lichfield	Propose move to Curborough Community Centre.	None	In support of recommendation.	Propose move to Curborough Community Centre.

					Officers have not heard back from premises, therefore propose to remain at mobile polling station.
RP	Lichfield District Council	Propose move to rotating around Cherry Orchard schools.	Against using Cherry Orchard schools and recommended the Air Cadets hut.	In support of recommendation.	Propose move to 1206 City of Lichfield Squadron Air Cadets. Officers have not heard back from premises, therefore propose to remain at Lichfield District Council, alternatively Cherry Orchard schools can be used under (A)RO powers.
RR	Holy Cross Community Meeting Room	Split district. RR2 at King Edward VI Sports Centre.	None.	In support of recommendation.	Split district. RR2 at King Edward VI Sports Centre.
RS	Guildroom, Guildhall	Propose move to Lichfield Garrick Theatre.	Suitable.	Did not feel change was required.	Propose to remain at Guildroom. Guildhall.
RX	Lichfield City Football Club	Propose move to Scotch Orchard Primary School.	Not very accessible by foot, recommend Scotch Orchard Primary or a mobile.	In support of recommendation.	Propose move to Scotch Orchard Primary School. Officers have not heard back from premises, therefore propose to remain at Lichfield City Football Club. Continue to try to contact school, or use under (A)RO powers.
KA,KB	Fazeley Town Hall	No change proposed.	Town Hall not very accessible for KA residents, recommend using the Longwood pub.	In support of recommendation.	Propose KA move to the Longwood pub. Officers have not heard back from premises and ward councillors are assisting with communications. Propose to remain at Fazeley Town Hall in the meantime.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council is obliged to review the Polling Districts and Polling Places that it uses to support the running of parliamentary elections. Such a review considers the number of voters in a polling district and the suitability of the polling places which are used to provide polling stations.
- 3.2 Whilst the Review needs to be undertaken for parliamentary reasons, in practice, the Council uses the same polling districts and polling places for other elections including national referenda, local government, PCC and neighbourhood plan referenda.
- 3.3 Such a Review is a formal process, and its recommendations are considered and approved by Council but, of course, more informal reviews are undertaken by the Returning Officer's team ahead of each election to ensure that polling places remain suitable.
- 3.4 Definition of terms:
- **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 geographical area created by the sub-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 located.
 - **Polling station:** the room, part of a room, or building where the poll takes place.
- 3.5 The boundaries of polling districts and the location of polling places are for the Council to determine, and the locations of the polling stations are the responsibility of the Returning Officer.
- 3.6 The Review allows the Council to identify optimum polling districts and polling places. There is no requirement to change any existing arrangements however any change or decision to make no change must be justified.

Criteria for Polling Places

- 3.7 Polling Places contain one or more polling stations, and the following criteria are used when identifying a Polling Place:
- Must be available for elections between 6.30am and 10.30pm and that the council has priority for bookings for elections.
 - Each polling station to have no more than 2,250 voters; a polling district with, say, 2,300 voters, would need a polling place that could accommodate 2 polling stations.
 - Proximity to voters
 - Accessible for all, including those with mobility or sensory difficulties.
 - Safe, warm and well-lit
 - Cost
 - Schools only to be used when there are no suitable community venues.
 - Mobile polling stations to be used if there are no suitable community venues or schools.

Key Issues

- 3.8 The council identified several specific issues for consultation. These issues included:

Burntwood - dense housing, with insufficient infrastructure throughout Burntwood. Many polling stations are schools or have accessibility concerns. This review should look at alternative options for each, however these are limited.

Fradley – developments will increase elector counts above what Fradley Village Hall can handle. The review should look at an alternative polling place, or a boundary review such that the new developments are captured by another polling district.

Rugeley Power Station – new developments will significantly increase elector counts at the Rugeley Power Station site, which falls within polling district BA, going to polling place Armitage & Handsacre Village Hall. The review should consider an alternative polling place or should look at whether a new polling district could be created to capture this new development, with a polling place closer to future new residents.

South Lichfield – new developments at Cricket Lane and the South Lichfield SDA bring elector counts over the maximum for the district and the current polling place (Holy Cross Parish) cannot facilitate another polling station. The review should consider an alternative venue, or a boundary review such that new residents should not have to travel so far.

Boley Park – supervisors raised concerns around accessibility due to there being a lip on the entrance at Boley Park Community Hall. The review should consider more accessible options.

The use of mobile polling stations – mobile polling stations are only used as a last resort, however in the last election, the Council used 6 mobiles. Ramps are available, although these are steep and there is limited room to manoeuvre inside for those who use wheelchairs or mobility scooters. A lack of facilities such as toilets, heating, water etc. raise concerns around working conditions for polling staff, particularly in winter. Availability of mobiles and the logistics of delivery is a concern to elections staff as these are high in demand during the election periods.

