



## **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE**

THURSDAY 24TH OCTOBER 2019 AT 6.00 P.M.

COMMITTEE ROOM 2 - PARKSIDE

MEMBERS: Councillors M. Glass (Chairman), R. J. Hunter (Vice-Chairman), S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, S. G. Hession, L. C. R. Mallett and M. Middleton

### **AGENDA**

1. To receive apologies for absence and notification of substitutes
2. Declarations of Interest  
  
To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.
3. To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on 10th September 2019 (Pages 1 - 6)
4. Polling Places Review 2019 (Pages 7 - 46)
5. To consider any other business, details of which have been notified to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services prior to the commencement of the meeting and which the Chairman considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting

K. DICKS  
Chief Executive

Parkside  
Market Street  
BROMSGROVE  
Worcestershire  
B61 8DA  
16th October 2019



## **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY, 10TH SEPTEMBER 2019, AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors M. Glass (Chairman), S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming and M. Middleton

Officers: Mr D. Whitney, Ms M. Bassett and Mrs. P. Ross

7/19 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. C. R. Mallett and S. G. Hession.

8/19 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

9/19 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the electoral Matters Committee held on 15th July 2019 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on 15th July 2019 be approved as a correct record.

10/19 **REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2019**

The Electoral Services Manager introduced the report and explained that the report sets out the results of the initial consultation, the comments of the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) and the findings of the Electoral Services team to the formal review of Polling Districts and Polling Places; as required under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, and based on the Electoral Commission Guidance as detailed at Appendix 3 to the report.

Members were further informed that the initial consultation had run from 17th July to 28th August 2019, all submissions and summaries had been recorded in Appendix 1 to the report.

Polling Station Inspectors had reviewed all of the current polling stations within the area during the Local and Euro Parliamentary Elections in

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May 2019; officers had considered the suitability of these and any other recommendations, which included verbal discussions with Elected Members and members of the public. Officers had also assessed any changes that may be needed to Polling Districts and the Acting Returning Officer's (ARO's) comments, all of which had been included in Appendix 1 to the report.

The Committee was asked to consider the proposals made and to make any recommendations for the final consultation which would run from 12th September to 7th October 2019.

The Electoral Services Manager drew Members' attention to paragraphs 3.6, 3.7 and 3.8 in the report, which detailed the 'Starting Points' for the selection of Polling Places / Stations.

Members were further informed that any changes agreed must be likely to be sustainable for a reasonable number of years, as frequent changes of Polling Stations were not helpful for electors and undermined their knowledge of, and confidence in, electoral systems.

In terms of environmental risks, it was of course preferable that choice of Polling Station location could help minimise unnecessary additional journeys by motorised vehicles. It was preferable where possible not to use a portable building where a generator was required.

Members then considered each Ward and the changes / comments received, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report; with the following being agreed by all Members of the Committee:

**Avoncroft AVB** – Members supported the Electoral Officers change submission and the ARO's comments to move away from using a portable building at Morrison's and agreed with using Stoke Prior Village Hall as a shared Polling Station (with **Avoncroft AVA**). Members however did raise some concerns with regard to the size of the car park at the village hall.

**Barnt Green & Hopwood BHA** – Members were informed that access to Hopwood Village Hall was poor for disabled / elderly residents as there was no clear step free footpath. The costs associated with using the suggested new venue, namely the Westmead Hotel, remained approximately the same. Members therefore supported the Electoral Services and ARO's comments to move the Polling Station to the Westmead Hotel which had better access.

**Catshill North CAN** – Members were informed that access to the entrance of Catshill Village Hall (in order to access the rear car park) was difficult. There was very little difference in location if the Polling Station was moved to Catshill Methodist Centre. Therefore Members supported the Electoral Officers change submission and the ARO's comments and agreed with moving the Polling Station to Catshill

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Methodist Church, provided that **Catshill South CAS** Polling Station was moved to Catshill Social Club.

**Catshill South CAS** – Members were informed that moving the Polling Station to Catshill Social Club would stop any confusion, as mentioned by the local Councillor, and that the move would make it clearer for the electorate. Catshill Social Club was within the polling district. Members therefore supported the Electoral Officers change submission, the comments received from the district Councillor and the ARO's comments; and agreed with the move, pending permission being sought from Catshill Social Club Committee.

**Cofton COA** – Members noted the change submission from Cofton Hackett Parish Council to move the Polling Station to the new Cofton Village Hall as an additional Polling Station. However, after considering the comments received from Electoral Services and the ARO, the Committee agreed with 'no change'. Officers needed to establish how many properties were being built on this site before considering a new polling district. Also the new village hall was not ready, so not yet open. Officers agreed to keep the progress of the new village hall under review and assess the needs of Cofton Hackett at a later date.

**Hollywood HWA** – Members were informed that a district Councillor had suggested moving the Polling Station to the Hub at Woodrush. In May 2017 a Polling Station Questionnaire indicated that electors were happy with Park Hall. Members noted the findings of the May 2017 Polling Station Questionnaire and the ARO's comments that no change was required and that it was commented that there was sufficient parking at Park Hall. Therefore the Committee agreed with no change.

**Lowes Hill LWA** – Officers clarified that there would be no access impact should the Polling Station be moved from the portable building to the changing rooms at Barnsley Hall Road. Members therefore supported the Electoral Officers change submission and the ARO's comments that the Polling Station be moved to the changing rooms, as a trial, with a view to reverting back to a portable building should the changing rooms be found to be unsuitable.

**Perryfields PFB** – The Committee agreed with the Electoral Services and ARO's comments that currently no change was required. Officers would keep up to date with the progress of the new development at Perryfields and review the Polling Station location once the development was complete.

**Rock Hill RHA** - Electoral Officers were looking, in general, at moving away from using portable buildings, so had suggested moving the Polling Station from the portable building at Morrisons to Bromsgrove and District Indoor Bowls Club Limited (foyer or canteen area). The indoor bowls centre was a much better space. Members were informed that electors would have to access the bowls club via the road to the car park. It was noted that the car park was large and well lit and there was

a separate entrance to the canteen. Officers would have to contact the bowls centre Board for a quotation and to seek approval, but no problems were envisaged. Members therefore supported the Electoral Officers change submission and the ARO's comments and agreed with moving the Polling Station to Bromsgrove and District Indoor Bowls Club Limited (canteen area); pending permission and a quotation being sought from the bowls centre Board.

**Rock Hill RHB** – Members were informed that the current Polling Station, the Court Leet public house, was not always available due to the nature of the business. Electoral Officers had suggested moving to St. Andrews Church Hall as the distances for the electorate were not that different and electors would not have to cross a busy road. Members therefore supported the Electoral Officers change submission and the ARO's comments and agreed that the Polling Station be moved to St Andrews Church Hall.

**Rubery North RNA** - Members were further informed that, as detailed in the report, if schools were designated as polling stations; First Schools were normally selected because of reduced impact on important examination processes for older pupils. However, concerns had been raised by the current venue, Holywell Primary School, that there was some disruption to children and parents.

