

Report sponsor: Director of Legal, Procurement
and Democratic Services
Report author: Elections and Local Land
Charges Manager

Interim Polling Place Review

Purpose

- 1.1 To advise Council of the results of a recent interim review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations and seek approval for the implementation of the proposed changes.

Recommendation

- 2.1 To approve the proposals for the scheme of polling districts and polling places set out in Appendix 1.

Reasons

- 3.1 Council has a statutory responsibility under the Representation of the People Act 1983 to review our polling districts and polling places.
- 3.2 This interim review is required following a Local Government Boundary Commission review of electoral arrangements for Derby.
- 3.3 This review presents an opportunity to improve voting facilities for our electors and ensure our polling stations are accessible.

Supporting information

- 4.1 The proposals for future polling arrangements in Appendix 1 are based on recommendations made by the (Acting) Returning Officer (ARO) following consultation.
- 4.2 The Electoral Commission recommends that no more than 2,500 electors vote at a single polling station. More than one polling station may be present at a particular polling place, referred to as a 'double' or 'triple' station.

The proposed changes aim to ensure that electorate levels remain within this limit whilst accounting for planned development in the city over the next five years. This has been achieved either by designating new double stations, or by revising polling district boundaries.

- 4.3 The proposed arrangements would be effective from 1 February 2023. Any alterations made to polling district boundaries will be reflected in the revised register of electors published on that date.
- 4.4 The number of polling districts has increased from 87 to 102 due to the requirement that the polling district boundaries be coterminous with both the current and future ward boundaries. Due to an increase in the use of multiple polling stations there is no increase to the number of polling places designated.
- 4.5 The next compulsory review must be started and completed within the 16-month period commencing 1 October 2023. The council may conduct a review of a particular polling district or polling place at any time.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 Public consultation took place between 31 October 2022 and 10 January 2023. All representations received were considered when preparing the proposals in Appendix 1. Responses to the 'Let's Talk Derby' survey are set out in Appendix 4.
- 5.2 A total of 33 survey responses were received. 52% of respondents said they agreed or strongly agreed with the proposals. 9% of respondents said they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposals.
- 5.3 Where feedback was given about specific polling places comments have been included in Appendix 1. In some cases alternative polling places have been proposed as a result of this feedback.
- 5.4 The consultation period was shorter than typically allowed by council policy. This was necessary due to the timetable constraints imposed by the publication of the LGBCE recommendations on 4 October 2022, and the requirement for the Electoral Register to be published with new boundaries for use in matters preliminary to the local elections on 4 May 2023.
- 5.5 Details of the review were sent to councillors, Members of Parliament for local constituencies and local political parties. Documents were published through 'Let's Talk Derby' and on the council's website. Hard copies of the documents and ward maps were made available at the Council House.
- 5.6 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out and is included as Appendix 2.

Other options

- 6.1 Options considered for individual polling districts and polling places are given in Appendix 1.
- 6.2 If a polling place becomes unavailable at short notice before an election the Returning Officer may designate an alternative using delegated powers.

Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 Whilst the number of polling districts has increased, the number of polling places required has not. We do not expect a significant increase in booking fees to be charged as a result of the review.
- 7.2 As a result of the review there will be an increase in the number of staff needed due to the additional number of polling districts. There will be 12 more staff which will cost an additional £3,311. This extra cost will be met from the Conduct of Elections budget.

Legal implications

- 8.1 This review has been conducted in accordance with Schedule A1 of the Representation of The People Act 1983.

Climate implications

- 9.1 The risk of flooding by surface water or rivers was checked for each polling place using the Environment Agency's online tool. Flood risk was elevated above 'low' at the following polling places:
 - All Nations for Christ Christian Fellowship
 - Chester Green Community Centre
 - Sunny Hill Community Centre
 - The Council House

The risk of flooding at polling places is considered in the Returning Officer's risk management plan for each election.

- 9.2 Polling places are situated within walking distance of home for many electors which helps to encourage the use of active travel.
- 9.3 A Climate Impact Assessment was conducted and is included as Appendix 3. No significant net positive or negative climate impact was identified.

Socio-Economic implications

- 10.1 In-person turnout at elections is sensitive to travel time to and ease of accessibility of the polling place. During the course of this review, we have considered both of these factors for each polling district with the aim of maximising participation in elections.
- 10.2 It is recognised that the use of schools as polling stations can cause disruption to the education of young people in Derby, particularly when an unscheduled poll is held. Whilst schools funded by a local authority are available to the (Acting) Returning Officer for use as polling places we have sought to avoid their use unless no suitable alternative is available.

One fewer school is designated under the proposed arrangements compared to the current arrangements. Where schools are used, we give at least 11 months' notice

of scheduled polls to schools so that they may be incorporated into a planned 'inset' day if necessary.

Other significant implications

11.1 No other significant implications were identified.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal	Olu Idowu	9/1/2023
Finance	Janice Hadfield	5/1/2023
Service Director(s)	Emily Feenan	9/1/2023
Report sponsor	Emily Feenan	9/1/2023
Other(s) Report author	Mick Styne	5/1/2023

Background papers:

List of appendices:

Appendix 1: Proposed scheme of polling places and polling districts
Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix 3: Climate Impact Assessment
Appendix 4: Results of 'Let's Talk Derby' Survey