

General Purposes Committee

AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Report Title	REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS
---------------------	---

Date of Meeting:	14 February 2011
Directorate:	Chief Executive's Office
Ward(s)	All

1. Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England published its Final Recommendations on the Further Electoral Review of Northampton Borough Council on 12th October 2010. The draft Order (the legal document which brings into force their recommendations) was laid in Parliament on the 29th November 2010 and having received no objections the Order came into force on 29th January 2011 for the purposes of preparing for the May 2011 election including work on the register but otherwise it comes into force at those elections. The Further Electoral Review fundamentally altered a large number of the ward boundaries within the Borough, which made it necessary to conduct a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations in order to bring these in line with the Borough's new ward boundaries. On 25 October 2010, Full Council noted the commencement of this review and delegated to the General Purposes Committee the power to make the decision on any changes to polling districts and polling places. Responsibility for choosing polling stations lies with the (Acting) Returning Officer, however the details of the proposed polling stations are included in this report for the Committee's reference.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 General Purposes Committee is asked to note the outcome of the public consultation on the polling districts, polling places and polling stations review.
- 2.2 General Purposes Committee is asked to agree the changes to the polling districts and polling places within the Borough in order that preparations can be made for the election to be conducted on the new ward boundaries.
- 2.3 The Returning Officer be able to amend the Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations as required for operational purposes.

3. Report Background

- 3.1 Due to the significant changes to the Borough's ward boundaries that will be brought into force at the May 2011 elections, the Council was required to undertake a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations in the Borough in order to bring them in line with the new ward boundaries.
- 3.3 A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a constituency or ward into smaller parts. A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer. A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are

fixed by the local authority, polling stations are chosen by the (Acting) Returning Officer for the election.

- 3.4 Reviews of parliamentary polling districts must be undertaken at least once every four years. However, the Electoral Commission's interim report on the problems experienced at some polling stations at the close of poll at the 6 May 2010 elections recommends that all local authorities take steps immediately to begin the process of conducting reviews of polling districts and polling places, reflecting on the problems identified in some areas at the May 2010 elections.
- 3.5 Although polling districts and polling places for local government elections are not automatically part of the review, given that in practice polling districts and polling places for local government elections are based on UK Parliamentary polling arrangements, it is recommended that a review of local government polling arrangements is conducted simultaneously.
- 3.6 In late 2010, a draft scheme was developed for consultation with councillors and the public. In light of the fact that for the most part the boundaries for each type of election (General, County, Borough and Parish) are no longer coterminous, the new scheme has been required to introduce a number of polling districts that are substantially smaller than those that the town has seen previously. This is in order to enable an elector wherever possible to vote in the same polling district for a Borough Election as well as a County Election.
- 3.7 For the most part, the polling stations are the same as those used previously. Whilst there has been a desire to eradicate the use of mobile units as polling stations, this has not been possible in the New Duston, Banbury Lane, Ladybridge Drive and Link view areas, as there are no schools or community building in these areas.
- 3.8 The Polling Places (Polling Stations) have taken into account accessibility and tried to be in or as near the Polling Districts as practicable.
- 3.9 Where schools have previously been used as polling stations there has been an attempt to find suitable alternative premises. However, where this has not been possible the Council will continue to work with the schools to find ways to enable them to remain open on polling day and ensure that their use as a polling station does not jeopardise their security.
- 3.10 It has also been identified that there is a need to make an amendment to the Parish boundary in Wootton and East Hunsbury where 2 properties are not in the Parish but, as the boundary follows an old water course it would be much more sensible to include them with the surrounding properties.
- 3.11 A full Governance review will be undertaken later in 2011 and areas that have been brought to notice to be taken into account at present are:
 - The inclusion of SNUPA polling district in the Upton Parish (Area opposite Sixfields);
 - The inclusion of SNNVH polling district in the East Hunsbury & Wootton Parish (Area on old Turners site to London Road Roundabout); and
 - Review of the East Hunsbury & Wootton Parish.
- 3.12 Once a draft scheme had been developed, this was viewed and commented upon by the Council's Electoral Review Member Working Party and some slight amendments carried out following their discussions. All councillors were also contacted individually and invited to

comment on the scheme and make suggestions for any alternative premises that might be suitable for use as polling stations

3.13 On Monday 20th December 2010 public consultation on the scheme commenced, with it being made available on the consultation pages of the Council's website and being made available at the One Stop Shop in the Guildhall and in the Electoral Services Office. In addition, the Council wrote to a wide variety of stakeholders within the town, including Residents' Associations, disability charities and forums, political parties and community organisations, to request their views on the proposals.

3.14 The public consultation period lasted six weeks and no responses were received.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Resources and Risk

The review increases the number of Polling Stations and therefore staffing resource requirements. This does, however bring all Polling Stations into line with the Electoral Commission guidelines on the size of Polling Stations.

Increased costs will be incurred to improve quality of the provision of the mobile Polling station. This will improve the facilities for the staff and electors alike.

4.2 Legal

The Council has a legal obligation to conduct the May 2011 elections on the new ward boundaries as laid out in the Order which was brought into force on 29th January 2011. In order to do this, the Council has to conduct a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations in order to bring these in line with the new ward boundaries.

4.3 Other Implications

A review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations includes an assessment of buildings available, of their location, size and suitability with a view to enabling access to all electors, including specific consideration of the needs of the disabled.

The republished register will be published on 1st March 2011.

5. Background Papers

Please Note: A Map will be provided at the meeting of the Committee and later attached to the approved published minutes.

Report to Full Council, 25 October 2010, item 11: Further Electoral Review and Subsequent Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations.

Available at

<http://www.northamptonboroughcouncil.com/councillors/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=242&MId=6514&Ver=4>

Working Maps available in Electoral Services Office.

NBC Web site consultations section.

Revised Lists of Polling Districts, Polling Stations and corresponding Maps are available to view in the Electoral Services Office.

Report Author and Title: Cassie Triggs, Democratic and Chief Executive Services Manager

Telephone and Email: 01604 837 680, ctriggs@northampton.gov.uk