Taking the comments received from Holywell Primary School into account and looking at other available venues, Rubery Leisure Centre had been suggested as a suitable Polling Station. Officers informed the Committee that Rubery Leisure Centre was not in the polling district, as was the school; however, Rubery Leisure Centre was a good venue with adequate lighting outside. There was limited pedestrian access via a small footpath, but electors would not have to cross a busy road. The leisure centre was well lit but was accessed via a lane and officers were unsure as to the lighting on the lane. Rubery Social Club (which had been suggested as a venue for **Rubery RSA**), was also considered by the Committee as this was nearer for electors. Members therefore agreed with moving the Polling Station to Rubery Social Club.

**Rubery South RSA** – Members were informed that moving from the Memorial Club was a change submission from Electoral Officers following complaints received from a district Councillor in the past, with regard to entry problems there. Electoral Services had therefore viewed and were suggesting moving the Polling Station to Rubery Social Club. The club had good access points and plenty of space, however, parking was limited. Officers were informed that the newly elected Ward Councillor had liaised with electors and that after speaking with them he would suggest keeping the Polling Station at the Memorial Club. Having considered all of the information received from officers and information on behalf of the Ward Councillor, Members agreed that the Polling Station be kept at the Memorial Club.

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**Slideslow SSA and SSB** – Members were reminded that, as stated earlier, if schools were designated as polling stations; First Schools were normally selected because of reduced impact on important examination processes for older pupils.

However, concerns had been raised by the current venue, Finstall First School, that there was some disruption to children and parents and that they would like to see the Polling Station moved. Alternative venues were looked at which included St. Godwolds Church Hall and Finstall Village Hall. St. Godwolds Church Hall was already used as a Polling Station and would not accommodate another Polling District. Finstall Village Hall would be adequate for current usage but would not accommodate any extra electors. Members therefore supported the Electoral Services and ARO's comments and agreed that Finstall First School, Polling Station continued to be used whilst officers scoped the possibility of using Aston Fields Middle School and if the school could accommodate two Polling Stations.

Members were reminded that, First Schools were normally selected as Polling Stations because of reduced impact on important examination processes for older pupils.

**Wythall West WWA** – Members were informed that the current venue Wythall Village Hall had presented some parking problems. The district Councillor had suggested and was happy to support a move to Park Hall to alleviate the parking problems experienced at Wythall Village Hall. Officers highlighted that there were only 303 electors who were widely spaced in a rural area. Park Hall was closer for those electorates with adequate parking facilities. Members therefore supported the district councillor, Electoral Services and ARO's comments and agreed with moving the Polling Station to Park Hall.

Following on from the discussion and taking into account the amendments as detailed in the preamble above it was

**RESOLVED** that

- a) Appendix 1 to the report be updated with the amendments as detailed in the preamble above, and
- b) that the proposals for Polling Districts and Polling Places in Appendix 1 (as amended) be published for final consultation.

The meeting closed at 6.44 p.m.

Chairman

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### **ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE**

**24 October 2019**

#### **Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2019**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillors May, Leader and, Denaro Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton
Ward(s) Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	Part of consultation
Not a Key Decision	

#### **1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 The report sets out the results of the consultations, the comments of the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) and the findings of the Electoral Services team to the formal review of Polling Districts and Polling Places, as required under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, and as based on Electoral Commission Guidance (a copy of the guidance is included in appendix 3).
- 1.2 The initial consultation ran from 17 July to 28 August all submissions and summaries were recorded and published on the Council website and at the Council offices. Polling Station Inspectors had already reviewed all of the current polling stations within the area at the Local and Euro Parliamentary Elections in May, officers, including the ARO have considered the suitability of these and any other recommendations, including verbal discussions with Elected Members and members of the public. They also assessed any changes that maybe needed to Polling Districts.
- 1.3 The results of the consultation and the recommendations of officers and the ARO were considered by the committee at its meeting held on 10 September. These formed the final recommendations for consultation before the Committee concludes the review and sets the new Polling Districts and Places. These recommendations with an option for more suggestions were opened for consultation on 12 September and closed on 7 October. Members of the Committee are asked to consider any further proposals and finalise the review.
- 1.4 A full review document will be published at the end of November 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 on 1 December 2019.
- 1.5 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.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 that the final proposals in respect of Polling Places, as contained in Appendix 1 (as amended), be approved; and
- 2.2 that the decisions of the Committee in respect of 2.1 above take effect from the date of poll any election/referendum held or on of publication of the revised Register of Electors on 1st December 2019 whichever is sooner.

**3. KEY ISSUES**

**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. Extra budget would be required if Members choose to use additional temporary portable buildings.

**Legal Implications**

- 3.3 The Review is undertaken as required under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Electoral Administration Act 2013, and in accordance with relevant Electoral Commission Guidance.
- 3.4 a) Authority to set Polling District boundaries and to designate Polling Places rests with the Council or relevant Committee (Statutory elements of the Council's Constitution under the Local Government Act 2000). Bromsgrove District 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 and the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.5 "Relevant authorities" (such as Bromsgrove District 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.”

#### **Service/Operational Implications**

##### Key Issues

- A. Proposed Polling District Boundaries and Polling Places.
- 3.6 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.
- B. Issues arising from consultation on recommendations
- 3.7 Polling District COA Cofton Hackett – The Parish Council sent a submission informing the Committee that the new Parish Village Hall is now open. Members will need to decide if to move polling from the old to the new village hall.
- 3.8 Polling District RSA Rubery South – A District Councillor (not Ward Member) would like RSA reviewed again with a view to move to Rubery Social Club due to the current polling station having *“to be forced to give access that enable people to vote without having to go through people drinking alcohol (the last two elections)”*.
- 3.9 Polling Districts SSA and SSB Slideslow North and Slideslow South – Officers were asked to review Aston Fields Middle School as an option. The school was not interested in hosting, however Rigby Hall Special School would be willing to act as a polling place. Officers are confirm this could be used as a polling place, however it is outside of both polling districts.
- 3.10 Polling District WWA Headley Heath – Several concerns have been raised in regard to moving the polling place for electors from Wythall Village Hall to Park Hall.
- a) It has been raised that the current polling place is in the Ward whereas the proposed one is outside it. This is true, however guidance only refers to the wherever possible the polling place should be in the polling district. Neither the suggested or current polling place is in the polling district.
- b) There were concerns that people that normally walk to the polling place would no longer be able to do so. WWA is a very rural polling district and it is unlikely that many electors currently walk to the village hall. Those making submissions may have been confused and thought that the whole of Wythall

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West Ward electors moving to Park Hall as the majority of those in polling district WWB would certainly be able to walk to the village hall.

In terms of electors in WWA officers considered two properties one in the centre of the polling district and one towards the south of the polling district. The first 'Gay Hill Farm' would take 35 minutes to walk the 1.9 miles to the village hall and 25 mins to walk the 1.4 miles to Park Hall. The second, 'Highfield Farm' would take 21 minutes to walk the 1.1 miles to the village hall and 11 mins to walk the 0.6 miles to Park Hall.

- c) Submissions suggest the Committee running Park Hall were thinking of charging for parking. If this were to happen both polling districts DRA and HWA would also be affected.

#### **Customer/Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.11 The Council's Customer Care / Equalities policies directly cross-relate, particularly in relation to Access issues. Accessibility for members of minority or disadvantaged groups is a key issue in the selection of suitable Polling Places and Stations.

