



<b>Full Council</b>	<b>Tuesday, 24 September 2019</b>	<b>Matter for Information and Decision</b>
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**Report Title:**
**Review of Polling Districts and  
Polling Places (September 2019)**
**Report Author(s):**
**Steve Tucker (Democratic & Electoral Services Manager)**

<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	To advise the Council on the final arrangements being proposed by the (Acting) Returning Officer for the Harborough Constituency in respect of the polling districts and polling places to be used at all relevant future elections and referendums that take place within the Borough.
<b>Report Summary:</b>	<p>It is proposed that the existing polling arrangements for the Borough of Oadby and Wigston should be retained, with the exception of polling districts 'M' (All Saints) and 'Q' (South Wigston) where external factors have made venue changes necessary.</p> <p>The next scheduled election to take place within the Borough is the Leicestershire Police and Crime Commissioner election on Thursday 7 May 2020. Any changes to the existing polling arrangements agreed by the Council will be implemented in time for this election.</p>
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	<b>That Council approves the revised polling district and polling place arrangements as proposed by the (Acting) Returning Officer ( as set out at Appendix 2 to this report).</b>
<b>Senior Leadership, Head of Service, Manager, Officer and Other Contact(s):</b>	<p>Anne Court (Chief Executive / Returning Officer) (0116) 257 2602 <a href="mailto:anne.court1@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">anne.court1@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a></p> <p>David Gill (Head of Law &amp; Democracy / Monitoring Officer) (0116) 257 2626 <a href="mailto:david.gill@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">david.gill@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Steve Tucker (Democratic &amp; Electoral Services Manager) (0116) 257 2605 <a href="mailto:steven.tucker@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">steven.tucker@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>Corporate Objectives:</b>	Providing Excellent Services (CO3)
<b>Vision and Values:</b>	Customer Focus (V5)
<b>Report Implications:-</b>	
Legal:	The implications are as set out at paragraph 7 of this report.
Financial:	The implications are as set out at paragraph 6 of this report.
Corporate Risk Management:	Regulatory Governance (CR6)
Equalities and Equalities	The legislation governing this review requires that representations are

Assessment (EA):	sought from persons who are considered to have an expertise in access for persons with different forms of disability. In order to fulfil this requirement, representations were sought from various local organisations including Age UK, Scope and Vista. EA not applicable
Human Rights:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Health and Safety:	There are no implications arising from this report.
<b>Statutory Officers' Comments:-</b>	
Head of Paid Service:	The report is satisfactory.
Chief Finance Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Monitoring Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
<b>Consultees:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Paragraph 3 of the report.</li> </ul>
<b>Background Papers:</b>	<a href="#">Guidance on the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places</a> <a href="#">The Electoral Commission</a>
<b>Appendices:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Returning Officer's Proposals (For Consultation)</li> <li>2. Returning Officer's Final Proposals</li> </ol>

## 1. Background Information

- 1.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 amended the Representation of the People Act 1983 by including a new provision altering the timing of compulsory reviews of Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The change meant that all local authorities have a duty to complete a compulsory review of their polling districts and polling places every five years. The aim of this was to reflect the move to fixed-term Parliaments and to ensure that all polling places had been reviewed in time for a Parliamentary election.
- 1.2 Whilst the legislative changes outlined at 1.1 above were aimed to coincide with the Parliamentary election originally scheduled for May 2020, this is now out of sync due to the snap Parliamentary election held in June 2017.
- 1.3 The Council's polling districts and polling places were last compulsorily reviewed in 2013. Once a compulsory review is completed, subsequent 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. An optional interim review was carried out in July 2018 in preparation for the May 2019 Borough Council elections, however this did not replace the need for a further statutory review to be conducted between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive). That said, on the basis that the July 2018 interim review considered and addressed the long-term suitability of polling arrangements appropriately at that time, the proposals arising from the statutory review are minimal.
- 1.4 The current polling arrangements within the Borough are predominantly satisfactory and have been shown at numerous elections conducted in recent years to be practicable given the circumstances that prevail within the areas that they serve. The approach throughout this review has been to only propose changes where a clear conclusion has been reached that the new arrangements will:
  - Better serve the affected electors by offering superior polling facilities, accessibility

- and/or location in comparison with existing arrangements; and/or
- Reduce inconvenience caused by polling day arrangements for local residents without any substantive detrimental effect upon the voting arrangements for affected electors.

