Review of Polling Districts and Places

The Returning Officer published his proposals for future Polling Districts and Polling Places on 23 September 2011. The initial proposals, ward maps and comments can be viewed at
http://www.derby.gov.uk/CouncilGovernmentDemocracy/Elections/Polling+Review.htm

The consultation period for the review ended on Friday 28 October 2011.

Since the Returning Officer's proposals were originally published there have been a number of comments in respect of the proposals. These were responded to and published on 18 October 2011 and are available to view at
http://www.derby.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/01A9F3AE-64E1-456A-B675-5D733044E91E/0/ReviewofPollingDistrictsExtraInfo_v2.pdf

A number of further comments were received from stakeholders between 6 and 28 October 2011. These are itemised below, together with comments of the Returning Officer in each case.

Final recommendations will be put to Full Council on 23 November 2011 for final approval.

Allestree Ward

Comment 1, 23 October 2011

The change proposed at Allestree cannot go ahead. We cannot go to Woodlands Church and must stay put at Portway School

All three Allestree members oppose any change as proposed

Comment 2, 23 October 2011

The church on Woodlands Road is quite unsuitable as a polling station due to inadequate parking, traffic safety and nuisance to residents as previously stated. Allestree police have already identified problems in this area.

Comment 3, 24 October 2011

Since Woodlands Chapel has been operating there have been regular requests for this to become a polling station. These proposals have always been rejected because of inadequate parking facilities, conflict with school traffic at starting and finishing times, traffic congestion, pupils, parents and residents safety.

As none of these problems have been addressed please keep the polling station at Portway Junior School where the above issues do not apply.

Returning Officer Comments regarding the 3 comments above

On 31 October I visited Portway Junior School and spoke with the head teacher regarding possible options available for polling at the school. The structural survey report on the Annex adjacent to the school has determined that the building is unsuitable due it's limitation of 15 adults in a classroom at any one time.

The Scope building accessibility report of 2010 also regards the ramp into the Annex building as unsuitable for wheelchair users. Taking both of these points into account, I have to conclude that it is not suitable for polling to take place using the Annex building.

I have spoken to the Head Teacher and there are no other suitable rooms available within the school that could be used for polling purposes and allow the school to remain open on polling day, as it has in the past. His view is that if the school were to close on polling day this would have an adverse effect on the preparation for SATS tests that are taking place near to that time.

The Head Teacher has suggested that if the Woodlands Evangelical Church were to be used for polling that he would be able to allow parking at the school in either the small car park opposite the church or the car park in front of the Annex building. However, this arrangement would potentially be confusing for voters and would also result in voters having to cross Woodlands Road to vote at the church.

In exploring potential alternatives to the use of the school for polling, I have visited the Woodlands Hotel on Blenheim Parade. The venue has an extremely large car park and is also fully accessible for disabled voters. If it were to be used for polling, the lounge room to the right of the main entrance would be suitable for polling purposes. The disabled access is to the rear of this room by use of a permanent ramp. The polling room is of adequate size and the venue would be available for scheduled and unscheduled elections.

It appears from previous comments that the main concerns over the suitability of Woodlands Evangelical Church are related to insufficient parking and traffic management issues, especially at school starting and finishing times. I recommend that the proposals should be changed and that the Woodlands Hotel is used for polling in preference to the Woodlands Evangelical Church which should alleviate these problems.

Littleover Ward

Comment 1, Friday 28 October 2011

'Dividing Havenbaulk and Heatherton into three, rather than just one polling district seems excessive, especially when construction of the proposed new housing in this area has not even started.'

Schools (and parents /careers) rarely appreciate the use of schools as polling stations, and there is no reason that Griffe field Primary should differ in this.

We are therefore proposing that the Heatherton and Havenbaulk area is divided into two polling districts., using Haven Church and Heatherton Community Centre as their respective polling stations.

The suggested division of the area does not take into account exact electoral numbers, but have been defined considering convenient walking and driving routes.

Another minor change for consistency: Include all the houses (even numbers) on Manor Road in LT2 rather than the first few in LT1, together with the potential move of Swanmore Road and the associated streets from LT4 to LT3

Having discussed these comments with a member of the Electoral Services team I understand that these suggestions are unlikely to meet the electoral numbers that are being treated as required rather than advisory.

Returning Officer Comments

In reviewing the Littleover ward polling districts we have taken into account guidance from the Electoral Commission on voter numbers to be allocated to each polling station. The Electoral Commission will assess whether we are meeting the performance standards in this area on an annual basis.

We are required to consider proposals where there are likely to be new housing developments scheduled to occur during the 4 year period covered by this review. This has resulted in the Heatherton and Havenbaulk areas being divided into 3 polling districts and also takes account of the Electoral Commissions requirements.

In relation to the comments regarding the use of Griffe Field Primary School in LT4, we are proposing to use the family room at school, which is self contained and does not disrupt the normal operation of the main school building. This proposal should allow the main school to remain open on polling day.

