

**ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE  
2023**

11 July

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**Review of Local Polling Districts and Polling Places due to Ward  
Boundary Changes 2023**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillors Dormer, Leader, and Court, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton
Report Author	Job Title: Darren Whitney Contact email: darren.whitney@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881650
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	Will be part of consultation
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	N/A
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1.1 that the timetable for the review in appendix 3 be agreed;**

**1.2 that a working group be set up to review and report back findings to this Committee.**

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The report sets out the proposed methodology and timetable to review, and where necessary, create Polling Districts and Polling Places due to the recent ward boundary review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
- 2.2 Statutory Instrument SI 2023/654 - "The Redditch (Electoral Changes) Order 2023" was made on 14 June 2023 which creates new electoral wards for Redditch Borough Council which will come into operation for Borough Elections in 2024. (Appendix 1 and 2).
- 2.3 As many of the ward boundaries will have changed the review covers, Polling Districts (a geographical area, which tend not to cross Ward or Parish Boundaries), Polling Places (a building or area where Polling Stations are located) and Polling Stations (the room or area where polling takes place, the decision on location of the polling station is decided by the (Acting) Returning Officer).

- 2.4 As this review will feed into statutory review and to avoid duplication it is recommended that a working group made up of this Committee and relevant officers plus others the Group may want to invite is set up to review polling districts and polling places and formally report back findings to the Committee. A timetable for agreement is included in Appendix 3.
- 2.5 A consultation phase could be included to gain information from local stakeholders including all Ward Councillors and County Councillors, Parishes.
- 2.8 The conclusions of this review will feed into the Statutory Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places which cannot commence until 1 October 2023.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 Subject to the Committee's final decisions, there may be some minor financial implications for the Council which arise directly from this review, but which can be contained within existing budgets.
- 3.2 Depending on the outcome of the statutory review there may be additional costs or savings regarding polling stations that are to be used in future elections.

### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 a) Authority to set Polling District boundaries and to designate polling places rests with the Council (Statutory elements of the Council's Constitution under the Local Government Act 2000). Redditch Borough Council has delegated full relevant powers to this Electoral Matters Committee.
- b) Decisions about the situation of Polling Stations within designated Polling Places are for the (Acting) Returning Officer. Arrangements must comply with relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Acts and Regulations, the Equality Act 2010 and the Elections Act 2022.
- 4.2 "Relevant authorities" (such as Redditch Borough Council) must

“a) seek to ensure that all the electors in the Constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances”; and

“b) 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. If it is necessary to use a place where the access is not ideal, then every reasonable adjustment must be undertaken to provide access for all electors.”

- 4.3 The Elections Act 2022 has placed new considerations for Local Authorities in regard to polling places. Key considerations are accessibility and checking voter’s ID to ensure polling stations have suitable space to allow polling station staff to check documents and provide a privacy screen or separate area for confidential conversations.

**5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS**

**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

- 5.1 None as this report deals with statutory functions.

**Climate Change Implications**

- 5.2 It is preferable that choice of polling place location can help minimise unnecessary additional journeys by motorised vehicles.
- 5.3 Emissions and carbon footprint should be reduced as far as possible.

**6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 Accessibility for members of minority or disadvantaged groups is a key issue in the selection of suitable Polling Stations. The Returning Officer will have a general responsibility to provide equipment to support people with a range of disabilities in the polling station.

**Operational Implications**

- 6.2 The review will take up a large amount of Officer in time in dealing with statistics, maps and reporting back to this Committee via the working group.
- 6.3 The review will feed into the statutory polling district and polling places review commencing later in the year.
- 6.3 Officers have already started working on:
- Current Polling Stations – Polling Station Inspectors reviewed all of the current stations within the area in May 2023.
  - Polling Districts – Polling Districts are being assessed using mapping software.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 New Polling Districts and Polling Places need to be in place to publish a revised electoral register for local elections to be held 2 May 2024.
- 7.2 Any changes agreed must be likely to be sustainable for a reasonable number of years, as frequent changes of Polling Station are not helpful for electors and undermine their knowledge of, and confidence in, electoral systems.
- 7.2 Choice of Polling Place / Polling Station should not give rise to significant grounds of complaint which might put election results at risk of challenge.
- 7.3 The (Acting) Returning Officer must provide adequate levels and standards of staffing to secure proper polling arrangements. The Electoral Commission has changed it's guidance in that no more than 2,250 electors should be allocated to a single polling station with at least 1 Presiding Officer and 3 Poll Clerks.

## **8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Appendix 1 – Statutory Instrument SI 2023/654  
Appendix 2 – New Ward Map  
Appendix 3 – Review Timetable

Electoral Commission Guidance  
Local Government Boundary Commission for England Guidance  
Relevant statutory provisions

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**9. REPORT SIGN OFF**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Name and Job Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
Portfolio Holder		
Head of Service		
Financial Services		
Legal Services		