

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee

Date 12 March 2024

Report of: Assistant Director (Democracy)

Subject: STATUTORY REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY POLLING DISTRICTS
AND POLLING PLACES

SUMMARY

The Council has a statutory duty to keep under review the polling districts and polling places it uses for parliamentary (and other) elections. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires that a review be undertaken before 31 January 2025. This report explains the process and puts forward proposals which may be incorporated into a draft scheme for consultation.

The Committee is now requested to consider the proposals set out in this report which will then be published for consultation before coming back to the committee for final consideration and recommendation to Council for the scheme to be approved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee:

- (a) agrees the statutory notice, as set out in Appendix A to the report, and the timeline for the statutory review;
- (b) considers the proposed scheme of polling places as set out in Appendix B to the report; and
- (c) delegates authority to the Assistant Director (Democracy), following consultation with the Chairman of the Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee and the Returning Officer, to make any minor amendments to the proposed timeline in order to meet the statutory review in the event of the UK Parliamentary General Election being called before the review is completed.

INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with the Electoral Administration Act 2006, the Council has a statutory duty to keep under review the polling districts and polling places it uses for parliamentary (and other) elections. The last full review was completed in 2019 and an interim review was undertaken in 2023 to address the new warding arrangements implemented following the Electoral Review of Fareham carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission.
2. The regulations contained in The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and places. The current compulsory review must now be started and completed between October 2023 and 31 January 2025.
3. The Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee (LRA) has delegated powers to undertake such a review and to recommend a final scheme to the Council for adoption.
4. This report outlines the process for the 2024 review, explains what has been done so far and invites the LRA Committee to approve draft proposals for further consultation. The LRA Committee will be asked at its next meeting to consider any further comments received and to recommend a final scheme for adoption by Council for the next four years.

THE LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

5. The Representation of the People Act 1983 requires the local authority to divide its area into polling districts for the purpose of parliamentary elections and to keep such districts under review. Polling districts may also be designated for local government elections and in practice they follow the same boundaries as the parliamentary ones.
6. Essentially, polling districts are the geographical sub-divisions of an electoral area, whether that is a constituency, a county division or a borough ward. Neither the parliamentary constituency boundaries, nor the local government wards and division boundaries may be changed by this process.
7. A local authority is also required to designate a polling place for each polling district. A polling place is a building or an area in which polling stations are located. The location of a polling station within a polling place is a matter for the Returning Officer and, as part of this review, the Returning Officer is required to make formal comment on polling stations currently or likely to be used in any parliamentary (or other) election.
8. In undertaking a review, the local authority must seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. It must also seek to ensure that so far as is practicable every polling station is accessible to electors who are disabled. A polling place should preferably be located within the polling district, but the Act recognises this is not always feasible,
9. The process for undertaking a review is largely prescribed by the Act and regulations but minor alterations can be implemented between major reviews to satisfy the reasonable requirements of electors or to consider the accessibility to disabled persons of polling stations within a designated polling place.
10. If the local authority in carrying out a review fails to meet the reasonable requirements

of the electors or does not take sufficient account of the accessibility to disabled persons of polling stations within a designated polling place, then representations may be made to the Electoral Commission. The Commission may then direct the authority to make alterations to the polling places designated in the review.

THE 2024 REVIEW

11. The review is being conducted in three stages in order to give maximum opportunity for public comment and the views of local interest groups to inform the review:
 - **Stage One:** (1 October 2023 – 2 May 2024)
Give notice of the review; commence inspection of current and potential polling places as necessary; prepare draft proposals.
 - **Stage Two:** (6 May 2024 – 3 June 2024)
Publish draft proposals as determined by the LRA Committee at the meeting of 12 March 2024; invite comment from interested parties and statutory consultees; complete inspection of current and potential polling places as necessary.
 - **Stage Three:** (24 June 2024 - 26 July 2024)
The LRA Committee at its July meeting to consider comments received and recommend a final scheme to Council; adoption of the final scheme; public notice given; Electoral Registration Officer to implement and publish register of electors on 1 September 2024. Returning Officer to have regard to the scheme in the conduct of elections.
12. Stage one is partially complete with the inspection of current and potential polling places completed as part of the Electoral Review implementation. Subject to the agreement of the LRA Committee, the Notice of Review will be published on 18 March 2024 (attached as Appendix A). Officers have also sought expert advice on accessibility, as required in the legislation and consulted with local accessibility groups.
13. The review now prepares to move to stage two, with a draft scheme presented to the LRA Committee which is to be published for further consultation immediately following the Local Elections in May 2024.

THE DRAFT SCHEME

14. Attached to this report at Appendix B is the detail of newly arranged polling districts for each ward, following completion of the Local Government Boundary Commission Electoral Review.
15. The recently completed Electoral Review resulted in new warding arrangements being adopted across the Borough and these new arrangements officially come into force at the Local Elections in May 2024.
16. The Electoral register published on 1st December 2023 adopted the new warding arrangements following an interim review of polling districts and polling places reported to this committee on 5 October 2023.
17. Any apparent inequalities in the electorate totals for each polling district is due to the conflicting County and/or Parliamentary boundaries which in some cases carve

through the Fareham wards.

18. As a reminder, the new warding arrangements resulted in changes to the names, layout and electorate of wards across the Borough. There are now 32 wards with the following elector number prefix references and ward names:

AV	Avenue
FF	Fort Fareham
FP	Fareham Park
FT	Fareham Town
HH	Hill Head
HW	Hook-with-Warsash
LH	Locks Heath
PC	Portchester Castle
PG	Park Gate
PW	Portchester Wicor
ST	Stubbington
SW	Sarisbury & Whiteley
TC	Titchfield Common
TI	Titchfield
UF	Uplands & Funtley
WD	Wallington & Downend

19. Members are asked to consider the draft proposals of polling districts and their assigned polling places, as set out in Appendix B, which will be published as a draft scheme for statutory consultation as part of Stage 2 of the review (as set out in paragraph 11 above).

RISK ASSESSMENT

20. The LRA Committee is reminded that undertaking this review fulfils the Council's statutory obligations, However, failure to meet the reasonable requirements of electors or not taking sufficient account of accessibility to disabled persons may lead to representations to the Electoral Commission who may direct changes to be made. In undertaking the review the Council may ensure that it is taking reasonable steps to enable all electors to participate in the democratic process.

CONCLUSION

21. The Council is required to undertake a review of the polling districts and places used in parliamentary (and other) elections before 31 January 2025. It must observe certain criteria, not least of which is accessibility to polling places by disabled persons. The draft proposals set out in Appendix B to this report have been formed taking account of the recently completed Electoral Review of the Borough including the interim review of polling districts and polling places. The LRA Committee is asked to approve a draft proposal, which will proceed to public consultation. Any comments received will be brought back to the Committee at its next meeting, with a view to recommending a final scheme to Council for adoption.

Appendices: **A: Draft Statutory Notice of Review**
 B: Draft Scheme for Consultation

Background Papers:

Project File for Local Government Boundary Commission Electoral (LGBCE) Review of Fareham

Reference Papers:

Report to LRA 5 October 2023 – Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places
LGBCE Boundary Review

LGBCE report - New Electoral arrangements for Fareham Borough Council – Final
Recommendations February 2023

Report to LRA 23 November 2021 - Local Government Boundary Review – Council Size
Submission

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Annette Rickman 01329 824692