#### **4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 Choice of Polling Place / Polling Station should not give rise to significant grounds of complaint which might put election results at risk of challenge.
- 4.3 In terms of Environmental risks, it is of course preferable that choice of Polling Station location can help minimise unnecessary additional journeys by motorised vehicles. It is preferable where possible not to use a portable building where a generator is required.
- 4.4 In terms of Human Resources risks, the ARO must provide adequate levels and standards of staffing to secure proper polling arrangements.

#### **5. APPENDICES**

- 1 Recommendations for final consultation including submissions made
- 2 Map of polling place option for polling districts SSA and SSB.
- 3 Electoral Commission Guidance

#### **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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- Previously published Polling Stations Review reports / Minutes.
- Relevant Statutory provisions.

### 7. **KEY**

Bromsgrove Returning Officer, Kevin Dicks, is designated (Acting) Returning Officer for Parliamentary Elections.

This is because formally the Returning Officer for a County Constituency such as Bromsgrove is the High Sheriff for that County, which is a purely honorific title/role.

### **AUTHOR OF REPORT**

Name: Darren Whitney

Tel.: 01527 881650

email: [darren.whitney@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:darren.whitney@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)

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APPENDIX 1

Bromsgrove Polling District & Polling Place Review 2019  
Proposals for final consultation

Ward	2019 Ward Electorate	May 2019 Polling Place Electorate (includes postal votes)	Proposed Dwellings (5+)	Polling District Code	Parish	Parish Ward	County Division	Current Polling Place	No Change Submission	No Change Submission received from	Change	Change Submission from	Ward Cllr Comments to Review Response	Electoral Services	Returning Officer Comments	Recommendation from Electoral Matters Committee held 10 Sept to consult on.	Comments received on Electoral Matters Committee recommendations	Further Officer/ARO Comments
Alvechurch South		739	9	ALA	Alvechurch	Rowney Green & Bordesley	Alvechurch	Rowney Green Peace Memorial Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Alvechurch South		801		ALB	Beoley		Alvechurch	Beoley Village Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Alvechurch South	2296	761		ALC	Alvechurch	Rowney Green & Bordesley	Alvechurch	Alvechurch Baptist Church							No change	No change	None Received	
Alvechurch Village	2263	2266		ALV	Alvechurch	Alvechurch Village	Alvechurch	Alvechurch Baptist Church	No change	BD8 13/8 Councillor					No change	No change	None Received	
Aston Fields		1035		ASA			Bromsgrove East	St Godwalds Church Hall	No change	23/08 Councillor					No change	No change	None Received	
Aston Fields	2495	1465		ASB			Bromsgrove South	St Godwalds Church Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Avoncroft		1661	14	AVA	Stoke	Stoke Prior	Bromsgrove South	Stoke Prior Village Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Avoncroft				AVB	Stoke	Stoke Prior	Bromsgrove South	Portable Building Morrison's			Move away from using portable building	Electoral Officers		Stoke Prior Village Hall - could accommodate two polling stations. If so consider combining AVA and AVB. Officers can also check Avoncroft museum and Avoncroft Arts Centre	It seems reasonable to move away from the portable building here. It is still worth checking out the Avoncroft buildings if possible to present to the Committee.	Move polling to Stoke Prior Village Hall	None Received	
Barn Green & Hopwood				BHA	Alvechurch	Hopwood	Alvechurch	Hopwood Village Hall			Move away from Village Hall due to access issues			Westmead Hotel has much better access. Recommend moving to the Hotel for BHA.	Access is poor at the village hall and there is little difference in location so support moving to Westmead Hotel.	Move polling to Westmead Hotel	None Received	
Barn Green & Hopwood	2373	1576	6	BHB	Barn Green		Beacon	Friends Meeting House							No change	No change	None Received	
Belbroughton & Romsley		1332		BRA	Belbroughton	Belbroughton	Clent Hills	Belbroughton Recreation Centre	No change	BD11 15/8 Belbroughton and Fairfield PC					No change	No change	None Received	
Belbroughton & Romsley				BRB	Belbroughton	Fairfield	Woodvale	Fairfield Village Hall	No change	BD6 31/7 Fairfield Community Association BD12 15/8 Belbroughton and Fairfield PC					No change	No change	None Received	
Belbroughton & Romsley		774		BRC	Bourneheath		Woodvale	Bourneheath Village Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Belbroughton & Romsley		405		BRD	Clent		Clent Hills	Clent Parish Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Belbroughton & Romsley		924		BRD	Clent		Clent Hills	Clent Parish Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Belbroughton & Romsley		93		BRE	Frankley		Clent Hills	St Kenelms Church Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Belbroughton & Romsley		471		BRF	Hunnington		Clent Hills	St Kenelms Church Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Belbroughton & Romsley	5260	1264		BRG	Romsley		Clent Hills	St Kenelms Church Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Bromsgrove Central		2130		BVA			Bromsgrove Central	Ryland Centre							No change	No change	None Received	
Bromsgrove Central	2344	233	10	BVB			Bromsgrove East	Ryland Centre							No change	No change	None Received	
Catshill North				CAN	Catshill & North Marlbrook	Woodrow	Woodvale	Catshill Village Hall			Move to Catshill Methodist Church Hall	Electoral Officers			There is little difference in location and entrance to village hall is difficult so would support move to Catshill Methodist Church Hall providing CAS moves to Catshill Social Club	Move polling to Catshill Methodist Church	None Received	
	2200	2201																

