**REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2023**

Taking into consideration the Local Government ward boundary changes, effective for the next local government elections in May 2023, a review of polling districts and polling places will be a full exercise for all wards. The review provides the opportunity for the council to respond to feedback from stakeholders on the current arrangements in place for polling stations at the next scheduled Local Government and Police and Crime

Commissioner elections taking place on 2 May 2024.

**Statutory requirements**

Sections 18A to 18E and Schedule A1 – RPA 1983 and the Review of Polling District and Polling Places Regulations 2006 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of polling districts and polling places. A compulsory review must take place between 2 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.

Schedule A1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983 sets out the steps that

authorities must follow in undertaking any review of polling districts and/or polling places.

The authority must:-

* Publish a notice of the review
* Consult the Returning Officer for every parliamentary election held in a constituency that is wholly or partly within its area. The Returning Officer must make representations which must include information as to the location of polling stations (both existing and proposed) within polling places (both existing and proposed).
* Within thirty calendar days of their receipt, the relevant authority is required to publish the Returning Officer’s representations
* Actively seek representations from such persons as it thinks have particular expertise in relation to: access to premises; or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability

On completion of a review, the authority is required to give reasons for its decisions in

respect of the designation of both polling districts and polling places. In addition, the

authority must publish:

* all correspondence sent to a Returning Officer 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 meetings held by the authority where details of the review have been considered;
* details of the actual designations of polling districts and polling places agreed as a result of the review; and
* details of where the results of the review have been published.

**Process for the review**

The Electoral Commission has issued guidance on the practical procedures involved

in conducting a review of polling districts and polling places, including measures to

ensure compliance with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act. In

determining polling places, an authority must:

1. seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and
2. seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.

The length of the review process is not prescribed, provided all the steps required by

the legislation can be undertaken within it. However, the time allowed for a consultation

should be sufficient to enable interested persons and groups to read and understand the proposals, gather comments and respond with any alternative arrangements that they may wish to submit.

Where a local authority makes any alterations to the polling districts within its

area, the ERO must amend the register of electors accordingly – either on a notice of alteration or by publishing a revised register.

The changes to the register take effect on the date that the ERO publishes a   
separate notice stating that the alterations have been made, which should be done to coincide with the publication of a notice of alteration/publication of a revised register.

The (Acting) Returning Officer ((A)RO) must comment during any review of   
UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places on both existing polling stations and the polling stations that would likely be used if any new proposal for polling places were accepted. 

The election rules require the (A)RO to decide how many polling stations are  
required for each polling place and they must allocate electors to the polling stations   
in such manner as they think most convenient.

**Criteria**

The following should be considered as part of the assessment for the suitability of

polling district boundaries.

Polling District boundaries:

* Are the boundaries well-defined? For example, do they follow the natural boundaries of the area? If not, is it clear which properties belong in the polling district?
* Are there suitable transport links within the polling district, and how do they relate to the areas of the polling district that are most highly populated? Are there any obstacles to voters crossing the current polling district and reaching the polling place e.g., steep hills, major roads, railway lines, rivers?

5.3 In relation to polling places, the Commission advises that there are a number of factors that will need to be considered when reviewing existing polling places or when assessing new polling places, including:

* **Location:** Is it reasonably accessible within the polling district? Does it avoid barriers for the voter such as steep hills, major roads, rivers, etc.? Are there any convenient transport links?
* **Size:** Can it accommodate more than one polling station if required? If multiple polling stations are required, is the polling place capable of accommodating all voters going into and out of the polling stations, even where there is a high turnout?
* **Availability:** Is the building readily available in the event of any unscheduled elections? Is there any possibility that the building may be demolished as part of a new development?
* **Accessibility:** Is the building accessible to all those entitled to attend the polling place?

The following should be considered as part of the assessment for the suitability of

polling places.

**Polling Places**:

**Polling Place -** a building(s) or area(s) within each polling district in which polling stations will be selected by the (A) 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.

**Polling Station -** the room or area within the polling place chosen by the Returning

Officer, where the process of voting takes place at an election.

The review has given us the opportunity to look for new polling places where currently, schools, portacabins, hotels and public houses are used.