The use of Primary Schools – at every election, the Council receives complaints from parents whose child's school is closed. The council recognises the disruption to parents and to pupils when a school is closed because of an election, although it is the decision of the Head to close a school. In some cases, there may be actions that can be taken that mean that the school could remain open and a polling station can operate.

In consequence, the council will seek to use alternative community venues where they exist and where they are suitable. The council will not choose to use a mobile polling station where a suitable school exists because a mobile polling station is not as accessible for those with certain disabilities and working.

Officers have reached out to **consult new venues** on whether they should be able to accommodate us, however only 1 response was received out of 12. This has meant any proposals to move polling places to any venues that have not yet replied, cannot be recommended. Officers will continue to attempt contact and a number of Councillors with existing relationship with those venues have offered support.

County Council Division Boundary Review

Following the proposed changes to the County division and parish ward boundaries (since Regulatory & Licensing Committee, confirmation of the order has now been received), there is a small pocket of land south of Cannock Road, Burntwood which includes the street of Chaselands, houses south of Cannock Road, Silverdale Drive and part of Plant Lane. To ensure these electors vote in the correct areas, a new Polling District is required. We are proposing a new polling district called CK1 – Chaselands and associated polling places.

The Consultation

3.9 The consultation was complemented by recommendations from the (Acting) Returning Officer ((A)RO)

3.10 Consultation was conducted online. The council received 34 responses via the online form, 1 via paper form, and 1 response from a Councillor via email.

3.11 The key issues to emerge are as follows:

- Mixed feelings about the use of schools – some in support, some in opposition
- Distance and accessibility issues at 7th Lichfield Scout Hut
- Cherry Orchard 3 schools are not appropriate.
- Parking concerns at Holy Cross Parish Hall, Chapel Lane
- Distance and accessibility of Lichfield City Football Club
- Distance and accessibility of Fazeley Town Hall to Deer Park Road/Bonehill residents.

Alternative options	The Council is required to complete a review of all parliamentary polling districts and polling places at least every five years and the review must be completed by 31 January 2025.
Consultation	<p>Online consultation (with paper form options) conducted between 10 September and 22 October 2024 for Lichfield Constituency and Lichfield District residents. Proposed new venues are being consulted on availability.</p> <p>A report with recommendations has been taken to Regulatory & Licensing Committee on 19 November 2024.</p>
Financial implications	<p>School locations are free to hire and under SCC guidance issued to headteachers must be made available if no other suitable venue exists.</p> <p>Most other locations attract a hire and cleaning fee which is paid for from the District election’s budget and where parish ballots are held, from the relevant Parish Council budget.</p>
Approved by Section 151 Officer	Yes
Legal implications	In accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Electoral Administration Act 2006 and the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, Lichfield District Council is required to complete a full review of all polling districts and polling places within their parliamentary constituency every five years. Our last review was completed in 2019, and we have until 31 January 2025 to complete this review.
Approved by Monitoring Officer	Yes
Contribution to Lichfield District 2050	To enable the democratic process whereby voters elect those that will drive through changes to improve the quality of life for everyone.
Data assessment	<p>Approximate increases in elector counts in each polling district have been calculated from the Housing Trajectory 2024 – 2029.</p> <p>Consultation responses have been reviewed and considered.</p>
Equality, diversity and human rights implications	The aim of the review is to seek to ensure that all electors have reasonable facilities for voting, including having regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.

EIA logged by Equalities Officer	Yes
----------------------------------	-----

Crime & safety Issues	Not applicable to this report.
-----------------------	--------------------------------

Environmental impact (including climate change and biodiversity)	Not applicable to this report.
--	--------------------------------

GDPR / privacy impact assessment	Not applicable to this report. No personal details or identifiers were submitted during consultation.
----------------------------------	---

	Risk description & risk owner	Original score (RYG)	How we manage it	New score (RYG)
A	That suitable sites are not available in key locations	Likelihood Yellow (material) and Impact Assessment. Yellow (material)	Continually identify suitable sites to use and respond to notification of sites no longer suitable. Where necessary, seek a site for a mobile location as a last resort.	Likelihood Green (tolerable) and Impact Assessment. Green (tolerable)
B	That sites used are disruptive to local communities and school activities	Likelihood Yellow (material) and Impact Assessment. Yellow (material)	Seek alternative sites wherever possible	Likelihood Green (tolerable) and Impact Assessment. Green (tolerable)
C	Proposed polling stations are not able to accommodate increased voter numbers	Likelihood Yellow (material) and Impact Assessment. Yellow (material)	We will assess performance of the larger polling stations at the general election and review accordingly	Likelihood Green (tolerable) and Impact Assessment. Green (tolerable)
D				
E				

Background documents	(Acting) Returning Officer Representations Consultation Responses
----------------------	--

Relevant web links	Review of polling stations – Lichfield District Council Consultation Creation of a new polling district - CK1 Chaselands Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations Electoral Commission
--------------------	---