We have considered the use of Heatherton Community Centre, but consider that the size of Haven Christian Centre would allow 2 polling stations (LT3 and LT5) to operate effectively in the one building which would save additional hire charges being incurred. As a result of visiting the LT3 polling district, there does not appear to be a suitable alternative venue within the polling district.

In relation to the suggested minor changes to include all the houses (even numbers) on Manor Road in LT2 rather than the first few in LT1 and the potential move of Swanmore Road and the associated streets from LT4 to LT3, these have been incorporated into my recommendations.

Mickleover Ward

Comment 1, Thursday 13 October 2011

We would like to offer support for the increase in the number of polling stations. We feel that the car parking available at MV1The Great Northern, Station Road, makes this venue particularly suitable.

For pedestrians however the only negative point is the poor pavement over the old railway bridge.

Returning Officer Comments

The positive comments in relation to the proposed use of the Great Northern Public House are welcomed. I have passed your comment regarding the pavement over the old railway bridge to our Highways team for further consideration.

Comment 2, Friday 21 October 2011

As Clerk to the Governing Body of Mickleover Primary School I have been asked to write and convey the Governors' concerns on the choice of Mickleover Primary as a polling station. Due to the nature of the site it would almost certainly mean that the school would have to close on polling days. This would be seriously detrimental to the education of the children and in particular Year 6 at a crucial time in the year before their SATs tests. The Governors understand that a proposal has been made to use Mickleover Community Pavilion instead of the school which seems to them a far more suitable choice.

Returning Officer Comments

As a result of the comments received at an earlier stage in the review process I am proposing a change of polling venue from Mickleover Primary School to the Mickleover Community Pavilion on Vicarage Road. This is a suitable alternative to the school and will allow the school to operate as normal on polling day.

Comment 3, Thursday 27 October 2011

MV1

The proposed Polling Station at Great Northern Public House is a very long walk from the majority of the polling area, and is a particularly long walk from the end of Sandown Ave. This is an area that has traditionally walked to vote at Silverhill School, often in the evening. I think that this long walk could discourage voting for the majority of the polling district.
There is no footpath on the East of Station Road from the end of Onslow Rd to the polling Station at the Great Northern; this means that anyone who chooses to walk from

the Onslow Road area would need to cross this busy road twice. This would discourage walking voters.
If we are seeking a new polling station, has the Honeycomb public house on Ladybank Road been considered? Would any of the premises in the row of shops be suitable for a polling station - there is a coffee shop and couple of restaurants?
The boundary shown on Mill Lane - is this behind the houses so they are all in MV1?
Can the short length of Station Road between MV1 and MV4 go along the back gardens rather than the middle of the road?

MV2

As this area will grow in voter size due to the Varsity development I would suggest they use the church hall not the annex, as it is bigger. MV3 can use the annex as the area is unlikely to change in size.
Can the boundary between MV3 and MV2 on Devonshire Drive go behind back gardens rather than the middle of the road as these voters have all gone to the same polling station for years and it does not seem right to use the road as a barrier! If they all voted in MV3 it would make more sense at the north end to move the boundary to the East of Devonshire Drive, along the school boundary to the top cul-de-sac then across the North end of Clifton and join up with existing line behind Buxton - this puts all East Ave and Devonshire in one polling district.
Uttoxeter Road - move boundary with MV5 so that the brook is used i.e. put all Stanage Green area in MV2 as, there is a walking route via “gitties” linking Uttoxeter Road with Bristol Drive and then Bath Road then onto Western Road and up to Devonshire Drive (route used to walk to school at Ravensdale) or by car via Arundel Avenue so either way access is probably nearer than voting at the Church Centre.

MV3

Uttoxeter Road - move boundary to back gardens on North side including Alma Heights so they vote at MV5 as it is nearer to walk to the polling Station.
Move Devonshire Drive proposed boundary so all in MV3 (see above).
Station Road is currently in 4 different polling districts. If the boundary ran along back gardens on the West then almost the entire road would be in MV3. I would include Windsor, Hope Ave and New Orchard Place in MV3 as it is easy to walk to Devonshire Drive via Moorland Road and Chestnut to access polling station.

MV4

Hilton Close should be voting at the Pavilion as it is a flatter walk and many of the residents are elderly so move to MV4. The “gitty” from the church next to the bungalow no 19 Vicarage (I think that’s the number) could form a natural boundary then up the back of Hilton and across to Station Rd rear gardens (see above) so that all Park Road moves to vote at the Pavilion. Vicarage Court should also go to MV4 as it is nearer.