## 2. Terminology

- 2.1 **Polling District:** The area created by the division of a constituency, ward or European Parliamentary electoral region into smaller parts, within which a polling place can be determined, which is convenient to electors. In Oadby & Wigston, each Borough ward is divided into a number of polling districts which each have an alphabetical code running from 'A' to 'S', based on the ward in which they are located.
- 2.2 **Polling Place:** 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.
- 2.3 **Polling Station:** The room or area within the polling place where voting takes place.
- 2.4 It should be noted that the terms 'polling place' and 'polling station' are often used interchangeably and most people consider the polling place (such as a community centre) to be the polling station. However, it is possible to have more than one polling station per polling place (i.e. a double polling station) and this is the case in several polling districts in Oadby & Wigston with a large number of electors.

## 3. Consultation and Engagement

- 3.1 Public notice of the review, which invited representations to be made regarding the existing polling arrangements within the Borough, was published and displayed at the Station Road Council Offices and Bell Street Customer Service Centre on 24 July 2019. In addition, a copy of the review notice was placed on the Council's website and electronic copies were sent to:
- All 26 Oadby & Wigston Borough Councillors (including the 6 Leicestershire County Councillors representing the Oadby & Wigston County Divisions);
  - The Member of Parliament for the Harborough constituency;
  - The 5 MEPs serving the East Midlands Region;
  - Political Parties with known contact details operating within the Harborough constituency; and
  - Organisations operating within Oadby & Wigston having knowledge of, or special expertise in, access for persons with different disabilities.
- 3.2 The initial proposals of the (Acting) Returning Officer (as set out in **Appendix 1** to this report) were received on 23 July 2019 and had to be published within 30 days of receipt. The proposals were published at the Council Offices, the Customer Service Centre and on the Council's website on 24 July 2019.
- 3.3 The only revisions proposed by the Returning Officer to the existing arrangements were:
- **Polling District 'M' (Wigston All Saints)** – Relocation of the designated polling place from Horsewell Lane Pavilion (now demolished) to the adjacent, recently completed Thythorn Hill Community & Sports Centre; and
  - **Polling District 'Q' (South Wigston)** – After the temporary designation of St Mary's Parish Church Hall, Countesthorpe Road for the May 2019 elections, revert back to the designation of Bassett Community Centre, Bassett Street, following its return to use.
- 3.4 No formal written representations either in support or against the Returning Officer's proposals were received during the consultation period. A verbal representation was

received from Age UK, asking the Returning Officer to consider using its Hawthorn Centre facility on Paddock Street, Wigston instead of, or in addition to, The Elms and Ex-Services Social Club. Whilst there have been no reported issues from staff or voters in relation to The Elms to suggest that a change of venue is desirable, it is noted that the facility on Paddock Street provides a viable backup option in the event of The Elms being unavailable at any particular election.

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1 Following the review, it is submitted to Council that the needs of affected electors will be best met at future elections and referendums within the Borough by adopting the proposed changes to polling arrangements detailed within **Appendix 2**.

#### **5. Implementation**

- 5.1 The polling districts and polling places as approved by Council will be used for the Leicestershire Police and Crime Commissioner election on Thursday 7 May 2020 and any by-elections or Borough-wide elections/referendums called before the next statutory review of polling districts and polling places takes place.
- 5.2 If any approved polling place becomes unavailable before an election, the polling place can be changed by the Council in accordance with its decision-making arrangements. Under the Council's Constitution, it is a function of Full Council to make decisions concerning electoral wards, therefore any further changes to the arrangements proposed within the report shall be brought back before Council for approval.

#### **6. Financial Implications**

The Council is only responsible for the costs of conducting Borough Council elections, including when held, local by-elections that elect the Borough's own Councillors. At all other elections, all 'actual and necessary' costs, including hire fees for polling venues, are recovered by the Returning Officer from the relevant governing body for that particular election (e.g. Central Government for UK Parliamentary elections).

#### **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1 In carrying out any review of polling arrangements, the local authority must comply with the steps set out in Schedule A1 Representation of the People Act 1983.
- 7.2 By approving the outcomes of this review the Council will be complying with its statutory duty to keep under review its polling districts and polling places as designated under the Representation of the People Act 1983 section 18A-18E (amended by section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013).
- 7.3 Rule 20(1)(a) of The Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales Rules 2006), provides that the Returning Officer may use, free of charge, for the purpose of taking the poll, any room in a school maintained or assisted by the local authority, or in a school in respect of which grants are made out of monies provided by Parliament to the person or body responsible for the management of the school.
- 7.4 Following the conclusion of the local authority's review, certain persons have a right to make representations to the Electoral Commission. There are only two grounds on which a representation may be made. These are if:
- The local authority has failed to meet the reasonable requirements of electors in the constituency; and/or

- The local authority has failed to take sufficient account of accessibility to disabled persons of the polling station(s) within a polling place.

Representations based on any other premise will not be considered.

- 7.5 Provision is contained within Section 18E RPA 1983 to state that no election is to be questioned by reason of any informality relative to polling districts and polling places.