

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT OF: Chief Executive

TO: Civic Affairs Committee

19/09/2013

WARDS: All wards

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of reviews of polling arrangements and it is required that the next review must be started and completed within a sixteen-month period, between 1 October 2013 and 31 January 2015 (inclusive). The process for conducting a review is prescribed and the Electoral Commission gives comprehensive guidance on how a review is carried out.
- 1.2. Each local authority in Great Britain is responsible for reviewing polling districts and polling places in its area. The Civic Affairs Committee has been delegated this function.
- 1.3. Responsibility for deciding how many polling stations are required for each polling place lies with the Acting Returning Officer for Parliamentary elections, who must allocate electors to the polling stations in such a manner as they think most convenient.
- 1.4. Definition of terms:
 - A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a parliamentary constituency. In practice, the same polling district boundaries are used at all elections.
 - A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations are located.
 - A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling stations and polling

places, which are set by the local authority, the (Acting) Returning Officer for the election selects polling stations.

- 1.5. The last review of polling districts, places and stations in Cambridge was completed on 1 December 2010.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the committee consider the arrangements for designating polling districts, places and stations for the purpose of parliamentary and local government elections.
- 2.2. That the starting point for public consultation be the current polling arrangements (see copy of the notice of consultation attached at appendix b).
- 2.3. That the recommendations arising from the public consultation are reported to the committee at its meeting on 29 January 2014, to consider and approve any changes to polling districts and places.
- 2.4. Such amendments are implemented with effect from the date of the next publication of the revised Register of Electors on 17 February 2014.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. While there have been a number of issues already raised by members of the Council in 2012/13 regarding polling district boundaries and polling stations (e.g. the area of Jack Warren Green in Abbey ward and location of polling stations in Newnham and Romsey wards), the recommendation is that the current polling arrangements are presented as the starting point for the consultation. This will make the administrative process more straightforward and provide a structured approach to all consultation responses and subsequent recommendations.
- 3.2. The current polling district and polling station arrangements are shown at appendix a.
- 3.3. Requirements of a review:
 - The authority must designate a polling place for each polling district, unless the size or other circumstances of a polling district are such that the situation of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of electors. E.g. there is Fisher Hall, a polling station for Newnham ward, located in Market ward.

- The polling place must be within the authority area, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside that area.
- The polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in the different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station.
- Local authorities must seek to ensure that all electors in the area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- Local authorities must seek to ensure that so far as is practicable, every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

4. PROCEDURES FOR CARRYING OUT A REVIEW

4.1. When carrying out the review, local authorities must:

- Publish a notice of the holding of the review.
- Consult the (Acting) Returning Officer for every parliamentary constituency that is wholly or partly in its area.
- Publish all representations made by the (Acting) Returning Officer.
- 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 conclusion of the review, give reasons for its decisions and publish all correspondence, minutes, representations and details of designations of polling districts and places.

4.2. Timetable of proceedings:

Preliminary report to Civic Affairs	19 September 2013
Publish notice of the review	11 October 2013
Consultation responses to be made by	22 November 2013
Roundtable of interested parties (if appropriate)	Date in December TBC
Final recommendations to Civic Affairs	29 January 2014
Changes made to Register of Electors	17 February 2014

- 4.3. Once public notice has been given on 11 October, a six-week consultation period will allow interested parties to make comments and suggestions on the current arrangements (see appendix b).
- 4.4. The notice is required to be displayed at the Guildhall and published on the council website. City councillors, County Councillors and both MP's as well as local political parties, election agents, tenant associations, groups representing disabled persons and any other relevant stakeholders, will be informed of the review and asked for comment. The councils social media feeds will also be utilised to draw attention to the review and consultation period.
- 4.5. Maps and statistics will be available during the period of the consultation on the council website and for those who cannot access the internet, on request from the Electoral Services office.
- 4.6. If there has been significant response to the consultation, a roundtable discussion can be arranged to allow members and those who have responded to the review to discuss suggested changes. This would enable the final proposal to Committee to have a clear direction.
- 4.7. If the review results in one or more alterations to polling districts, a revised Register of Electors must be published. This review has been timed in order to allow changes to take effect at the next scheduled publication of the register on 17 February 2014.