MV5

Chantry Close, Cromer Close, Sedgefield Green, Alverton Close and Cumbria Walk move to MV5 as the "gitty" off Chantry Close links directly to the Church Centre so is very near to walk if driving easy access from Catterick via Ladybank. I would put the boundary along the backs of south side of Catterick Drive so all Catterick votes in MV4. The boundary on Ladybank Road with MV4 moves so that all this section of the road votes at MV5 boundary cuts straight across Ladybank Road at end of Catterick by wood.

Returning Officer Comments

MV1

In considering the location of polling facilities in the MV1 polling district, I have taken account of concerns raised over a number of years from Silverhill School over the use of that venue as a polling station. I have also explored whether there are any other suitable venues within the polling district. A visit has been made to explore the feasibility of using the Honeycomb Public House on Ladybank Road as a potential polling venue, but this is unsuitable due to accessibility issues from the car park to the venue and issues with the interior of the premises being on multiple levels. The premises in the row of shops on Ladybank Road fall outside of the boundary of the MV1 polling district. I conclude that there are no other suitable alternative venues within the MV1 polling district and to maintain the proposal for polling to take place at the Great Northern Public House.

I have considered the area relating to Sandown Avenue and this area has now been included in the MV4 polling district, polling at Mickleover Community Pavillion.

I can confirm all voters in Mill Lane will be voting in the MV1 polling district and that the short length of Station Road between MV1 and MV4 has been moved into the MV4 polling district.

MV2

Due to the voter numbers within the re-drawn polling districts I accept the proposal that MV2 polling district should poll at St John's Church Hall and MV3 polling district should poll at the Annex.

The comments relating to boundary changes between MV2 and MV3 on Devonshire Drive are accepted.

I have considered the comments in relation to the Stanage Green area moving to MV2. However, as we need to maintain the potential polling district numbers within the Electoral Commission guidelines, these properties will remain in the MV5 polling district.

MV3

Comments in relation to the proposals for the MV3 polling district are accepted and the changes will be reflected in the revised ward maps.

MV4

Comments in relation to the proposals for the MV4 polling district are accepted and the changes will be reflected in the revised ward maps, however, the properties in Hilton Close will remain part of the MV5 polling district as per the original proposal.

MV5

Remaining comments in relation to the proposals for the MV3 polling district are accepted and the changes will be reflected in the revised ward maps.

Comment 4, Friday 28 October 2011

The two St John's Church venues are drawing voters towards them who are actually closer to the alternative venues, or which are likely to be more convenient. We would therefore suggest returning to four polling districts. Voter numbers from the development on the University side by the A38 will be growing over the next yearor so, and we are suggesting some movement of other polling district boundaries to accommodate these numbers.

To avoid using Mickleover Primary School, the nearby Mickleover Pavillion should be considered for the polling station for MV4

Returning Officer Comments

The above comments are similar in nature those in comment 3 and my response is the same. The use of Mickleover Pavillion is recommended in preference to Mickleover Primary School.

General Comments

Comment 1, received 20 October 2011

Whilst in general supportive of the reasons behind the proposed changes, now is not the time to proceed with increasing the number of Polling Districts.
The 10 additional districts proposed will significantly increase the costs of the election in 2014. We have had concerns in the past about the ability to obtain high quality returning officers to staff polling stations and this proposal will exacerbate this problem.

The changes of venue for accessibility reasons are supported as is the change of venue for Normanton. For the reasons stated above I object to increasing the number of Polling Districts at this time.

Returning Officer Comments

To comply with Electoral Commission guidance we now have to ensure that we have no more than 2,500 electors polling at a polling station. To comply with this (we will be assessed through Electoral Commission Performance Standards as to whether we are complying with their guidance) we have had to create additional polling districts. The Electoral Commission also state that when conducting a review we have to where possible ensure that a polling station is within the polling district. This is why we have created the additional polling districts.

We have considered the issue of budgets and have taken into account the potential additional costs of polling stations and staff, which will apply at the local elections in 2013 also. We have where possible in the recommendations suggested alternative polling stations to those that consistently charge a high rent for polling day such as moving from the Queens Hall on London Road to The Stuart and moving from the Enterprise Centre to St Stephens Church in Sinfin. We will also have reduced costs for example in Mickleover by not using Silverhill as we normally provide barriers to the school on polling day, so this is another saving.

At the referendum this year we were directed by the Counting Officer that a polling station can have no more than 2500 electors. To do this we had to spilt a number of polling places into 2 polling stations. We had to rent partitions to split the rooms and appointed additional staff for these venues. Having separate venues will be cheaper than hiring or purchasing these partitions. The number of Presiding Officers that we will need under the proposals in the review will be no more than we appointed this year, so hopefully we won't have a problem appointing them for next year and obviously we will continue to provide comprehensive training to all polling station staff.

I hope this explains why we have made the recommendations in the report and that we do share your concerns over the increasing cost of running elections. I hope you can also see that where possible we have tried to minimise any increase in costs.

Comments regarding changes of venue for accessibility reasons and support for the change of polling venue in Normanton are appreciated.