

Polling Place & District Review 2018

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Wards affected: All

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

That the feedback from the consultation responses, as set out at appendix E to the report is considered, and the changes to Polling Districts and Polling Places be agreed.

Corporate Implications

Changes to UK Parliamentary polling arrangements are made by Council, following recommendation, either through statutory review or necessity if urgent amendments to polling places are required at short notice.

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Executive Summary

1. The Polling District and Polling Places review commenced within the Wycombe District on 1 October until the 29 October 2018.
2. 13 responses were received ranging from no change to several location changes based on necessity, convenience and fairness of allocation.

Background and Issues

3. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 sets out the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. This means that compulsory reviews must be started and completed within the period of 16 months that starts on 1 October of every fifth year after 1 October 2013.
4. A 'review' is all the steps set out in Schedule A1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983).
5. The statutory responsibility for reviewing Parliamentary polling districts and places rests with Wycombe District Council.
6. It is the Full Council that makes the decisions on any changes to polling districts or polling places.
7. Polling districts and polling places for other elections (not Parliamentary) are not automatically part of the compulsory review. However, as polling districts and polling places for other elections are based on UK Parliamentary polling arrangements, the requirements of any other elections that are held within the local authority area should be taken into consideration as part of the review.

8. The Council must comply with the following legislative requirements regarding the designation of polling districts and polling places:
 - each parish in England is to be a separate polling district, unless special circumstances apply;
 - the Council must designate a polling place for each polling district, unless the size or other circumstances of a polling district are such that the situation of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electors;
 - the polling place must be an area in the district, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the district (for example, if no accessible polling place can be identified in the district); and
 - the polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station.
9. The Council must also comply with the following access requirements. As part of the review, they must:
 - seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and
 - seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.
10. After considering all of the representations, the local authority must decide on the most appropriate polling districts and polling places, which must be approved by the council.
11. The last Polling Places & Polling District Review was undertaken in 2014 and the one before that in 2011/12.

Definitions

12. Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations are defined as follows:

Polling District

13. A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency for the purposes of a UK Parliamentary election.
14. Each parish is to be a separate polling district unless there are special circumstances. This means that a parish or community must not be in a polling district which has a part of either a different parish or community within it, or any unparished part of the local authority area within it, unless special circumstances apply. Those special circumstances could arise if, for example, the parish/community has only a small number of electors and it is not practicable for the parish/community to be its own polling district.
15. When a parish or community is not a separate polling district the special circumstances and the recommendation resulting from these should be clearly set in the review document for the council or relevant committee to consider.

Polling place

16. A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district.
17. Section 18B (4) (e) of the RPA 1983 states 'the polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station'. The Electoral Commission consider that polling places should always be defined more specifically than simply the polling district - for example, by designating the name of the polling place (normally a particular building or area and its environment).

Polling station

18. A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the Local Authority, polling stations are chosen by the Returning Officer appointed for an election.

Consultation

19. As required by the RPA 1983, the Notice of Review (Commencement) was published formally on Monday 1 October 2018 and was displayed at the Council Offices, Queen Victoria Road, Wycombe, HP11 1BB and on the Councils web page at <https://www.wycombe.gov.uk/pages/About-the-council/Elections-and-voting/Polling-district-and-polling-places-reviews.aspx>
20. The web page provided details of the review and included:
 - up to date Parliamentary electorate figures as of September 2018 (Appendix A);
 - local electorate figures as of September 2018 (Appendix B);
 - a list of existing Polling Places and Polling Districts (Appendix C); and
 - electronic maps (jpg) of each polling District.
21. E-mails were sent to District Councillors, Wycombe District Parish Clerks, Party Agents, Parliamentary Acting Returning Officers for Aylesbury, Beaconsfield and Buckingham, Scope and also Wycombe District Council's Access Officer.

Responses

22. The review ended on 30th October with 13 responses received. Two responses were received before the formal consultation commenced however, their comments echo other responses received regarding Chiltern Wood School.

23. Although not received in response to the formal consultation process, additional and relevant responses have been received from our key contacts at existing polling stations. The Electoral Services Team have been forward planning for the 2019 District Election and have received helpful feedback in relation to existing polling stations which have helped inform the review.

Summary of Responses

24. Cllr Matt Knight (Micklefield) – email received 1 October 2018

I would like to propose Micklefield has a second polling district created. This could use the Hicks Farm Rise community room owned by Red Kite at the pensioners bungalows as a polling station. Micklefield traditionally has low turn out and is currently served by just one polling station.

