

REPORT TO: COUNCIL

DATE: 13 DECEMBER 2023

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

PURPOSE: This report details the proposals of future polling districts and polling places following the compulsory review of polling arrangements.

KEY DECISION: N/A

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Councillor Craig Leyland

REPORT OF: Robert Barlow Chief Executive and Returning Officer

REPORT AUTHOR: Sue Brewitt- Elections Officer

WARD(S) AFFECTED: All

EXEMPT REPORT? No

SUMMARY

This reports sets out proposals for polling districts and polling places following a review as required by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To approve the schedule of polling districts and polling places as listed at Appendix A to this report.
2. To approve the revisions to polling district boundaries for Woodhall Spa Parish and St Clements Parish Wards as attached at Appendix E and H to this report.
3. To note the revised polling district reference numbers attached at Appendix I to this report.
4. To reconfirm the delegation to the (Acting) Returning Officer in consultation with the relevant Ward Members to approve any amendments to polling places prior to the next compulsory review.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure the most appropriate polling districts and polling places are designated for voters that provide suitable access, space and facilities for voting. The changes proposed in this review also enable the Council to align polling district references to the Parliamentary constituencies.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The Council could choose not to approve all or part of the proposals to the polling districts and polling places, however this is not recommended.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Representation of the People Act 1983 places a duty on the Council to divide the District into polling districts, to designate polling places for each of these districts and to keep the arrangements under review.
- 1.2. This reports sets out proposals for polling districts and polling places following a review as required by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.
- 1.3. Although the compulsory review is not required to be completed until 31 January 2025, the review has been timed to enable any proposed changes to be implemented before the Police and Crime Commissioner elections which will take place on 2 May 2024. In addition, the Parliamentary election can be held at any time before 28 January 2025 and it is considered appropriate for the polling places review to be completed as early as possible to ensure certainty of polling places for this election when it is called at short notice.
- 1.4. The purpose of the review was to ensure that electors have reasonable facilities for voting and that so far as is reasonable and practicable, polling places are accessible to voters who are disabled.
- 1.5. Changes to the size and parish divisions of some polling districts were also assessed to ensure that polling places with more than one polling station have a more even balance of electors, inline with Electoral Commission guidelines on the maximum number of electors allocated to each polling station.
- 1.6. Following the changes to Parliamentary Constituency boundaries which will take effect at the next Parliamentary election and as a result changes have been made to the polling district reference codes to reflect these changes.

2. POLLING DISTRICT AND POLLING PLACES

- 2.1. Polling districts are, sub divisions of electoral wards. Each parish is automatically a polling district in its own right but then that area can be broken down into further polling districts dependent on the size of the parish and the number and location of electors.

2.2. A polling place is the area in which polling stations will be designated by the (Acting) Returning Officer. Details of the proposed polling places are included in Appendix A.

2.3. **Legislative Requirement**

2.3.1. In designated polling districts the Council must comply with the following legislative requirements:

- 2.3.1.1. each parish in England is to be a separate polling district, unless special circumstances apply;
- 2.3.1.2. the Council 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 the electors;
- 2.3.1.3. the polling place must be an area in the district, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the district (for example, if no accessible polling place can be identified in the district);
- 2.3.1.4. the polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station.

2.5 The Council must have regard to the accessibility to disabled persons of potential polling stations in any place which it is considering designating as a polling place or the designation of which as a polling place it is reviewing. The Council must also comply with the following access requirements;

- 2.5.1 seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
- 2.5.2 seek to ensure that as far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

2.6 In summary the (Acting) Returning Officer is recommending the following changes to the existing arrangements, as detailed in Appendix A and following comments and further assessments outlined in Appendix B:

2.7 Changes to polling places.

- 2.7.1 Tumby – permanent move to the Village Hall, Tattershall.
- 2.7.2 Mumby – permanent move to the Village Hall, Willoughby.
- 2.7.3 Kirkby on Bain – move back to the Kirkby on Bain School (subject to all improvements being completed).
- 2.7.4 Great Steeping – permanent move to the Irby & Bratoft Village Hall, Irby in the Marsh.
- 2.7.5 Withern – permanent move to the Village Hall, Withern.
- 2.7.6 Louth St Marys Parish Ward – permanent move to the Sessions House, Louth.

2.8 The size and parish divisions of the following polling districts have been assessed due to an imbalance in elector numbers. This is in line with Electoral Commission guidelines on the maximum number of electors allocated to each polling station, which is 2250. The proposed changes are as follows:

2.8.1 Woodhall Spa Parish – the current and historic polling district boundary division for ES-A Woodhall Spa No 1 (Appendix C) and ES-B Woodhall Spa No 2 (Appendix D) were based on alphabetical street names. The proposed polling district boundary divisions have been divided to provide a more equal number of electors at each of the two current polling stations as outlined in Appendix E. As both ES-A and ES-B have the same polling place, but separate polling stations, there will be no impact on electors.