5. HOW TO DECIDE ON POLLING DISTRICTS AND PLACES

- 5.1. The following information is taken from regulations and Electoral Commission guidance.
- 5.2. The following should be considered as part of the assessment of the suitability of polling district boundaries:
 - Are the boundaries well defined? Do they follow the natural boundaries of the area?
 - 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?
- 5.3. There are a number of factors that need to be considered when reviewing existing or assessing new polling places:
 - Location: Is it reasonably accessible within the polling district?

- Size: Can it accommodate more than one polling station if required?
 - Availability: Would a polling station in the polling place be readily available in the event of an unscheduled election?
 - Accessibility: Would a polling station in the polling place be accessible to all those entitled to attend?
- 5.4. All electors must have reasonable facilities to be able to vote. The place for voting must be accessible for all electors, including those with disabilities. The polling station should be easy to find on polling day and be as close to electors as possible.
- 5.5. Consideration should be given to the appropriate number of electors per polling place. Guidance issued by the Electoral Commission in 2011 indicates that polling stations should not exceed 2,500 voters. Given that, in Cambridge, the average indicates that 12% of electors now vote by post, the aim should be to allocate no more than 2,800 electors to a polling station.
- 5.6. Consideration of polling district size should also take account of future population growth in the City. For example, we may look to create a third polling district within Trumpington ward.
- 5.7. The choice of polling place will often be a balance between the quality (access, facilities, etc.) of a building and the distances between the residents and that building compared to other options for polling places. Availability and co-operation of the building management can, sadly also be a factor in deciding on polling places.
- 5.8. Once a decision on the proposals is made, two key factors must be addressed in the reasoning given for the change to or maintaining the status quo:
- The reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency, and
 - The accessibility for disabled persons to the probable polling stations within the polling place.

6. CONCLUSION OF THE REVIEW

- 6.1. The council must agree final proposals for the polling districts and polling places, taking account of any representations received. The final proposals will then be placed on public deposit, together with

any copies of all correspondence, minutes and representations relating to the review.

- 6.2. The Register of Electors must then be altered to reflect any changes in polling districts.
- 6.3. Following the conclusion of the review, individuals have a right to make representations to the Electoral Commission. Representations must be made within six weeks of the publication date of the final review.
- 6.4. The Commission will direct the authority to make changes (within two months) to any polling place if they find that the authority did not:
 - Meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency, or a body of them, or
 - Take sufficient account of the accessibility for disabled persons of a polling station/ polling stations within a designated polling place.

7. **CONSULTATIONS**

- 7.1. As indicated above (paragraph 4.4) public notice of the review will be given and all relevant stakeholders will be informed of the consultation period.

8. **IMPLICATIONS**

(a) **Financial Implications**

Changes to the location of polling stations could result in an increase or decrease in rental charges, due to the differing rates charged by organisations.

An increase in the number of polling places/stations would mean an increase in the number of polling station staff and consequently increase staff payments at an election.

(b) **Staffing Implications**

There are no staffing implications.

(c) **Equal Opportunities Implications**

An Equality Impact Assessment for elections covers this report.

(d) **Environmental Implications**

This report has a NIL climate change impact.

(e) **Procurement**

No procurement is required for this project.

(f) **Consultation and communication**

As indicated above (paragraph 4.4) public notice of the review will be given and all relevant stakeholders will be informed of the consultation period.

(g) **Community Safety**

There are no community safety implications.

BACKGROUND PAPERS: The following are the background papers that were used in the preparation of this report:

- Electoral Commission guidance on conducting a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations. (Published August 2013)
- Equality Impact Assessment for elections.

To inspect these documents contact Vicky Breeding on extension 7057.

The author and contact officer for queries on the report is Vicky Breeding, Electoral Services Manager on extension 7057.

