



Council

4 November 2019

**Subject: Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places**

Report by:

Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To consider the outcome of the recent review of polling districts and polling places

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- 1. That the proposals for the polling districts, polling places and polling stations in the District, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be approved.**
- 2. That the Returning Officer be granted delegated authority for keeping polling districts and polling places under review and amending any such arrangements (following consultation with Local Ward Member(s) where there is an operational need, prior to the next compulsory District review.**

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

**To seek to provide reasonable facilities for voting that, so far as is practical, are accessible to all electors including those who are disabled, to comply with the requirements of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.**

## IMPLICATIONS

**Legal:** None arising from this report

**Financial: FIN/93/20/TJB**

The designation of any additional polling place will have financial implications regarding the hire of premises and polling staff fees and will be contained within existing budgets

**Staffing :** None arising from this report.

**Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:** Representation of the People Act 1983 require the accessibility needs of disabled persons to be taken into account when designating polling places.

**Data Protection Implications:** None arising from this report.

**Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:** None arising from this report.

**Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:** None arising from this report.

**Health Implications:** None arising from this report.

**Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

**Risk Assessment :** None arising from this report.

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**Call in and Urgency:**

**Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

**Yes**

**No**

**x**

**Key Decision:**

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

**Yes**

**No**

**x**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The Electoral Registration & Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The current compulsory reviews must be completed by 31 January 2020. Subsequent compulsory reviews must then be held once every five years.

1.2 In undertaking a review the local authority must:

- a) Publish notice of the holding of a review;
- b) Consult the (Acting) Returning Officer for every parliamentary constituency which is wholly or partly in its area;
- c) Enable any such (Acting) Returning Officer to make representations to the authority and publish them in a prescribed manner;
- d) Seek representations from such persons that it thinks has particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability;
- e) Allow any elector in the authority's area to make representations which could include proposals for alternative polling places.

1.3 On completion of a review the authority must give reasons for its decisions in the review and publish such other information as is prescribed in the Act and regulations.

1.4 Details of the Returning Officer's proposals regarding polling districts, polling places, electorates and postal voters are set out at Appendix 2.

## **2. POLLING DISTRICT BOUNDARIES AND POLLING PLACES**

2.1 Polling Districts are, in effect, sub divisions of Electoral Wards. Each parish is automatically a polling district in its own right but then that area can be broken down into further polling districts dependent on the size of the parish and the number and location of the electors.

2.2 When designating polling districts the local authority must seek to ensure that all the electors in the area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practical in the circumstances.

2.3 In determining where polling places should be located the Council must seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practical in the circumstances and that, so far as is reasonable and practical, polling places chosen are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled.

## **3. CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN**

3.1 Public notice of the review was given on 1 October 2018 and full details of the review were placed on the Council's website. The period for

representations to be made on the Returning Officer's proposals was from 1 October 2018 to 13 January 2019.

3.2 In addition the following specific consultations were undertaken explaining the reason for the review and factors which could influence the Returning Officer's proposals regarding the location of polling districts/places:

- a) with all Members of the Council prior to the publication of the Returning Officer's proposals by way of electronic mail on 1 October 2018.
- b) with all Town/Parish Councils and Chairs of Parish Meetings by way of a letter dated 3 October 2018.
- c) letters advising of the review, accessibility and proposals dated 1 October 2018 to:
  - i. Gainsborough Constituency Conservative Association
  - ii. Gainsborough Constituency Labour Party
  - iii. West Lindsey Liberal Democrats
  - iv. United Kingdom Independence Party
  - v. Lincolnshire Independents
- d) with 22 organisations and persons connected with the Disability Network within the West Lindsey area by way of electronic mail on 1 October 2018.

3.3 Press releases were issued to the local media and notices placed on parish notice boards throughout the Council's administrative area.

#### **4. COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING THE CONSULTATION PROCESS**

4.1 A total of 14 responses were received and these are summarised in the schedule set out at Appendix 1. The schedule provides details of the parishes on which comment has been received, observations of the Returning Officer and the name of the person or organisation who has made comments or representations.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

5.1 The Council is aware that in a vast, mainly rural area such as West Lindsey, there are many electors who have to travel some miles in order to vote at their allocated polling station. However, postal voting is available to all electors and is an easier and more convenient method of voting for many electors. The current records show that almost 11,150 electors have already chosen to vote by post on a permanent basis, an increase of over 650 since the last review was undertaken in 2014.

5.2 Throughout the review process every effort has been made to ensure that electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practical in

the circumstances and that, so far as is reasonable and practical, polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled.

- 5.3 The proposals as listed in Appendix 2 reflect the composition of the 20 district council wards. The proposals reflect several parishes which have had to be 'moved' into new areas with a consequent change in their polling place within the new ward.
- 5.4 On occasions designated polling places may become unavailable for use during elections owing to the closure of buildings or premises being used for other events. The Returning Officer requires approval by the Council in order to change polling places at relatively short notice. It is recommended that delegated authority be given to the Returning Officer following consultation with local Ward Member(s) to approve any such changes during an election period.