

Cabinet
Council

7th January 2014
14th January 2014

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member (Community Safety and Equalities) – Councillor Townshend

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director, Resources

Ward(s) affected:

All Wards

Title:

Polling District and Polling Place Review - Update

Is this a key decision?

Yes

The proposals contained within this report will impact on all Wards in the City.

Executive Summary:

Section 18C(1) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) places a duty on all UK local authorities to review their parliamentary polling places within 18 months of a Parliamentary Election. The Electoral Commission have advised that the formal review process must take place between 1st October 2013 and 1st February 2015, and no part of the formal review can be carried out before 1st October 2013. In view of this advice, the Panel agreed a timetable and the notice of the review was to be published on 7th October 2013.

The annual audit of electors is currently being conducted with the revised register being published on 17 February 2014. The review needs to be completed in sufficient time to allow the revised register to be published using the revised polling districts, and allowing adequate time to book polling stations for the local and European parliamentary elections in 2014.

The report details a revised polling district and polling place scheme for the City of Coventry.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet is requested to recommend that Council consider and approve the proposed revised polling district and polling place scheme.

The Council is requested to consider and approve the proposed revised polling district and polling place scheme.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1	Draft Revised Polling District and Polling Place Scheme
Appendix 2	Suggested roads/properties to be moved from one polling district to another
Appendix 3	Maps detailing the suggested polling district boundaries with the future proposed polling district names for the 18 wards.
Appendix 4	Responses to the consultation
Appendix 5	Acting Returning Officer's recommendations regarding polling stations together with any comments received from the Ward Councillors

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

Although this report has not been considered elsewhere, the matter has been considered by the Advisory Panel on Electoral Arrangements at a number of their meetings.

Will this report go to Council?

Yes – 14th January 2014

Polling District and Polling Place Review - Update

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 As required under Section 18C(1) of the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council has reviewed its parliamentary polling places.
- 1.2 Section 18B RPA 1983 states the authority must designate the polling places for the polling districts in its area.
- 1.3 Section 25 of Schedule 1 of RPA 1983 states that the Returning Officer must provide a sufficient amount of polling stations, shall allocate electors to those polling stations, and those polling stations shall be in the polling place for that district
- 1.4 The notice of the review was published on 7th October and confirmed there would be a consultation period from the 7th October to 18th November 2013.
- 1.5 Attached at Appendix 1 is the draft revised polling district and polling place scheme it:-
 - confirms the current polling station
 - confirms the current polling place
 - recommends the future polling place for the polling district
 - confirms the current polling district name
 - recommends the future polling districts name – the only names that have been amended are where it has been recommended to delete a polling district, therefore the polling district name is changed for consistency.
 - details suggested changes to polling district boundaries
- 1.6 Attached at Appendix 2 is a report detailing the suggested roads/properties to be moved from one polling district to another.
- 1.7 Attached at Appendix 3 are the suggested polling district boundaries with the future proposed polling district names for all 18 Wards.
- 1.8 Attached at Appendix 4 are the responses received during the consultation period.
- 1.9 Attached at Appendix 5 are the Acting Returning Officer's recommendations regarding polling stations together with any comments received from the Ward Councillors.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 During February and March 2013, all existing polling stations were contacted to check whether or not they were available for future use at elections and to establish if there were any particular issues in relation to the premises. It was noted that four polling stations were no longer available and 18 schools had requested that possible alternative locations be considered so that they were no longer polling stations.
- 2.2 The Electoral Services team contacted 157 alternative premises that were identified by ward members, schools and electoral services to establish if they would be suitable and if they would be willing to allow the returning officer to use them as polling stations.

- 2.3 The Electoral Services Manager met with the Ward Councillors for all 18 Wards and discussed the existing polling stations and polling district boundaries with a view to see if any improvements could be made. Electoral Services had considered ways to reduce the number of portacabins or the change location from schools which close on polling day and where possible alternatives were put to the members at the meetings.
- 2.4 Councillors were given the opportunity to consider these suggestions for alternative polling stations and polling district boundaries and were asked if there were any other suitable buildings which could be used as polling stations in the ward which could be considered. Members were also asked if they had any suggestions of their own on re-drawing existing polling district boundaries.
- 2.5 Ward Councillors received copies of draft suggestions for their wards together with maps detailing possible revised polling district boundaries and alternative polling stations and were asked for their comments.
- 2.6 At the meeting in September the panel agreed the draft polling district and polling place scheme for consultation.
- 2.7 All the information relating to the Polling District and Polling Place Review has been published on the Councils website.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 The electors of Coventry and any person or body with expertise in access for persons with any type of disability were invited to make representations or to comment on the draft scheme to Coventry City Council. These comments are lists in Appendix 4.
- 3.2 Electoral Services have completed site visits for all proposed new polling stations to ensure that they will be suitable for use as polling station locations and reported their findings back to the relevant Ward Councillors.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 If this report is approved the revised polling district and polling place scheme will become effective when the revised register of electors is published on 17 February 2014 as required by the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended).

5. Comments from Executive Director, Resources

5.1 Financial implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

5.2 Legal implications

Section 18C(1) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) places a duty on all UK local authorities to review their parliamentary polling districts and polling places within 18 months of a Parliamentary Election.

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

The Council is legally required to review its polling district and polling place scheme within 18 months of a Parliamentary Election. It needs to consider locations of polling places which provide its electorate with adequate access and facilities in which to cast their vote. In view of this there is no direct link to the Council's key objectives/corporate priorities.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

The key risk associated with this report is around electors not being aware of where they should go to vote if their polling station has changed, this is dealt with by sending poll cards to all electors on the run up to an election.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

There is no impact on the organisation associated with this report.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

When assessing the location of polling places accessibility issues have been included to ensure that all proposed polling stations have full access.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

There are no implications for the environment associated with this report.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

There are no implications for partner organisations associated with this report.

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Members: Phil Townshend	Cabinet Member (Community Safety and Equalities)		5/12/13	17/12/13

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Appendices