

Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel 28th November 2013

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2013/14

Service: Electoral Services

Wards: All

Portfolio: Councillor Towe, Finance and Personnel

Executive Summary report

The purpose of this report is to present recommendations (contained in Appendix A attached), for consideration by the committee, on changes to polling districts and polling places.

Recommendations

- 1 That the proposed changes to polling districts and polling places, contained in Appendix A to this report, be submitted to the Council for approval.

Background information

Under the provisions of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, a local authority must carry out and complete a review of all the polling places and districts for UK Parliamentary elections in its area within the period of 16 months beginning from 1st October 2013, and the period of 16 months beginning with 1st October of every fifth year after that.

The reason for this is to align the reviews with the 5 year Parliamentary periods, and the five year cycle for UK Parliamentary boundary reviews implemented by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011.

The review has to be commenced on 1st October 2013 because the Electoral Services unit will be unable to carry out the review in 2014 because of its work load. Provision to enable the review to be brought forward has been made in section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.

Note that the government has moved the last household annual canvass to also commence on 1 October 2013.

This review is primarily concerned with polling districts and polling places for those parts of the UK Parliamentary constituencies that lie within council's boundaries. However, the review will also apply to the local government elections in the borough as the locations of polling districts and polling places have and will be the same for

both types of elections, as the constituency boundaries are currently aligned with councils ward boundaries.

Polling district – a geographical area created by the sub-division of a constituency or ward into smaller parts. There are no size constraints.

Polling place – not defined in law but taken to be a small area, such as a building or the grounds of a school etc. If council does not define a polling place, then by default the polling district becomes the polling place. This is the approach council has previously adopted for most polling districts as it gives the Returning Officer a lot more flexibility to locate the polling station, especially if time is short in the build up to an election.

Polling station – the place where polling actually takes place and it is located in the polling place. It is the Returning Officer's responsibility to determine how many polling stations are required for each polling place. Note, that a polling place can be located outside its polling district.

In practice, the review starts with the polling station and works backwards as it is no good designating a polling district only to find it has nowhere suitable within it for a polling station.

There are 140 polling districts in the three parliamentary constituencies within the borough. The review has to be transparent, which means we have to publish all submissions, correspondence, reasons why decisions have been made and minutes of all meetings.

As part of the review process council must;

- Seek to ensure that all electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practical in the circumstances
- Seek to ensure that as far as is reasonable and practicable the polling places are accessible to those who are disabled

Submissions

The Council is required to publicise the review and seek submissions. For the previous review, a copy of the public notice was inserted into Council tax booklets and placed on Council's web site. However, no submissions were received.

For the 2013 review, a copy of the notice and submission form was sent out to all those organisations that currently provide polling stations, as well as being placed on Council's web site and in its libraries. It was also inserted into the public notices column in two local newspapers.

The Council also has to actively seek representations from such persons as it thinks have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability. This was achieved by involving the assistance of the Equality, Safety and Wellbeing Team.

The submission period was one month and closed on 1 November 2013. Three submissions were received:

Submission One: Mr Patrick Kelly, (Paddock Ward)

Submission one, from Mr Kelly was requesting that the polling station at Queen Marys Sports Pavilion, Sutton Road, Paddock Ward be reinstated. This polling station has been reviewed several times. We ceased to use it as a Polling Station as it was not DDA compliant following the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places in 2007. In 2011 we revisited the idea for using it as a polling station following a request by the three Ward Councillors. Sue Fox Equality & Diversity Consultant confirmed that the situation had not altered and Queen Marys sports pavilion was still not DDA compliant. The polling Districts were altered and the electors that had voted at Queen Marys were allocated different polling stations. Mr Kelly was among the electors allocated to the polling station at Broadway United Reformed Church. This polling station provides excellent voting facilities including provision for people with disabilities. It has sufficient parking, and is on a main bus route. There is both a pelican crossing and pedestrian refuge available to cross the busy road to the polling station. Following the move to the Broadway Church we received no complaints from the electors that were transferred there. It is the Returning Officers opinion that the current arrangements for voters from polling district UA remain as they are.

Submission Two: Councillor Worrall regarding Breedon Way Polling District OG (Rushall Sheffield Ward).

Councillor Worrall has reported on an anomaly picked up by the residents of Breedon Way. The road should form part of the polling district OF and thereby the electorate would vote at St Marks Church Hall, Green lane. This has already been identified and forms part of the Returning Officers recommendations in Appendix A.

Submission Three: Councillor T Wilson re the Temporary Polling Station sited on the Bowman Public House Car park. Polling District JD (Aldridge Central & South Ward).