25. Cllr Michael Appleyard – email received 2 October 2018

I have looked at this and have no changes to propose for Bourne End and Wooburns.

26. Parent of child attending Chiltern Wood School – email received 2 October 2018

I'm emailing regarding my sons special educational school being used as a polling station come May.

Chiltern Wood school up in Cressex Verney Avenue has been used as a polling station for many years now and I think this should be reconsidered considering the severe stress and health issues this causes for all the children who attend the school.

I do understand that schools are allowed to be used but surely you could look at other schools in the area which isn't going to have such a severe impact on the children who attend.

I did recently read in the bucks free press about a church that they stopped using due to a nursery being placed there and the affects it was having.

I do hope that you can see the impact that it has not only on the children but the whole family.

27. Cllr Lesley Clarke (Abbey) – email received 3 October 2018

Could the new Community building on the Queen Elizabeth II Playing Field on Shelley Road, formally the Shelley Road playing field, be considered as a polling station?

There is sufficient parking on site and the required facilities for the polling staff.

28. Parent of child attending Chiltern Wood School – email received 4 October 2018

I am a parent of a special needs child who attends Chiltern Wood School.

I would like you to consider not using our school as a polling station as it disrupts their important routines and their education is extremely important to us and them.

I'm sure there must be alternative venues that are not in use.

Every child's education is important.

29. Parent of child attending Chiltern Wood School – email received 4 October 2018

I am emailing to express my concern for my son's school (Chiltern Wood) being held as a polling station. My son, along with many of the students there with additional needs, really struggle with changes to routine and new transitions. A change in routine such as polling day needs to be prepared for well in advance with him, and will likely leave him with anxiety and behavioural outbursts, and can also impact on therapy time he is directly receiving (one which we went to tribunal for and the county is accountable for providing).

I think it makes more sense to move this polling station to an alternative site with mainstream children where a change to their routine will not have as great an impact on their wellbeing or health.

30. Parent of child attending Chiltern Wood School – email received 4 October 2018

We are trying to get the council to stop using Chiltern Wood (Cressex site) as a polling station, due to the impact that this has on our children.

It unsettled our son Exxx.

31. Parent of child attending Chiltern Wood School – email received 5 October 2018

My son attends Chiltern Wood School and is on the Autism spectrum. He is a child who likes routine and struggles when he is not at school due to the learning opportunity and routine it gives him. My son thrives at school and missing even a single day can make a huge impact on his well-being.

As a parent I would strongly request that a special needs school such as Chiltern Wood is not used as a polling station as the closure for the day causes unnecessary anxiety and disruption when there are other schools or even community centres which could be used instead.

32. Secretary at the Clare Foundation – phone call received 17 October 2018

Phone call to advise that the Clare Foundation building has been sold and is being turned into apartments.

33. Letter received 19 October 2018 from Acting Returning Officer at Aylesbury and Buckinghamshire with no concerns with the current arrangement.

34. Philip Dumville – email received 29 October 2018

I am happy with the existing polling places in my patch.

35. Email received 29 October 2018 from Acting Returning Officer at Beaconsfield that overall they had no concerns with the polling districts or polling places.
36. Discussion with Alan Switalski Wycombe District Council Access Officer on 29 October 2018

Alan raised no issues with the current polling stations and confirmed that no feedback had been made to him in the past regarding access into polling stations.

Options

37. Taking on board the comments received and summarised above, the Committee is invited to consider the following options:
 1. Reject all of the recommendations in appendix 'E' to this report and maintain the status quo;
 2. Amend the polling district and polling places arrangements to reflect some or all of the suggestions made; or
 3. Amend the current arrangements as advised in appendix 'E'.
38. A copy of the existing Polling Places and Polling Districts is enclosed at appendix 'C' to the report.

Next Steps

39. The recommendations of the Committee, option 1, 2 or 3 above, will be presented to Full Council for consideration at their next meeting on 10 December 2018.

Background Papers

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013

Schedule A1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)

The Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986

Section 18B (4) (e) of the RPA 1983

www.electoralcommission.org.uk

Appendices

Appendix A - Parliamentary electorate figures as of September 2018

Appendix B - Local electorate figures as of September 2018

Appendix C - A list of existing Polling Places and Polling Districts

Appendix D - Content of e-mail distributed

Appendix E – Summary of recommendations from those consulted

