
Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations 2019 – Supporting Information

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 The Returning Officer recently conducted a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations ahead of the scheduled District and Parish elections in May 2019. This review is pursuant to the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.
- 1.2 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England completed a Boundary Review of the district in January 2018. The Boundary Commissions' proposals for West Berkshire were:
 - (i) A reduction in the total number of Councillors from 52 to 43.
 - (ii) A reduction in the total number of wards from 30 to 24.
 - (iii) The boundaries of one ward staying the same.
- 1.3 These proposals will take effect from the May 2019 District/Parish Council Elections.
- 1.4 Section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires Local Authorities to carry out and complete reviews of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Polling Stations) every five years. However, this review is being undertaken having regard to the outcome of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's boundary review of the district.
- 1.5 A Polling Place is provided for electors living within each polling district. The changes to wards mean that the Council is required to carry out a review of the Polling Districts and Polling Places within the District, pursuant to Section 18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983.
- 1.6 A Polling Place for a Polling District is expected to be an area in that district, except where special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the Polling District. Any Polling District is expected to be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the Polling District how they will be able to reach the Polling Place.
- 1.7 A Public Notice was posted on to the Council's website and consultation letters were sent to all Local members of Parliament and West Berkshire Councillors and relevant Disability organisations via the Disability Forum. Feedback received from Polling Station staff in the past has also been used to help shape this review and the preliminary proposals set out in this document.
- 1.8 The consultation was open for four weeks starting on 14 January 2019 and ending on 11 February 2019.

- 1.9 The aim of the review was to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. The Council is required to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the Polling Places are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a Polling Place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.
- 1.10 The choice of Polling Places is very often a balance between the quality (access, facilities etc) of a building and the distance between the residents and that building compared to other potential options for Polling Places. Local Authorities are expected to follow a reasonable methodology in arriving at their choice of Polling Place.
- 1.11 There is no fixed rule on how this review should have been undertaken. However, we have adopted a methodology which does not seek to use schools for Polling Places because of the potential impact of the educational attainment of young people and also because of the health and safety issues associated with an increase in traffic caused by electors attending the school to vote.
- 1.12 The review covered each of the new 24 wards and acknowledged the electorate in each (2017 and 2023) and proposes Polling Places in each area. In all but a few instances it is proposed that the current Polling Places be retained. The changes that were proposed related to a few Polling Stations. The consultation has also raised a small number of other adjustments which need to be made to Polling Districts.

2. Consultation Feedback

- 2.1 Out of the 46 respondents who answered this question, only 42 gave their views on the proposed changes. Respondents could identify themselves in more than one category:

- 41 residents of West Berkshire
- 7 employees of West Berkshire Council
- 6 Parish/Town Councillors – Two respondents gave the name of the council they represent: Shaw-Cum-Donnington and Thatcham Town Council
- 3 respondents gave the name of the organisation they represented Disability Officer (Newbury Constituency Labour Party), a vergers at St. Mary's Church, Speen and an election officer and agent for West Berkshire Green Party

Newbury Greenham and Newbury Wash Common Wards - Polling Station

- 2.2 Of the 42 respondents, 19 had no opinion on this proposal. Of the remaining 23, 87% responded that they considered Newbury Rugby Club to be suitable location. Based on the feedback it is proposed to use Newbury Rugby Club as a Polling Station for the Newbury Greenham and Newbury Wash Common Wards.

East Ilsley Parish (Ridgeway Ward) - Polling Station

- 2.3 The previous Polling Station (Baptist Church) is no longer available for use as a Polling Station so the consultation sought suggestions from the Parish Council and local community on suitable alternative. The following suggestions were received:

- (i) The Swan Pub
- (ii) The Catholic Church or the School
- (iii) Mobile Unit

2.4 The Council visited both the Swan Public House (separate room) and the Catholic Church and is recommending that the Swan Public House be used because of its accessibility and parking provision. The Catholic Church was deemed to have poor access and limited parking.

Newbury Greenham Ward - Polling Station

2.5 The previous Polling Station located at the Newbury Racecourse was the Staff Welfare Building which is no longer available. The Council received the following suggestions for new venues:

- (i) Newbury Racecourse Owner's Club
- (ii) Nuffield Gym
- (iii) Greenham Community Centre
- (iv) Greenham Control Tower

2.6 The Council has reviewed all of the above suggestions and proposes to use the Owner's Club at the Newbury Racecourse because of its location and accessibility.

2.7 Appendix D is the original consultation document. This has been updated to reflect comments arising from the consultation and also to propose recommendations across a number of the 24 wards.

Additional alterations

2.8 During the course of undertaking this review alterations were highlighted that had been undertaken during mapping of the polling district boundaries following the review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The opportunity has been taken to correct these issues and these are reflected in the recommendations contained in Appendix D.

3. Consultation and Engagement

3.1 The public consultation exercise has helped to identify new Polling Stations for Newbury Greenham and Newbury Wash Common Wards and the Parish of East Ilsley. The opportunity has also been taken to make a number of other minor changes to some Polling Districts all of which have been reflected in Appendix D.

Background Papers: Spreadsheet of individual responses

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council

Wards affected:

This report relates to all wards across the District.

Strategic Aims and Priorities Supported:

The proposals will help achieve the following Council Strategy aim:

X MEC – Become an even more effective Council

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priority:

X MEC1 – Become an even more effective Council

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