Catshill South				CAS	Catshill & North Marlbrook	Barley Meadow	Woodvale	Catshill Methodist Church Hall			Could Catshill North and South be at both polling stations as residents have to go past Catshill Village Hall to get to the Church Hall.  Move to Catshill Social Club as in Polling District and looks to have better access	BD7 05/08 Councillor  Electoral Officers		Catshill Social Club suitable for polling station. Could accommodate 2 polling stations. Suggest Move CAS to Catshill Social Club and Move CAN to Catshill Methodist Church. If approved would require permission from Catshill Social Club Committee	Catshill Social Club is within the polling district and would stop the confusion mentioned by the Councillor. The move is supported.	Move Polling to Catshill Social Club	None Received	
	2224	2222																
Charford		2185	11	CFA			Bromsgrove South	St Andrews Church Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Charford	2286	96		CFB			Bromsgrove Central	St Andrews Church Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Cofton				COA	Cofton Hackett		Beacon	Cofton Hackett Village Hall			Would like to use the new Cofton Village Hall as an additional polling station.	BD9 13/8 Cofton Hackett Parish Council		To establish how many properties are being built on this site before considering a new polling district. New village hall not yet open.	The new hall is yet to be opened but would support Cofton Hackett residents voting here.	No change but keep progress of new Village hall and number of electora under review	New Hall is now open	Members to decide if they would prefer the new or old hall used for polling
		1887	335															
Cofton	2337	451		COB	Lickey & Blackwell	Lickey	Beacon	Trinity Church (Lickey Parish Centre)							No change	No change	None Received	
Drakes Cross	2477	2483		DRA	Wythall	Drakes Cross	Wythall	Park Hall, Silver Street							No change	No change	None Received	See comments regarding WWA
Hagley East	2353	2367	26	HGA	Hagley	Hagley East	Clent Hills	Hagley Community Centre							No change	No change	None Received	
Hagley West		1536	6	HGB	Hagley	Hagley West	Clent Hills	Hagley Community Centre							No change	No change	None Received	
Hagley West	2857	1310		HGC	Hagley	Hagley South	Clent Hills	Hagley Community Centre							No change	No change	None Received	
Hill Top	1811	1812		HTA			Bromsgrove West	Millfields Social Club							No change	No change	None Received	
Hollywood				HWA	Wythall	Hollywood	Wythall	Park Hall, Silver Street			Move to the Hub at Woodrush	BD5 and discussions, District Councillor (not Ward Member)		May 2017 Polling Station Questionnaire indicated electors were happy with Park Hall. Suggest no change.	No change - Not in PD	No change	None Received	See comments regarding WWA
	2375	2369																
Lickey Hills		467		LHA	Lickey & Blackwell	Lickey Monument	Beacon	Trinity Church (Lickey Parish Centre)	No change	BD10 14/8 Lickey and Blackwell PC					No change - Not in PD	No change	None Received	
Lickey Hills		1137	45	LHB	Lickey & Blackwell	Linthurst	Bromsgrove East	The Wheel, St Catherine's Church	No change	BD10 14/8 Lickey and Blackwell PC					No change	No change	None Received	
Lickey Hills				LHC	Lickey & Blackwell	Shepley	Bromsgrove East	The Wheel, St Catherine's Church	No change	BD10 14/8 Lickey and Blackwell PC			Consider moving LHC to Trinity Church	There maybe better parking facilities at Trinity Church but The Wheel has caused no complaints and the Parish Council is happy with it so would recommend no change.	No change	No change	None Received	
	2251	621																
Lowes Hill				LWA			Bromsgrove Central	Portable Building at Barnsley Hall Road			Move polling station away from portable building to changing rooms at polling place	Electoral Officers		Consider using changing rooms	Agreed to use changing rooms as a trial can revert back to portable building if not suitable.	Trail using changing rooms instead of portable building	None Received	
		1616																
Lowes Hill		516		LWB			Bromsgrove West	All Saints Church Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Lowes Hill	2603	458		LWC			Bromsgrove Central	All Saints Church Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Marlbrook		839		MAA	Catshill & North Marlbrook	Lower Marlbrook	Woodvale	St Luke's Church Centre							No change	No change	None Received	
Marlbrook		652		MAB	Lickey & Blackwell	Lickey Grange	Woodvale	St Luke's Church Centre							No change - Not in PD	No change	None Received	
Marlbrook		79		MAC			Beacon	St Luke's Church Centre							No change - Not in PD	No change	None Received	
Marlbrook	2412	834		MAD			Woodvale	St Luke's Church Centre							No change - Not in PD	No change	None Received	
Norton				NTA			Bromsgrove Central	Lickey End First School								As school doesn't close recommend no change	No change	None Received
		1322																
Norton		5		NTB			Bromsgrove East	Lickey End First School								As school doesn't close recommend no change	No change	None Received
		976	9	NTC			Bromsgrove Central	All Saints Church Hall							No change -Not in PD	No change	None Received	
Norton				NTD			Bromsgrove East	Lickey End First School								As school doesn't close recommend no change	No change	None Received
	2326	5																



Perryfields		639		PFA	Dodford with Grafton		Woodvale	Dodford Village Hall	No change	BD3 24/7 Clerk to Dodford with Grafton PC				No change	No change	None Received	
Perryfields		414		PFB			Bromsgrove West	Girl Guide Hut, Kidderminster Road					Consider future proofing for Perryfields Development. Holiday Inn, Room available suitable for polling station with good access for voters. However, Hotel on main Road and not central in polling district. Consider Sidemoor Frist School as an option when development is complete.	At the current time no change is recommended, this will need revisiting when the development is completed.	No change - Review polling place once development at Perryfields is completed.	None Received	
Perryfields	1493	425		PFC			Bromsgrove West	Portable Building at King George Close					See PFB above	See PFB above	No change - Review polling place once development at Perryfields is completed.	None Received	
Rock Hill		1139		RHA	Stoke	Stoke Heath	Bromsgrove South	Portable Building Morrison's		Move from portable building	Electoral Officers		Bowls Centre has adequate space for a polling station. To Write to centre and ask for permission to use and quote. Suggest moving from portable building to here.	This in conjunction with AVB moving which would free up the use of a portable building. Recommend this change.	Move polling to Bowls Centre	None Received	
Rock Hill		783		RHB			Bromsgrove South	Function Room, Court Leet		Move to St Andrews as closer	Electoral Officers			Distances are not much different and electors would not have to cross the busy road. Recommend this change.	Move polling to St Andrews Church Hall	None Received	
Rock Hill	2424	486		RHC			Bromsgrove West	Function Room, Court Leet						No change	No change	None Received	
Rubery North		2441	2432	RNA			Beacon	Holywell Primary School		Would like to move from school due to disruption to children and parents and other venues being available. Alternatives suggested : Rubery Library, Rubery Community & Leisure Centre, Royal British Legion Rubery, Rubery Social Club and Institute, Whetty Lane Church Centre, St Chad's Church Centre.	BD2 10/7 Holywell Primary School		Rubery Leisure Centre - good venue with adequate lighting outside. Limited pedestrian access- small footpath.	Suggest move to Rubery Leisure Centre to avoid use of school. Rubery Library unsuitable.	Move polling to Rubery Social Club	Move supported by District Councillor	
Rubery South		2491	2481	9	RSA		Beacon	Memorial Club (formally Royal British Legion), New Road		Have had complaints from Councillor in the past, check other venues	Electoral Officers		Rubery Social Club - Premise has good access points and plenty of space for a polling station. However, Limited Parking.	Would recommend a move to Rubery Social Club because of the entry problems at the Memorial Club.	No change	District Councillor (not Ward Member) would like this reviewed again with a view to using Rubery Social Club	
Sanders Park		1089		SAA			Bromsgrove West	Girl Guide Hut, Kidderminster Road						No change	No change	None Received	
Sanders Park		548		SAB			Bromsgrove Central	Girl Guide Hut, Kidderminster Road						No change - Not in PD	No change	None Received	
Sanders Park		558		SAC			Bromsgrove West	New Song Community Church						No change - Not in PD	No change	None Received	