Councillor Wilson on behalf of all of the ward members has raised the issue that voters and polling station staff felt intimidated and were verbally abused and sworn at by crowds gathered outside the pub who had been drinking. This has been an issue since the polling station (temporary building) has been located there following the closure of Redhouse Primary school. The Returning Officer sought approval from Aldridge School (across the road in the neighbouring polling district) to make an additional polling station on their car park. Unfortunately the Headmaster would not allow us to do this on the grounds that it was a working school and did not have the capacity to accommodate up to a minimum of 700 voters. We have explored a number of options; there is a Church Hall in Tynings Lane which is also across the road in the neighbouring polling district. The Hall itself is fine although there are parking issues. The Reverend from the Hall would prefer us to find alternative accommodation as the Hall is used quite extensively by the community on a Thursday. However, if we cannot find another option the Church Hall or neighbouring House (4 Tynings Lane) could be made available. The other option, which seems more viable, is a piece of land owned by WHG next to 52 Gretton Crescent that could be used to locate the temporary building. WHG have now granted us

permission to locate a temporary Polling Station on their land. Therefore the Returning Officer recommends that the land adjacent 52 Gretton Crescent be the polling station For Polling District JD. This Polling Station will be kept under review.

Transparency / appeals

The Council is required by law to give reasons for its decisions in respect of the designation of polling districts / places. In addition, it must publish;

- All correspondence sent to any person whom the authority thinks has particular expertise
- All representations made by any person in connection with the review
- The minutes of any meeting held by the Authority where details of the review have been considered
- Details of the actual designations of polling districts / places as a result of the review
- Details of where the results of the review have been published.

The decision(s) of the Council can also be appealed to the Electoral Commission by not less than thirty electors in the constituency, any person who made representations to council during the review or any person who is not an elector in the constituency who the Commission feels has sufficient interest in the accessibility of disabled persons to polling places in the area.

It is important to note that the outcome of an election cannot be questioned simply because any party to the review failed to comply with all or any aspects of the review process.

Proposals

Proposed changes are attached as an Appendix to this report.

The Returning Officer's representation is that there will be no planned changes to the location of any polling stations that were used for the elections in 2012, except for polling district DD & DC in Bloxwich West. Polling district DD will move to the communal room, Cartwright House, Wolverhampton Road as the previous location, the British Legion building, will not be available. It is proposed to combine this station with the polling district DC. This will mean that the current polling station Bloxwich C of E School in the High Street will no longer be used avoiding disruption to the school timetable. The electors would then attend the communal room Cartwright House which is located opposite the school. The new polling station will also be very convenient to the electors from the new housing development off Bell Lane and provide a saving to the council with the overall reduction of one polling station.

The polling place for DD & DC is recommended to be the same as the polling districts.

Resource considerations

There are no financial or staffing considerations that are outside the services budget.

