

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

General Purposes Committee,
7th July 2015

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Council reviews and defines Polling Districts and Polling Places
- The Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) amends the Register to reflect Polling Districts
- The Returning Officer (LRO/ARO) is responsible for defining polling stations

Definitions

- **Polling District:** sub division of the Borough to allow for the administration of an election / elections
- **Polling Place:** the building or area within which the LRO/ARO selects a Polling Station or Polling Stations
- **Polling Station:** the room or area in which voting takes place

Some Practicalities

- Polling Districts are the building blocks of the Register for all elections and therefore need to be defined in a manner whereby each election can be administered properly
- The choice of Polling Place is limited by the availability of premises of a suitable nature and/or the limitations of temporary solutions (i.e. “Mobiles”)
- A Polling District cannot have more than one Polling Place but can have multiple Polling Stations
- The same Polling Place can be defined for more than one Polling District and a single Polling Station can serve more than one Polling District.



Example - Abington Ward

- Consists of 3 Polling Districts
- Falls into two different Parliamentary Constituencies
- Part of a larger County Division
- Contains one double Polling Station

Polling Districts

- As at 25th June the Full Register contained 7,327 registered electors in Abington Ward, unlikely to rise much before 2020
- One Polling District of 803 voters cannot be amended upwards
- The other 3 Polling Districts have 6,524 voters of which about 5,500 are registered to vote in person at 4 Polling Stations, ranging from 950 to 1,800 at each Polling Station



Issues to consider

- Would a different arrangement of Polling Districts provide better accessibility to voters?
- Where are the premises to provide Polling Places and how accessible are they?(currently Abington Avenue URC, Stimpson Avenue Academy and Barry Road Primary School)
- EG: Abington Park Museum, the County Cricket Club?
- Are there natural barriers to access to consider such as Wellingborough Road?
- What do we do in any premises-starved area such as north-west of this ward?



Example - Phippsville

- All in one Parliamentary constituency
- In two County Divisions
- One Polling District has 882 voters and is in one Division.
- Remainder has 2,240 voters, not projected to change much.
About 1,800 vote in person at St Matthew's Parish Centre
- Asking same questions, is there another potential Polling Place that would improve accessibility (e.g. Community buildings on Ashburnham Road)



How is the review carried out?

- Initial consultation and analysis to prepare proposals from the Returning Officer
- Report on initial consultation and submission from the RO to GP Committee in October
- Formal consultation on both the RO's submission and any comments made by the Committee
- Report back to GP Committee in November to conclude the review, which is then published.

Consultation

- Council motion asked for the Committee to be consulted before consultation
- Guidance from the Electoral Commission laid out in 3.2.16 in the report today
- Officers will also approach relevant members of Forums, and Parish Council, Residents Associations etc...
- Consultation will be by written communication to all those listed explaining the process and requesting views

Consultation

- Reference to the review will be include on all HEFs as part of the canvass, so in principle ALL voters will be contacted
- There will be a simple web survey at the initial stage asking for views on polling stations.
- The web site will also be used to publicise information and responses received.
- Committee are requested to propose any additional avenues they would like explored

Analysis Stage

- In parallel with the first consultation stage analysis is being or will be undertaken including:
- Analysis of comments made by electoral staff on their experience in May 2015 and of public comments made on the day or about the Polling Day experience in 2015
- Surveys of all existing Polling Places and potential newly identified Polling Places by an experienced Presiding Officer and Polling Station Inspector
- Projections of numbers of voters in 2020 will be further refined and used to inform modelling
- Consultation responses will be analysed as they arrive and published



October Committee

- Committee will receive a report containing the following:
- Consultation response to the initial consultation period
- Submission by the Returning Officer with regard to future polling arrangements
- Recommendations to form the basis of consultation before making a decision in November