

Appendices:
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NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE REPORT

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| Report Title | Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places |
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

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|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Committee Meeting Date: | 17 th November 2015 |
| Policy Document: | No |
| Directorate: | Chief Executive |

1. Purpose

1.1 To present to the Committee final recommendations from the Local Returning Officer relating to the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places under The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 and seek the Committee's approval to adopt.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Committee approve the final representations of the Local Returning Officer.

2.2 That the Committee approves the amendments to be included in the register due to be published on 1st Dec 2015

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

3.1.1 The introduction of The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires each local authority to carry out a review of polling districts and polling places every fifth year after 1st October 2013.

3.1.2 The initial review was completed but following representations made to the Electoral Commission that the review had not been completed fully, the Commission requested that a further full review be conducted as soon as possible.

- 3.1.3 The Local Returning Officer initiated a full review of Polling Districts and Polling Places immediately following the Parliamentary and Local Elections held on 7th May 2015.
- 3.1.4 The scope and methodology of the review and consultation was agreed by General Purposes committee on 7th July 2015
- 3.1.5 Since the meeting in July the draft Guidance on the holding of a Referendum on Membership of the European Union has been published. This recommends, based on experience at the Scotland Referendum in 2014, that Local Returning Officers should, for that purpose, seek to have Polling Districts with less than 1,500 voters in person as far as that is possible and practicable. This draft Guidance has been considered when drawing up the attached recommendations and has had the effect of increasing the number of Polling Stations likely to be required.
- 3.1.6 The attached proposals have also been shaped by representations made around the May 2015 elections, reports from Polling staff at the May 2015 elections, informal preparatory consultation, and inspections of existing and potential Polling Places. The process of consultation and inspection will continue during the rest of the review period.
- 3.1.7 The proposals have been subject to a full public consultation which ran from 7th October to 3rd November following approval from this committee on 6th October 2015.
- 3.1.8 Specific feedback from the consultations, which included representations from elected members, has been reviewed and any appropriate changes have been made to the original proposals. These are detailed in the attached final recommendations report, which also attaches the consultation responses received in summary.
- 3.1.9 The Committee is recommended to approve the proposals attached.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Resources and Risk

- 4.1.1 Additional resources will be required to manage and run any additional Polling Stations required following proposed reductions in the size of some Polling Districts. European, National, Police, County and Parish elections, ballots and referendums are not funded by the Borough Council but costs are reclaimed from the responsible body. The Borough Council is responsible for its own elections and for specified local ballots such as Community Planning Referendums or any Mayoral Referendum.
- 4.1.2 Additional costs will be incurred by increasing the number of Polling Places. The proposals attached increase the numbers of Polling Districts and Polling Places, and also the number of mobile units which have a higher unit cost.

| | May 2015 | Proposed | Change |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|------------|
| Polling Districts | 100 | 124 | +24% |
| Polling Places | 80 | 94 | +17.5% |
| Mobile Units | 7 | 11 | +57% |
| Polling Stations | 106 | Maximum 131 | Up to +24% |

4.1.3 The number of Polling Stations within each Polling Place is a matter for the discretion of the Returning Officer at each election. In the attached recommendations a number of Polling Districts are identified as potentially having two Polling Stations.

4.1.4 The costs of establishing a larger number of Polling Places, with attendant increase in Polling Stations, will depend on the nature and costs of the Polling Places used and the size of the Polling Stations. Under Electoral Commission guidance there are minimum staffing levels depending on the number of voters in person at each Polling Station. It does not therefore follow that one Polling Station becoming two is double the cost, it is usually less than double.

4.1.5 The arrangements proposed in this paper will be reviewed again in 2018/19 in preparation for the 2020 Parliamentary Constituency General Election, which will be on new boundaries.

4.2 Legal

4.2.1 Formal guidance from the Electoral Commission is being followed for the review which ensures that all parts of the legislation are adhered to.

4.1 Equality

4.1.1 Advice has been sought from specialist groups and agencies relating to access needs of protected groups, specifically those with a disability.

4.1.2 Full inspections of Polling Places have taken place which included accessibility and incorporated any initial advice given by the groups above.

4.2 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.2.1 Consultation has been carried out both informally and formally with the general public, and specifically the groups mentioned in 4.2.2 below.

4.2.2 Compulsory consultees are stated in the guidance issued by the Electoral Commission and include the following:

- Candidates and agents for the parliamentary, local and Parish elections held on May 7th, 2015
- Elected representatives (County Councillors, MEP's etc)
- (Acting) Returning Officers from neighbouring authorities (e.g. South Northamptonshire)
- Electors
- Council officers with relevant experience

4.3 Other Implications

4.3.1 None

5. Background Papers

5.1 Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places files and records, held by the Borough Secretary's department.

David Kennedy
Chief Executive and Local Returning Officer
Ext 7726