2.8.2 Skegness St Clements Parish – the current polling districts for TP-B St Clements No 1 (Appendix F) and TP-C St Clements No 2 (Appendix G) currently have imbalanced elector numbers. Therefore it is proposed to change the polling district boundaries as outlined in Appendix H. As both TP-B and TP-C have the same polling place, but separate polling stations, there will be no impact on electors.

2.9 Changes to Parliamentary Constituency boundaries will take effect at the next Parliamentary election and as a result changes to the polling district reference codes have been aligned to reflect the changes to constituency boundaries (Appendix I).

3. CONCLUSION

3.1. In developing the proposals contained in the attached appendices, every effort has been made to ensure that the legislative requirements are adhered to. Feedback has been received through the review process and this has helped to shape the final proposals presented to Council.

3.2. The proposals aim to ensure that electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practical in the circumstances and that, so far as is reasonable and practical, polling places are accessible to all electors, including those that are disabled.

4. EXPECTED BENEFITS TO THE PARTNERSHIP

None

5. IMPLICATIONS

6. SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL'S PARTNERSHIP

None

7. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

None

8. STAFFING

None

9. CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Council has a legal duty under Section 18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983 to undertake a compulsory review of polling districts and polling places every 5 years. The last full review was carried out in 2018 and the next full review is required to be completed before 31 January, 2025.

10. DATA PROTECTION

None

11. FINANCIAL

None

12. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 12.1. The key risk associated with the implementation of the recommendations is that electors do not realise that the location of their polling station has changed. This risk will be mitigated against by:
- 12.2. Sending correspondence to the electors whose polling station has changed prior to the election.
- 12.3. Including information on electors poll cards as to the location of the polling station.
- 12.4. Undertaking awareness campaigns in areas where there are changes to the previous voting arrangements.
- 12.5. In a vast, mainly rural area such as East Lindsey, there are electors who have to travel in order to vote at their allocated polling station. Postal voting is available to all electors and for many provides a more convenient method of voting. The current records show that 18,399 electors in East Lindsey have already chosen to vote by post on a permanent basis.

13. STAKEHOLDER/ CONSULTATION /TIMESCALES

- 13.1. Public notice of the review was given on 9 October 2023 with full details published on the Council's website supplemented by press release, social media, Messenger e-magazine.
- 13.2. Prior to the commencement of the review, initial consultation was undertaken of the existing polling places with all current District Councillors.
- 13.3. Draft proposals were prepared and published on 13 October, 2023. The public consultation ran from October until 17 November 2023. During this formal consultation period, comments were invited from all District and County Councillors, Parish and Town Councils, Disability Groups and Ministers of Parliament. The (Acting) Returning Officer for the Parliamentary Constituencies of Boston & Skegness and Gainsborough have also been consulted on the proposals.
- 13.4. A total of 9 responses were received from consultees and these are detailed in Appendix B.

14. REPUTATION

None

15. CONTRACTS

None

16. CRIME AND DISORDER

None

17. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY/ HUMAN RIGHTS/ SAFEGUARDING

None

18. HEALTH AND WELL BEING

None

19. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None

20. ACRONYMS

None

APPENDICES

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report: -

<i>APPENDIX A</i>	<i>Final Proposed Polling Arrangements</i>
<i>APPENDIX B</i>	<i>Summary of representations and comments received</i>
<i>APPENDIX C</i>	<i>Woodhall Spa ES-A current map</i>
<i>APPENDIX D</i>	<i>Woodhall Spa ES-B current map</i>
<i>APPENDIX E</i>	<i>Woodhall Spa proposed map</i>
<i>APPENDIX F</i>	<i>St Clements No 1 TP-B current map</i>
<i>APPENDIX G</i>	<i>St Clements No 1 TP-C current map</i>
<i>APPENDIX H</i>	<i>St Clements proposed map</i>
<i>APPENDIX I</i>	<i>Revised Polling District References</i>

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background papers used in the production of this report are listed below: -

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
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Electoral Commission Guidance on the Review of Polling District and Polling Places	https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/reviews-polling-districts-polling-places-and-polling-stations
Notice of Review of Polling District and Polling Places and schedule of draft proposals	Polling District/Polling Places Review - East Lindsey District Council (e-lindsey.gov.uk)

REPORT APPROVAL	
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