Sanders Park	2717	511	7	SAD			Bromsgrove Central	Function Room, Court Leet							No change - Not in PD	No change	None Received	
Sidemoor		2526		SMA			Bromsgrove West	New Song Community Church							No change	No change	None Received	
Sidemoor	2609	68		SMB			Bromsgrove Central	New Song Community Church							No change - Not in PD	No change	None Received	
Slideslow		2629		SSA			Bromsgrove East	Fininstall First School	No change	BD4 29/7 Councillor	Would like to move from school due to disruption to children and parents. Alternatives suggested : St Godwolds Church Hall or Fininstall Village Hall	BD1 - 11/07 Fininstall First School	23/08 Aware school unhappy regarding use. Fininstall Village Hall too small. Suggestion of viewing Aston Fields Middle School	Fininstall Village Hall fine for current usage but not for any extra electors. Officers will try and view Aston Fields Middle School	Recommend continuing with Fininstall First School unless Aston Fields Middle School can accommodate a Polling Station.	No change - Although review if Aston Fields Middle School is an option.	None Received	Aston Fields Middle School not interested, however Rigby Hall Special School have offered to allow polling on their premises
Slideslow		2655	10	SSB			Bromsgrove Central	Fininstall First School	No change	BD4 29/7 Councillor	Would like to move from school due to disruption to children and parents. Alternatives suggested : St Godwolds Church Hall or Fininstall Village Hall	BD1 - 11/07 Fininstall First School	23/08 Aware school unhappy regarding use. Fininstall Village Hall too small. Suggestion of viewing Aston Fields Middle School	Fininstall Village Hall fine for current usage but not for any extra electors. Officers will try and view Aston Fields Middle School	Same as Polling District SSA above.	No change - Although review if Aston Fields Middle School is an option.	None Received	Aston Fields Middle School not interested, however Rigby Hall Special School have offered to allow polling on their premises
Tardebigge		287		TAA	Bentley Pauncefoot		Bromsgrove East	Bentley Village Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Tardebigge		556		TAB	Fininstall		Bromsgrove East	Fininstall Village Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Tardebigge		663		TAC	Tutnall & Cobley		Bromsgrove East	Tardebigge Church Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Tardebigge		150		TAD			Bromsgrove East	Fininstall Village Hall							No change - Not in PD	No change	None Received	
Tardebigge	2367	701		TAE			Bromsgrove East	Fininstall Village Hall							No change - Not in PD	No change	None Received	
Wythall East		961		WTA	Wythall	Grimes Hill	Alvechurch	Wythall Village Hall							No change - not in PD	No change	None Received	
Wythall East		745	7	WTB	Wythall	Truman's Heath	Wythall	Wake Green AFC Sports Pavilion							No change	No change	None Received	
Wythall East		2478	753	8	WTC	Wythall	Truman's Heath	Wythall	Woodrush Community Hub, Woodrush High School						No change - Not in PD	No change	None Received	
Wythall West		303		WWA	Wythall	Headley Heath	Wythall	Wythall Village Hall			Suggested moving to Park Hall	BD5 and discussions, District Councillor		Only 303 Electors - agree with move to Park Hall.	Recommend moving electors to Park Hall to alleviate parking problems at the Village Hall.	Move polling to Park Hall	Clr Hession - Hall maybe starting to charge for parking Wythall Residents Association - Suggests no change to current arrangements. Current polling place is in the ward, enables voters to walk to the location. Village hall severed by two bus routes. Concern about having to pay for parking at Park Hall. Clr Hession re-read and agreed with move provided car park charges are waived.  Chairman of Wythall Residents Association - Current polling station is within the ward. Important that a polling station should be in the ward. Concerns that most of the voters live in South Wythall and know the venue. Concern about car park charges at Park Hall.	It should be noted that most electors in WWA do not live within easy walking distance of the current polling place.
Wythall West		1355		WWB	Wythall	Wythall Heath	Alvechurch	Wythall Village Hall							No change	No change	None Received	
Wythall West		2038	634		WWC	Wythall	Walkers Heath	Wythall	Broadmeadow Junior School						No change - Not in District but there are no other premises available	No change	None Received	

**Appendix 2**  
Polling place option for  
polling districts SSA and SSB



Comsgrave Central Ward

BVA

SSB

TAD

Current polling place

Slideslow Ward

SSA

Tardebigge Ward

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BVB

Aston Fields Ward  
ASA

TAB

Alternative option for polling place

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Agenda Item 4

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# Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

This guidance provides a staged approach to conducting a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations according to the relevant legislative requirements. It builds on the guidance we have previously issued, and has benefited from feedback from local authorities on their experiences of carrying out their previous reviews. It also incorporates learning from the Commission's experience of administering the appeals process over the past five years.

## 1 Timing of compulsory reviews

1.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The next compulsory review must now be started and completed between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive).

1.2 Subsequent compulsory reviews must be started and completed within the period of 16 months that starts on 1 October of every fifth year after 1 October 2013.

1.3 A 'review' is all the steps set out in Schedule A1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983). Further information on what these steps are is included [later in this document](#). The review process, from the publication of the notice of the review until the publication of the documents at the end, must take place within the specified period.

1.4 The length of the review process is not prescribed, provided all the steps required by the legislation can be undertaken within it. However, the time allowed for consultation should be sufficient to enable interested persons and groups to read and understand the proposals, gather comments and respond with any alternative arrangements that they may wish to submit. The local authority may wish to have regard to any council guidelines on public consultation when carrying out the review.

1.5 Local authorities will need to decide when to carry out the review within the specified 16-month-period. In practice, (Acting) Returning Officers will often be asked to decide when the review should take place. In reaching their decision on timing, (Acting) Returning Officers will need to consider what other statutory duties and processes they and their staff will be carrying out in that time and how the review will fit with these.

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1.6 In relation to the 1 October 2018 – 31 January 2020 period, (Acting) Returning Officers will need to consider the following:

- **The canvass**

As in England and Wales the Acting Returning Officer is also the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO), any canvass period will be a busy time during which to conduct a review. Consideration will need to be given to resource requirements if the review process is to be started on or shortly after the start of a canvass as there will be some overlap between canvass activity and the review.

In Scotland, as the office of the Returning Officer is separate to that of the Electoral Registration Officer, the conduct of the canvass may have less of an impact on the conduct of the review.

- **Publication of the register**

The potential additional workload resulting from undertaking the review at the same time as carrying out canvass activity needs to be balanced against the benefits of completing a review in time for publication of the revised register. Completing the review in time for publication of the revised register means that any changes can be reflected in it, and that no subsequent alterations to the structure of an already published register will need to be made, thus avoiding the potential need to publish a further revised register.

- **Elections during the review period**

During the review period, there will be scheduled polls and could potentially be unplanned polls. . In each case, consideration will need to be given to how the work on a review would interact with any election/referendum preparations, including when work would need to be completed to avoid an impact on election/referendum processes.

- **Scheduling approval of the proposals**

It is important to factor into the timetable the most likely scheduled date of the council/committee meeting where the detailed review proposals would be formally considered and approved. The review officers should work closely with the lead officer in charge of these meetings to ensure that the date of the meeting and related deadlines can be factored into the review timescale.

- **Changes to electoral boundaries**

A number of local authorities may also have their local electoral boundaries reviewed during the 16-month period. If this is the case, (Acting) Returning Officers will need to consider how the electoral boundary review will fit with the polling district /polling place review and whether it would be possible and desirable to align the two.

Where the polling district/place review is to be carried out before the new electoral boundaries are fully in force, it will need to be based on the current electoral boundaries, but should also take any new boundaries

that are not yet in force into account. To avoid having to review the polling districts and polling places again once the new boundaries are fully in force, any parts of existing electoral areas that will be split when the new boundaries come into effect could be made into separate polling districts as part of the review.

Also, until the new boundaries are fully in force, the register will need to be constructed in a way that is capable of reflecting the current and the new boundaries. Again, this can be achieved by making any parts of existing electoral areas that will be split when the new boundaries come into effect into separate polling districts.

For the same reasons where, as a result of a review of one set of electoral boundaries, the boundaries for different elections are no longer co-terminous, those areas that are no longer co-terminous could be also be made into separate polling districts.