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2013/14 Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places - draft proposals											
The (Acting) Returning Officer proposes no major changes. Just a general tidy up of the polling districts and a change to the polling station in Bloxwich West											
Constituency	Ward	House No	Street	Current PD	New PD	Polling place	Houses	Electors	Reason	Current Polling Station	New Polling Station
Aldridge-Brownhills	Aldridge C & S	53-61	Walsall Wood Road	JA	JC		5	10	Put all those on same side of street in same PD	Leighswood School	Aldridge library
	Aldridge C & S	Oak House, The Coach House, 1 The Stables, 2 The Stables, Brook House, Holly House	Cedar Court, Walsall Wood Road	JB	JC		6	9	Put all those on same side of street in same PD	Aldridge Methodist Church	Aldridge library
	Aldridge C & S	11-31	Walsall Wood Road	JB	JC		11	24	Put all those on same side of street in same PD	Aldridge Methodist Church	Aldridge library
	Aldridge C & S			JD	JD		1031	1818	Complaints re the temporary building sited at Bowmans Public House	Temp sited at Bowmans Public House	Temp sited on WHG land adjacent to 52 Gretton Crescent
	Aldridge C & S	386-410; 367	Erdington Road	JF	JH		13	27	More convenient PS	Whetstone Prim School	Blackwood School
	Brownhills	133	Watling Street	LA	LB		1	2	More convenient PS	Temp, Brownhills West Prim School	Temp, Whitehorse PH
	Brownhills	53	Chester Road North	LC	LA		1	2	Same as adjoining houses	Brownhills Activity Centre	Temp, Brownhills West Prim School
	Rushall Sheffield	2-16	Bredon Way	OG	OF		8	10	Surrounded by OF electors	Communal room Autumn Close	St Marks Church, Green Lane
	Rushall Sheffield	6-14; 3,27	Mill Road	OG	OF		7	11	More convenient PS and better placed to be part of OF	Communal room Autumn Close	St Marks Church, Green Lane
	Walsall North	Birchills Leamore	80	Stafford Street	AH	AF		1	5	Isolated and with AF voters	Burrows St TMO
Blakenall		450-452 Strawberry Fields	Goscote Lane	BC	BB		2	4	Isolated and with BC electors	Rycroft NRC	Goldsmith academy
Bloxwich East		162-230	Ingram Road	CD	CE		36	77	More convenient PS and reduces pressure on Green Rock sch(2765 electors)	Green Rock Prim School	Valley Nursery School
Bloxwich East		102-106	Valley Road	CD	CE		3	5	More convenient PS and ties in with Ingram Road movements	Green Rock Prim School	Valley Nursery School
Bloxwich East		155-173a	Well Lane	CE	CD		12	17	More convenient PS and better for delivery of poll cards, canvass forms and electoral material	Valley Nursery School	Green Rock Prim School
Blowich West		23-27	Sneyd Lane	DG	DH		3	5	More convenient PS	Dudley Fields comm centre	Elmore Row
Blowich West				461	DD		461	676	British Legion closed	British Legion	Communal Room Cartwright House, Wolverhampton Rd
Blowich West				569	DC		567	825	Avoids disruption to school. Provides good amenities. Located near to new development (Off Bell Lane). Reduces cost as combined with box for Register DD	Bloxwich CE JMI School	Communal Room Cartwright House, Wolverhampton Rd
Short Heath		Re order PD's EC and EE	moving roads between PD EC & EE to provide a balanced East/West split on the Stroud Avenue Estate			No change			This will provide simpler uniform polling districts which will be better for delivery of poll cards, canvass forms and electoral material	Rosedale CE Infant School	No change
Willenhall North		7, 35-43	Hilton Road	FC	FD		6	9	Unmix PD's	Allen's centre	No change
Willenhall North	118-128	Essington Road	FD	FC		6	12	Unmix PD's	Allen's centre	No change	
Willenhall South	Flat 1& 2 St Annes Vicarage	Anne Street	GG	GF		2	0	Peripheral tidyup	Fibbersley School	St Marys Leveson St	
Walsall South	Bentley & D Nth	2-14	Kent Road	SB	SC		7	9	Makes all on same side of road same PD	Temp at Wing Close	Youth Centre, Wilkes Ave
	Palfrey	337	West Bromwich Rd	VG	VF		1	0	Peripheral tidyup	The Poppies Building	No change
	Pleck	151	Pleck Road	WA	WC		1	5	Peripheral tidyup	Innovation Centre, Primley Ave	St Johns Church hall
	Pleck	Flat 1-19 Saddlers Court	Bescot Road	WE	WD		18	14	Makes same side of road same PD	Hillary Prim School	Pleck library
	Pleck	2-14	Bescot Road	WE	WD		7	42	Makes same side of road same PD	Hillary Prim School	Pleck library
	St Matthews	Apt 37-63	Gallery Square	XD	XE		27	22	In amongst XE voters and isolated from other XD voters	Croft House comm room	St Marys Glebe St
	St Matthews	1-13	Lichfield Road	XA	XB		8	13	XB voters either side	St Michaels Church hall. Leigh Rd	Butts Prim School
	St Matthews	Arboretum House	Arboretum Road	XA	XD		1	2	Isolated and Arboretum Rd is all XD	St Michaels Church hall. Leigh Rd	Croft House comm room
	Darlaston South	126-128	Willenhall Street	TA	TI		2	4	TI voters either side	Rough Hay Prim School	Temp at Keyway Pentecostal
	Darlaston South	26	Rough Hay Street	TI	TA		1	2	TA voters either side	Temp at Keyway Pentecostal	Rough Hay Prim School
Darlaston South	1-11	Willenhall Street	TI	TE		11	19	More convenient PS and better for delivery of poll cards, canvass forms and electoral material	Temp at Keyway Pentecostal	Ralph Bayley House	
Darlaston South	1-5	Alma Street	TI	TE		3	5	More convenient PS and better for delivery of poll cards, canvass forms and electoral material	Temp at Keyway Pentecostal	Ralph Bayley House	
Darlaston South	70 & 71	Stafford Road	TE	TA		2	0	More convenient PS and better for delivery of poll cards, canvass forms and electoral material	Ralph Bayley House	Rough Hay Prim School	
Darlaston South	180-194	Wolverhampton Street	TB	TA		8	7	TA voters either side	Temp at Grace Academy	Rough Hay Prim School	
Darlaston South	87-99	Woden Road West	TF	TG		7	10	Isolated and with TG voters	Rowley View Nursery School	Kings Hill Prim School	

APPENDIX A