



# Report to Standards and General Purposes Committee

<b>Date:</b>	<b>24 August 2023</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations</b>
<b>Relevant councillor(s):</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Author/contact officers:</b>	Nick Graham, Service Director, Legal and Democratic Jo Hart, Deputy Electoral Services Manager
<b>Wards affected:</b>	<b>All</b>

## **Recommendation:**

To endorse the proposed timetable for the review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations in Buckinghamshire which the Council and Returning Officer are required to undertake.

## **1. Reason for decision:**

- 1.1 The Council and Returning Officer are required to undertake a compulsory review of the polling districts, polling places and polling stations within Buckinghamshire between October 2023 and January 2025. There is an ongoing duty to keep these under review and a review may be carried out at any other time. It is proposed that the review in Buckinghamshire commences on 2 October 2023 with the publication of notice and concludes on 1 February 2024 with publication of the revised register. This will enable any necessary changes to be made to polling districts so that they are ready to implement the outcome of the electoral review of Buckinghamshire Council's wards for May 2025 and the review of Parliamentary constituencies following Parliamentary approval. There may also be changes to some polling stations due to changes to the availability of premises.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places.

Compulsory reviews must be started and completed within the period of 16 months that starts on 1 October every fifth year after October 2013. This means that the next review in Buckinghamshire must commence between October 2023 and January 2025. It is proposed that the review commences on 2 October 2023 and concludes on 1 February 2024. This timescale will enable any consequential changes to polling districts, polling places and polling stations arising from the parliamentary and local government boundary reviews to be ready in time from when new boundaries take effect.

2.2 The Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) has been undertaking a review of unitary wards within Buckinghamshire Council and their [final report](#) was published on 30 May 2023. The polling district review provides an opportunity to identify consequential changes to polling districts, polling places or polling stations arising from the final report's recommendations. The Council's new wards take effect May 2025 when the next scheduled local elections will be held. Any by elections held between now and May 2025 will use the current wards. Any changes to polling districts arising from the polling district review will need to be compatible with both the current and new unitary wards.

2.3 A Parliamentary Boundary Review has also been undertaken by the Boundary Commission for England. The Committee received a report on the [Parliamentary Boundary Review on 17 November 2022](#). The Commission's final recommendations have been published and are available to view online (links below). The Government will now need to draft an Order containing the recommendations of all four Parliamentary Boundary Commissions: once that draft Order is approved by the Privy Council (no later than November 2023), the new constituencies will be used for the next General election following that date (for any by-election that may take place beforehand, existing constituencies are used).

Final report:

<https://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/2023-review/>

Interactive

map:

<https://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/interactive-map/>

2.4 Due to the above boundary reviews, the polling district review will commence on 2 October 2023. The proposed timetable would also mean that the polling district review concludes, and any changes to polling districts would then take effect from 1 February 2024. Any changes to polling districts as part of this polling district review will need to be compatible with the current and new unitary wards, and consequential changes to some parish wards (which take effect May 2025), and the new Parliamentary constituencies once those take effect (no later than November 2023). The outcome of the polling district review will also mean that changes to some polling

stations, required for example due to changes to venue availability ect, can take effect ready for the next scheduled Police and Crime Commissioner election on 3 May 2024.

- 2.5 Polling districts are made up from a geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency for the purposes of a UK Parliamentary election. For consistency the same polling districts are used for both local government and national elections. A polling place is the building or area in which a poll takes place and will be selected by the Returning Officer. The polling station is the actual room or building where the poll takes place.
- 2.6 This polling district review does not change the boundaries of unitary wards, parishes or parliamentary constituencies which must be dealt with through separate processes.
- 2.7 The Council currently has 366 polling stations and 309 polling districts. Most polling districts, polling places and polling stations will remain as they are now. Changes to polling district boundaries will only need to be made where they are no longer co-terminus with the new unitary ward or parish ward (where amended) and parliamentary constituency boundaries. Some polling places may need to change to take account of changes to venue availability, for example where new community buildings have been built or where previous venues are no longer available. New venues will be surveyed and assessed for their suitability.

### **3. Next steps and review**

- 3.1 The first step is to give notice of the review and invite representations on proposals. All Members, Town and Parish Councils, political parties and residents of Buckinghamshire Council will be given the opportunity to comment and make representations on the proposals. Views from residents with disabilities and local access groups will also be sought. Responses will be considered by the Committee on 18 January 2024.
- 3.2 On completion of the review, reasons for the decisions will be published. A copy of the proposed timetable is shown below detailing the schedule of work and commencement of the review on 2 October 2023. The final proposals will be considered by the Committee on 18 January 2024 and will take effect on publication of the revised register on 1 February 2024.

<b>Stage</b>	<b>What happens</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Buckinghamshire Council Electoral Review concludes			30 May 2023
UK Parliamentary constituency proposals published	final report and recommendations to Parliament by 1 July 2023	The Government to prepare an order to implement the new constituencies for the whole UK. This should be provided to the Privy Council for approval within four months of the Government receiving the last report of the four Parliamentary Boundary Commissions for the UK. The new constituencies will then take effect at the next general election thereafter.	1 July 2023
Report to Standards & General Purposes Committee	Timetable & process noted	Standards & General Purposes Committee	24 August 2023
Proposals drafted & notice prepared			August - September 2023
Publication of notice and commencement of the review	Start of public consultation period. Stakeholders contacted via email. Web page published.	No earlier than 1 October 2023	2 October 2023



<b>Stage</b>	<b>What happens</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Publication of the (Acting) Returning Officer's comments and proposals		Within 30 days of receipt of ARO's comments	6 November 2023
Public consultation period closes		9 weeks	4 December 2023
Draft Standards & General Purposes Committee report	Review consultation responses and draft recommendations for Standards & General Purposes Committee		December 2023
Standards & General Purposes Committee	Review consultation responses and agree recommendations on revised polling districts and polling places and that authority be delegated to the RO to make temporary changes, if required.		18 January 2024
Publication of the revised register – conclusion of the review	Register publication on 1 February		1 February 2024