## 2 Roles and responsibilities and definition of terms

### Roles and responsibilities

#### **The local authority**

2.1 The statutory responsibility for reviewing UK Parliamentary polling districts and places rests with each relevant local authority in Great Britain for so much of any constituency as is situated in its area. A relevant local authority is, in England, the council of a district or London borough, in Scotland, a local authority, and, in Wales, the council of a county or county borough.

2.2 Depending on the structure of the local authority, it may not be the full council which makes the decisions on any changes to polling districts or polling places. Some local authorities may have delegated that function, in which case the decision on polling districts and polling places becomes the responsibility of a committee or sub-committee. This will be set out in the council's constitution.

#### **The Electoral Registration Officer**

2.3 Where a local authority makes any alterations to the polling districts within its area, the ERO must amend the register of electors accordingly – either on a notice of alteration or by publishing a revised register. The changes to the register take effect on the date that the ERO publishes a separate notice stating that the alterations have been made, which should be done to coincide with the publication of a notice of alteration/publication of a revised register.

#### **The (Acting) Returning Officer**

2.4 The (Acting) Returning Officer must comment during any review of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places on both existing polling stations and the polling stations that would likely be used if any new proposal for polling places were accepted.

2.5 The election rules require the (Acting) Returning Officer to decide how many polling stations are required for each polling place and they must allocate electors to the polling stations in such manner as they think most convenient.

#### **The Electoral Commission**

2.6 While legislation provides no role for the Commission in the review process, it does provide for a role after the conclusion of the review.

2.7 Once the local authority has published the results of its review, specified interested parties (see paragraph 7.2 below) may make representations to the Commission to reconsider any polling districts and polling places. We may



direct the authority to make any alterations to the polling places that we think necessary and, if the alterations are not made within two months, we may make the alterations ourselves.

## Definition of terms

### UK Parliamentary constituencies

2.8 The Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 states:

‘There shall for the purpose of parliamentary elections be the county and borough constituencies (or in Scotland the county and burgh constituencies), each returning a single member, which are described in Orders in Council made under this Act. [...] In this Act and, except where the context otherwise requires, in any Act passed after the Representation of the People Act 1948, “constituency” means an area having separate representation in the House of Commons.’

2.9 UK Parliamentary constituency boundaries cannot be changed by the review.

### Polling district

2.10 A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency for the purposes of a UK Parliamentary election.

2.11 In England, each parish is to be a separate polling district and, in Wales, each community should be a separate polling district, unless there are special circumstances. This means that a parish or community must not be in a polling district which has a part of either a different parish or community within it, or any un-parished part of the local authority area within it, unless special circumstances apply. Those special circumstances could arise if, for example, the parish/community has only a small number of electors and it is not practicable for the parish/community to be its own polling district.

2.12 In Scotland, each electoral ward must be divided into two or more polling districts unless there are special circumstances. Given the size of wards in Scotland, it is difficult to envisage what those special circumstances might be in practice.

2.13 When a parish or community is not a separate polling district or a Scottish electoral ward is not split into two or more polling districts, the special circumstances and the recommendation resulting from these should be clearly set in the review document for the council or relevant committee to consider.

### Polling place

2.14 A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district.

2.15 We are aware that some authorities designate the entire polling district as the polling place. However, Section 18B(4)(e) of the RPA 1983 states that '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'. We therefore consider that polling places should always be defined more specifically than simply the polling district - for example, by designating the name of the polling place (normally a particular building or area and its environs).

### **Polling station**

2.16 A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the local authority, polling stations are chosen by the relevant Returning Officer for the election.

## **3 Scope of compulsory reviews**

3.1 Polling districts and polling places for other elections are not automatically part of the compulsory review. However, as polling districts and polling places for other elections are based on UK Parliamentary polling arrangements, the requirements of any other elections that are held within the local authority area should be taken into consideration as part of the review. This means that although it is the (Acting) Returning Officer who is the primary Returning Officer for the purposes of the review and has a statutory role to participate in it, all Returning Officers within the constituency (if they are not also the (Acting) Returning Officer) should be involved in the review process.

## **4 Requirements of a review**

### **Overview of the legislative requirements**

#### **Designation of polling districts and polling places**

4.1 Local authorities must comply with the following legislative requirements regarding the designation of polling districts and polling places:

- each parish in England and community in Wales is to be a separate polling district, unless special circumstances apply
- in Scotland, each electoral ward must be divided into two or more separate polling districts, unless special circumstances apply
- 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
- 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)

## APPENDIX 3

- 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

### **Accessibility**

4.2 Local authorities must also comply with the following access requirements. As part of the review, they must:

- 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
- seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled

4.3 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.

4.4 See also [‘Considering accessibility issues’](#) below.

### **Formal review process (Schedule A1 steps)**

4.5 When carrying out the review, local authorities must:

- publish a notice of the holding of a review
- consult the (Acting) Returning Officer for every parliamentary constituency which is wholly or partly in its area
- publish all representations made by an (Acting) Returning Officer within 30 days of receipt by posting a copy of them at the local authority’s office and in at least one conspicuous place in their area and, if the authority maintains a website, by placing a copy on the authority’s website
- 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. Such persons must have an opportunity to make representations and to comment on the representations made by the (Acting) Returning Officer(s).
- on completion of a review, give reasons for its decisions and publish:
  - a. all correspondence sent to an (Acting) Returning Officer in connection with the review
  - b. all correspondence sent to any person whom the authority thinks has particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability
  - c. all representations made by any person in connection with the review
  - d. the minutes of any meeting held by the council to consider any revision to the designation of polling districts or polling places within its area as a result of the review
  - e. details of the designation of polling districts and polling places within the local authority area as a result of the review

- f. details of the places where the results of the review have been published

### Considering accessibility issues

4.6 Local authorities have a duty to review the accessibility of all polling places to disabled voters and ensure that every polling place, and prospective polling place, for which it is responsible is accessible to disabled voters 'so far as is reasonable and practicable'.

4.7 According to the Equalities and Human Rights Commission the duty to make reasonable adjustments comprises three requirements. For service providers and those exercising public functions, these requirements are:

- Where a provision, criterion or practice puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with those who are not disabled, to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage.
- Where a physical feature puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled to avoid that disadvantage or adopt a reasonable alternative method of providing the service or exercising the function.
- Where not providing an auxiliary aid<sup>1</sup> puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled, to provide that auxiliary aid.

4.8 In the Scope 2010 report 'Polls Apart 2010: Opening elections to disabled people' it was made clear that access is still a barrier to some disabled people who want to cast their vote in person.

4.9 Below, are some of the main physical access issues identified by SCOPE, which should be considered as part of a review:

- polling places and stations with steps into the entrance, or otherwise inaccessible
- narrow doorways and corridors
- lack of space within the polling place that did not enable motorised wheelchair manoeuvrability
- lack of space and secrecy for the elector and their companion to discuss the elector's choice of vote
- lack of low level polling booths or booths/tables that didn't provide disabled voters with confidence that they could cast their vote in secrecy as they were positioned close to the polling station staff
- a lack of chairs to enable people to rest
- a lack of a clear display of guidance or aids (such as tactile voting devices) to enable people to feel confident about the process
- inadequate lighting

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of a polling station, an auxiliary aid could, for example, be a ramp for wheelchair users.

