



Report to Standards and General Purposes Committee

Date:	18 January 2024
Title:	Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations
Relevant councillor(s):	All
Author/contact officers:	Nick Graham, Service Director, Legal and Democratic Mat Bloxham, Electoral Services Manager
Wards affected:	All

Recommendations:

- 1) That the Electoral Registration Officer is authorised to take the necessary measures to give effect to any new or amended polling districts and polling places (Appendix 5), or as amended, ensuring that the register reflects existing and new boundaries, until the boundaries are fully in force.
- 2) That power to designate temporary polling places in accordance with section 18 and 18B of the Representation of the People Act 1983 is delegated to the Electoral Registration Officer/Returning Officer subject to the Chairman of the Standards and General Purposes Committee and relevant ward Members being informed.

1. Reason for decision:

- 1.1 The Council was required to undertake a compulsory review of the polling districts, polling places and polling stations within Buckinghamshire. The review enables necessary changes to be made to polling districts arising from the electoral review of Buckinghamshire Council's wards for May 2025 and the review of Parliamentary constituencies. The review also identified changes to some polling places due to changes to the availability of premises.
- 1.2 A power to designate temporary polling places is required because sometimes when a poll is called designated polling places are not always available and an alternative

polling place must be found, often at short notice, to avoid delays to the printing and despatch of poll cards. For example, a UK Parliamentary election can be called with 25 days' notice which leaves only a couple of days to book 366 polling stations, identify and visit suitable alternative venues, and send poll card data to be printed for 421,000 electors. Similar situations occur for unscheduled polls, such as by elections or neighbourhood planning referendums, which continue to be held regularly within Buckinghamshire.

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 meant that the next review in Buckinghamshire had to commence between October 2023 and January 2025.
- 2.2 As previously agreed by the Committee, [at the meeting held on 7 August 2023](#), the review in Buckinghamshire commenced on 2 October and the public consultation closed on 4 December 2023. Stakeholders, including the public, Councillors, Parish Councils, election agents and local groups with particular expertise in accessibility, were contacted and invited to comment on the proposed polling districts and polling places. The full responses to the consultation are attached in Appendix 2.
- 2.3 The Acting Returning Officers were also consulted on the proposals and their comments were published in the consultation (also in Appendix 2).
- 2.4 The timetable for the review is attached as Appendix 1 and enables 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. The availability of polling places can change over time which means that alternative suitable venues need to be identified to ensure electors can continue to be able to vote in person.
- 2.5 The Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) undertook 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. All proposed changes to polling districts arising from the polling district review are compatible with both the current and new unitary wards.

2.6 A Parliamentary Boundary Review was undertaken by the Boundary Commission for England. The Committee received a report on the [Parliamentary Boundary Review on 17 November 2022](#). The Government has now made an Order bringing into effect the Commission's final recommendations (links below). This means the next UK Parliamentary election will use the new constituencies. A UK Parliamentary election must be held before 28 January 2025 and can be called at any time. Buckinghamshire Council will administer the Aylesbury, Beaconsfield, Chesham and Amersham, Mid Buckinghamshire and Wycombe Parliamentary Constituencies. The Council will also support Milton Keynes City Council in administering the cross border constituency of Buckingham and Bletchley which Milton Keynes City Council will have overall responsibility for. Both Councils will work closely with one another to administer this cross border constituency.

Final report:

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

Interactive map:

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

- 2.7 Polling districts are 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. The Council determines polling districts during a polling district review.
- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 This polling district review does not change the boundaries of unitary wards, parishes or parliamentary constituencies which are dealt with through separate processes.
- 2.10 The Council currently has 366 polling stations and 309 polling districts. Most polling districts, polling places and polling stations are recommended to remain as they are now. Changes to polling districts boundaries were proposed where they would no longer match the new unitary ward or parish ward (where amended) and parliamentary constituency boundaries. There were proposed changes to some polling places arising from changes to venue availability.
- 2.11 The full responses received during the consultation are in Appendix 2.
- 2.12 Some of the proposals received only positive consultation feedback or no feedback. These are in Appendix 3.
- 2.13 Other proposals received feedback identifying alternative options. These are in Appendix 4 which sets out where further changes to some of the proposed polling

districts and polling places are recommended, having regard to the consultation responses received and circumstances in each location.

3. Next steps and review

3.1 Following the Committee's decision on future polling districts and polling places, the following documents will be published, and the revised register will be published on 1 February 2024. The new unitary wards, and consequential changes to parishes, will take effect at the next scheduled local elections on 1 May 2025.

- all correspondence sent to an (A)RO in connection with the review
- all correspondence sent to any person whom the authority thinks has particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability
- all representations made by any person in connection with the review
- the minutes of any meeting held by the council to consider any revision to the designation of polling districts or polling places within its area as a result of the review
- details of the designation of polling districts and polling places within the local authority area as a result of the review
- details of the places where the results of the review have been published

4. Appendices

- Appendix 1: Timetable
- Appendix 2: Consultation responses
- Appendix 3: Proposed changes to polling places that received positive support or no feedback
- Appendix 4: Proposed changes to polling places that received feedback identifying other options
- Appendix 5: Full list of proposed polling districts and polling places (word)