Report file:

Date originated: 28 August 2013

Date of last revision: 06 September 2013

Cambridge City Council
Polling Districts, Polling Stations & Electorate*

Abbey		
AA ⁺	Barnwell Baptist Church, Howard Road	3,104
AB	East Barnwell Youth Centre, Newmarket Road	1,911
AC	River Lane Community Room, River Centre	1,734

Arbury		
BA [^]	Good Shepherd Church Hall, Mansel Way	3,810
BB [^]	St. Luke's Church Centre, Victoria Road	3,013

Castle		
CA [^]	St. Augustine's Church, Richmond Road	3,899
CB	Castle End Mission, St. Peter's Street	2,637

Cherry Hinton		
DA	St. Andrew's Church Centre, Cherry Hinton	1,902
DB [^]	Cherry Hinton Village Centre, Colville Road	3,111
DC	St. Philip Howard Church Centre, Walpole Road	1,356

Coleridge		
EA	St. Martin's Church Hall, Suez Road	2,512
EB	Lichfield Hall, Lichfield Road	2,575
EC	St. Thomas' Church Hall, Ancaster Way	1,407

East Chesterton		
FA	Scout Centre, Logan's Way	1,894
FB	Chesterton Methodist Church, Green End Road	2,728
FC	Brownsfield Centre, Green End Road	2,050

King's Hedges		
GA ⁺	Arbury Community Centre, Campkin Road	3,313
GB ⁺	North Arbury Chapel, Cameron Road	2,997

Market		
HA	Fisher Hall, Guildhall Place	1,844
HB [^]	Wesley Church Buildings, King Street	4,586

Newnham		
IA ⁺	No fixed location	2,969
IB	St. Mark's Church Community Centre, Barton Road	2,712
IC	Fisher Hall, Guildhall Place	968

Petersfield		
JA [^]	St. Matthew's Church Hall, St. Matthew's Street	2,673
JB [^]	Salvation Army Hall, Tenison Road	3,297

Queen Edith's		
KA ^{^#}	St. John The Evangelist, Hills Road	3,394
KB ^{^#}	St. James' Church, Wulfstan Way	3,227

Romsey		
LA [^]	Ross Street Community Centre, Ross Street	4,097
LB	Romsey Mill, Hemingford Road	2,281

Trumpington		
MA ⁺	Christian Science Church, Panton Street	3,188
MB	Trumpington Village Hall	2,897

West Chesterton		
NA ⁺	Milton Road Library, Ascham Road	3,256
NB ⁺	St. Laurence's Catholic Church, Milton Road	2,993

**Electorate as at 1 September 2013*

^ Indicates polling station is split into two stations at all elections

+ Indicates polling station is split into two stations at Parliamentary elections

Polling district in South Cambridgeshire Parliamentary Constituency



Notice of Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

In accordance with [Section 17](#) of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, Cambridge City Council gives notice that a review of all polling districts and polling places in the city of Cambridge is to be conducted.

- The (Acting) Returning Officer will comment on the suitability of polling stations within each polling district. These will be available for viewing at The Guildhall, Cambridge CB2 3QJ and on the council website within thirty days of the date of this notice.
- Electors residing within the authority area are invited to make representations in connection with the review or comment on the (Acting) Returning Officer's proposals.
- The authority welcomes the views of all residents, particularly disabled residents, on the current polling arrangements, the (Acting) Returning Officer's representation or any other related matters.
- The authority also welcomes any person or body with expertise in the access requirements of persons with any type of disability to on the current polling arrangements, the (Acting) Returning Officer's representation or any other related matters.
- Any person or body making a comment should if possible, give alternative places that may be used as polling places.

Information concerning the existing arrangements may be obtained at the council website www.cambridge.gov.uk/elections or from the Electoral Services Office, The Guildhall, Cambridge CB2 3QJ.

The final date for submission of representations is 22 November 2013.

Representations, comments etc. should be submitted in writing to:

Electoral Services

Cambridge City Council

PO Box 700

Cambridge

CB1 0JH

Alternatively, by email to: elections@cambridge.gov.uk

Dated: 11 October 2013

Antoinette Jackson

Chief Executive