4.10 These factors, and accessibility issues more generally, will also need to be considered by the Returning Officer as part of their training for polling station staff.

4.11 In [Appendix A](#) of this guidance we provide an accessibility checklist that can be used to assess the suitability of each polling place and polling station which covers these, as well as other issues.

4.12 In addition to writing to those groups or individuals the local authority has identified as having expertise in access issues, the authority should also engage any internal disability access group and/or disability officer as part of the review.

## 5 Planning the next compulsory review: 1 October 2018 – 31 January 2020 (inclusive)

5.1 Local authorities will need to decide when they are going to conduct the next compulsory review within the timescales provided by the legislation.

5.2 Even though the next compulsory review cannot start before 1 October 2018, local authorities can start planning for the review before then. There are also some preparatory steps, detailed below, which can be taken that fall outside the formal legal requirements of the review.

5.3 For example, local authorities may start compiling statistics and information which may assist them during the review. These may include:

- Electorate figures, broken down to street level within wards and existing polling districts.
- Any local authority or national statistics that estimate population change within the area.
- In England and Wales, a report from the authority's planning section detailing any proposed areas of new development and the approximate number of dwellings and expected population numbers for those areas. In Scotland, this information can be obtained from the Housing Land Audit.
- Detailed up-to-date maps of a scale that will assist in the designation of polling district boundaries.
- Details of current polling places and an indication as to their overall suitability for purpose (including, for example, any surveys, diagrams or photographs completed with the assistance of Presiding Officers or polling station inspectors or as part of a previous review or post-election evaluation). Further guidance can be found under ['Assessing the current arrangements and proposals for change'](#).
- Any comments or complaints regarding the current arrangements from the public, elected members or other bodies.

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- Up-to-date information gained from the existing and possible future polling station venue managers as to continued availability (highlighting, for example, planned renovation work or other future plans).
- Details of potential alternative buildings (public, private or temporary type constructions) that might appear suitable.
- Advice and guidance from local disability groups and disability organisations (such as, for example, SCOPE or Capability Scotland), and any expert help from officers within the council who are responsible for equality schemes.
- Terms of reference and the criteria for assessing the suitability of the current/proposed arrangements

5.4 Local authorities could also set the timetable for conducting the review. This may include booking the date of the council/ executive/committee meeting where the detailed review proposals would be formally considered.

5.5 The documents required to be published or communicated during the review, such as the notice of review and the letters to Returning Officers and those with expertise in disabled access, could also be prepared. However, the notice cannot be published nor the letters sent before 1 October 2018.

5.6 When planning for the review, the local authority will also need to identify who will lead and support the review, drawing personnel not only from electoral services but also from other parts of the authority who may have expertise to assist. Again, this can be done ahead of the start of the compulsory review period.

### Carrying out a preliminary review

5.7 The local authority should undertake a preliminary review of the current polling districts and polling places with a view to establishing their suitability, and identify any potential alternatives where required. This may be done before the start of the specified review period.

5.8 There is no requirement to change any of the polling districts and polling places if they are suitable, but any 'no change' decision must be fully justified as part of the overall proposals.

5.9 The review process should be structured, and must be conducted formally with supporting documentation. This will ensure that there is a complete audit trail for all decisions taken and will contribute to the transparency of the process.

5.10 Close liaison with other departments of the council, such as communications, those providing services to disabled residents, and planning will help to increase the efficiency of the overall review process.

5.11 The local authority planning and property services departments, for example, will be able to provide guidance on the availability of locations and

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premises and details of any residential developments that might have an impact on future electorate figures.

5.12 Modelling possible options where changes are deemed necessary can be undertaken by using mapping and planning tools available within the local authority, particularly as most authorities will now have access to GIS mapping services which can pull data from a variety of sources.

5.13 Local authorities should determine the most appropriate method of involving relevant local authority staff and other interested groups as appropriate.

### **Assessing the current arrangements and proposals for change**

5.14 The legislation suggests an approach starting with polling districts, followed by choosing polling places and then considering polling stations. In practice, however, it is important that good quality polling places are identified first, which can then be used as part of the process of defining suitable polling district arrangements that comply with the requirements set out in the legislation. [Appendix A](#) provides template checklists to assist with the evaluation of current/proposed polling places and polling stations.

#### **Polling districts**

5.15 The following should be considered as part of the assessment of the suitability of polling district boundaries:

- Are the boundaries well-defined? For example, do they follow the natural boundaries of the area? If not, is it clear which properties belong in the polling district?
- 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? Are there any obstacles to voters crossing the current polling district and reaching the polling place e.g., steep hills, major roads, railway lines, rivers?

#### **Polling places**

5.16 There are a number of factors that will need to be considered when reviewing existing polling places or when assessing new polling places, including:

- **Location:** Is it reasonably accessible within the polling district? Does it avoid barriers for the voter such as steep hills, major roads, rivers, etc.? Are there any convenient transport links?
- **Size:** Can it accommodate more than one polling station if required? If multiple polling stations are required, is the polling place capable of accommodating all voters going into and out of the polling stations, even where there is a high turnout?
- **Availability:** Is the building readily available in the event of any unscheduled elections? Is there any possibility that the building may be demolished as part of a new development?

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- **Accessibility:** Is the building accessible to all those entitled to attend the polling place?

5.17 Ideally, there would be the choice of a range of fully accessible buildings, conveniently located for electors in the area within which to establish polling stations. In practice, however, the choice of polling places will often be a balance between the quality of a building (access, facilities, etc.) and the proximity of the building to the electors. When making a decision, all factors will need to be considered and the authority will need to be able to demonstrate their reasoning behind the decision.

5.18 Where, because of local circumstances, a polling place has been selected that is not fully accessible, then reasonable adjustments must be undertaken to provide access for all electors. Alternatively, the local authority should consider whether it would be appropriate to designate a polling place that falls outside the polling district.

5.19 Part of the decision-making process involves assessing if the polling place is capable of accommodating more than one polling station together with the necessary staff and equipment, particularly in circumstances where the number of electors allocated to a polling place is high. The number of electors allocated to a particular polling station should not exceed 2,500.

5.20 In instances where there may be a higher turnout, such as at a UK Parliamentary election, (Acting) Returning Officers may wish to set up multiple polling stations within the polling place. Consideration will need to be given to whether the size and layout of the area or building can accommodate such arrangements.

### **Polling stations**

5.21 When assessing the suitability of a room or area for use as a polling station, the (Acting) Returning Officer should consider how the size and layout would allow for the most effective throughput of voters, including in those instances where there is a high number of electors in the polling station at any one time on polling day. Each polling station should be designed to provide suitable conditions for the elector to vote in private, for staff to conduct elections in an efficient and effective manner and for those entitled to observe the voting process to do so without compromising the secrecy of the ballot.

### **Use of schools**

5.22 It should be noted that for the purpose of taking the poll in England and Wales, the (Acting) Returning Officer is entitled to use free of charge schools maintained or assisted by a local authority as well as those schools that receive grants made out of moneys provided by Parliament. This includes academies and free schools. In Scotland, the rooms in schools that can be used free of charge for the taking of the poll are those in schools that are not independent schools within the meaning of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.



