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**Statutory Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 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
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Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	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 final proposals in respect of Polling Districts and Polling Places, as contained in Appendix 1 (as amended), be approved; and**
- 1.2 that the decisions of the Committee in respect of 1.1 above take effect from the date of poll any election/referendum held or on publication of the revised Register of Electors.**

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on the 11 July 2023 it was agreed that the statutory review would formally commence on 2 October 2023.
- 2.2 The statutory review covers, Polling Districts (a geographical area, which tend not to cross Ward or Parish Boundaries), Polling Place (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).
- 2.3 The review consists of four stages:
- Stage 1 – Notification

- Stage 2 – Consultation
- Stage 3 – Concluding the Review
- Stage 4 – Publication

- 2.4 The (Acting) Returning Officer must make a submission regarding current and any proposed polling stations.
- 2.5 The report sets out the results of the consultation and the findings of the Electoral Services team to the formal review of Polling Districts and Polling Places.
- 2.6 The consultation ran from 2 October to 13 November all submissions and summaries are recorded in the various appendices below. All of the recommend polling stations were considered as part of the Local Review held earlier in the year. Members of the Committee are asked to consider any further proposals and finalise the review.
- 2.7 Communications were sent out to Councillors, stakeholder groups, Parishes and through Council communications including press releases and social media.
- 2.8 A full review document will be published at the end of December giving all the polling districts and places agreed by the committee. This will also record any further and outstanding work required on polling districts and places. Any changes made will be incorporated into the revised electoral register which will be published early in 2024.
- 2.9 Once complete certain people or organisations may appeal to the Electoral Commission to have changes made if they feel the Local Authority hasn't met reasonable expectations of the electorate or taken into account the needs for accessible polling stations.

### **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 review there may be additional costs or savings regarding polling stations that are to be used in future elections.

**4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Review will be undertaken as required under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Electoral Administration Act 2013, and in accordance with relevant Electoral Commission Guidance.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 "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."
- 4.4 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 This report deals with statutory functions but relates to the strategic purpose of an effective and sustainable council.

**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 (Acting) 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 Officer time was necessary in dealing with consultation, producing statistics, maps and reporting back to this Committee.
- 6.3 The review used the work completed on the review of local polling districts and polling places arising from the Redditch (Electoral Changes) Order 2023 (SI 2023/654).

**Key Issues**

**A. Proposed Polling District Boundaries and Polling Places.**

- 6.4 Appendix 1 to the report details Polling Districts and associated electoral areas, and the proposals arising from the consultation, together with consultee comments and responses to those comments arising from the recommendations of the last meeting of this Committee.
- 6.5 There are four polling districts where the current County Division boundary passes through them. Officers have split these into two sections and will have the suffix 2 added after the second section. This

allows for administration of a County Division by-election if one is called in the near future.

- 6.6 The affected polling districts are HOC, NRB, NRC and WCD. These polling districts can be reviewed once the proposals for the County Division are published by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

B. Issues arising from consultation on recommendations

- 6.7 Polling District CEA St Stephen's – A suggestion was made to change the polling district name to 'Town Centre District'.
- 6.8 Potential Polling District HOD Wirehill – The Committee asked Officers to look at the feasibility of a polling place at one of three locations.

The contractor that provides temporary polling stations to the Council made the following comments regarding the specified locations:

- **Woodrow Drive (B98 7UB) just after the entrance to nine days lane:**

'The driver advised due to this being a busy road he would be unable to set up the crane to offload the unit. The legs of the unit would be fully on the grass and there are risks of the unit sinking if the grass/soil is soft due to weather conditions and there are also electric pylons on the other side.'

- **Land next to 23 Atworth Close B98 7NX:**

'There is a phone wire but this can be worked around, the ground is uneven so packing would be required and the kerbside would need to be kept clear.'

- **Land at the end of Oakdale Close B98 7UW:**

'This site has no issues in regards to the delivery of the unit, as long as residents are happy as the generators are built within the units this will make noise while running.'

- 6.9 The owners of the land have been contacted for permission to use the land for polling if required. There has been no reply from the owners of Oakdale Close land; for Atworth Close land, discussions are ongoing, they have replied to the request with the following: "My Team are looking into your request and are currently reviewing the relevant legal documentation in order to respond..... It may be that this is best dealt with via a temporary licence, however this depends on your requirements."

- 6.10 It should be noted that if HOD is chosen to be a polling district it is the same area as HOC2 mentioned in paragraph 6.6 above.

**7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 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 – Polling District and Places Spreadsheet

Appendix 2 – Submissions Received

Local Government Boundary Commission for England Guidance  
Relevant statutory provisions

**ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE  
2023**

13 December

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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		