## 6 The review process

### Stage 1 – Notification of the review

6.1 The formal commencement of the review requires the local authority to give notice of the holding of a review. The notice must:

- be displayed at the local authority's office and in at least one conspicuous place within the authority
- be published on the local authority website

6.2 Additionally, the authority could display copies in other public buildings and, in particular, those buildings frequented by disabled residents. The authority's disability officer should be able to give guidance on the most suitable places for reaching disabled residents.

6.3 The content of the notice is not prescribed, but should state:

- that the local authority is conducting a review of polling districts and polling places
- that the (Acting) Returning Officer will make a comment on proposed polling stations, and an indication of when and where the (Acting) Returning Officer's representations will be made available
- that electors within the authority or within a UK Parliamentary constituency which has any part in the authority may make a representation
- that the authority would welcome the views of all residents, particularly disabled residents, on the authority's proposals, the (Acting) Returning Officer's representation or any other matters
- that the authority would welcome any person or body with expertise in access for persons with any type of disability to comment on the authority's proposals, the (Acting) Returning Officer's representation or any other matters
- that persons or bodies making representations should, if possible, give alternative places that may be used as polling places
- the postal address, e-mail address and website address at which documents can be inspected and representations made
- an indication of the timetable of the review and a deadline for representations

6.4 The authority should also send a copy of the notice to interested parties such as elected representatives (Councillors, MPs, MSPs, AMs, MEPs, etc.), political parties, disability groups and other stakeholders. Additionally, the authority could issue a press release and use social media feeds to draw attention to the review and the process.

## Stage 2 – Consultation

6.5 The consultation stage is for representations and comments to be made on the existing and proposed arrangements for polling districts and polling places. There are two aspects of this stage:

- A compulsory submission from the (Acting) Returning Officer of the UK Parliamentary constituency or constituencies, which must then be published by the local authority.
- Submissions from electors and other interested persons and bodies, including elected representatives and those with expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for disabled people.

### **The (Acting) Returning Officer's submission**

6.6 The (Acting) Returning Officer's submission must comment on both the existing polling stations and the polling stations that would likely be used based on any proposed polling places. The (Acting) Returning Officer's report must also contain information as to the location of polling stations within polling places. Completing the templates at [Appendix A](#) may help to form a basis for this report.

6.7 The local authority must publish the (Acting) Returning Officer's comments within 30 calendar days of receipt. The comments should be published at the local authority offices and in at least one conspicuous place within each UK Parliamentary constituency contained wholly or partly in the local authority area. They should also be published on the local authority's website. Additionally, the (Acting) Returning Officer's response could be copied and made available in council offices, libraries, community centres or other places where residents may visit.

### **Consultees**

6.8 The authority should consult widely on the review and should seek out the views of interested groups or bodies, including electors, candidates and agents, political parties and members of the council, as well as other elected representatives (MPs, MSPs, AMs, MEPs, etc.).

6.9 It will be particularly important to consult with those who have specific experience of assessing access for persons with different disabilities. These could include disability sections or occupational health departments within the council, as well as local and national disability groups. The authority should give consideration to the different types of disability which may make voting in person more difficult, and should also consider the council's own policy on disabled access. Consultees should be asked for comment both in general and, if appropriate, about particular buildings or areas within the authority.

6.10 Any persons involved in the consultation have the right to comment on the recommendations proposed by the (Acting) Returning Officer.

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6.11 Any elector for a UK Parliamentary constituency either wholly within or partly within the local authority area may comment on any of the recommendations within the whole local authority area.

6.12 Any person or body that makes a comment should be invited to suggest alternative polling districts/polling places and should be encouraged to give a reason for the alternative proposal so that it may be given appropriate consideration. As mentioned above, the notice published by the local authority should provide a deadline for the submission of comments.

### Stage 3 – Concluding the review

6.13 After considering all of the representations, the local authority must decide on the most appropriate polling districts and polling places, which must be approved by the council.

6.14 If the review results in the alteration of one or more polling districts, the Electoral Registration Officer must make the necessary alterations to the electoral register. Depending on the timing of the review and the extent of the changes, the ERO has three options to ensure the register reflects the new polling districts:

- update the register on publication of the revised register following the conclusion of the annual canvass
- re-publish a revised register at another point in the year
- publish a notice of alteration

6.15 Where the Electoral Registration Officer has decided to revise their register by republishing it to incorporate the changes, the law requires that the ERO publish a notice 14 calendar days before the publication of the revised version of the register in a local newspaper, at their office and at some other conspicuous place or places in the area. The legislation does not allow for a part publication of the register – a revised register can only be published for the whole of the local authority area.

6.16 Any alteration is effective on the date on which the Electoral Registration Officer publishes a notice stating that the alterations have been made, which should be published at the same time as the register is revised or a notice of alteration published, as appropriate.

### Stage 4 – Publishing the conclusions of the review

6.17 Once the council has agreed the proposals, details of the new polling districts and polling places must be made available to the public. These should be made available at the local authority offices, in at least one conspicuous place in the constituency (or constituencies), and on the local authority's website. The reasons for choosing each particular polling district and polling place must be given.

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6.18 Along with the reasons for the final decision of the review, the following must also be published:

- all correspondence sent to the (Acting) Returning Officer in connection with the review
- all correspondence sent to any person whom the authority contacted because they had particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for disabled people
- all representations made by any person in connection with the review
- the minutes of any meeting held by the council to consider any revision to the designation of polling districts or polling places within its area as a result of the review
- details of the designation of polling districts and polling places within its area as a result of the review
- details of the places where the results of the review have been published

6.19 It is important that electors are made aware of any changes made to the place they must attend to vote. For example, the poll card for the next election they are entitled to vote at could indicate if their station has changed.

## 7 The appeals process

7.1 Following the conclusion of the local authority's review, certain persons have a right to make representations to the Commission. If, on receipt of such representations, we find that a local authority's review 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

then we may direct the authority to make any alterations to the polling places that we think necessary and, if the alterations are not made within two months, we may make the alterations ourselves.

## Who is entitled to make representations to the Commission?

7.2 The following may make representations:

- in England, any parish council which is wholly or partly situated within each constituency, or parish meeting where there is no such council
- in Wales, any community council which is wholly or partly situated within each constituency
- thirty or more registered electors in each constituency (although electors registered anonymously cannot make a representation)

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- a person (except the (Acting) Returning Officer) who made representations to the authority when the review was being undertaken
- any person who is not an elector in a constituency in the authority's area but who the Commission thinks has sufficient interest in the accessibility of disabled persons to polling places in the area or has particular expertise in relation to the access to premises or facilities of disabled persons

7.3 In addition, the (Acting) Returning Officer may make observations on any representations made to us.

### Format for all representations

7.4 All representations must be made in writing, either by post, e-mail or fax. The representation must be as specific as possible and should clearly state the manner in which it is alleged that the local authority has failed to properly conduct the review. There are only two grounds on which a representation may be made. These are:

- the local authority has failed to meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency
- the local authority has failed to take sufficient account of accessibility to disabled persons of the polling station/ polling stations within a polling place.

7.5 Representations based on any other premise will not be considered.

7.6 The representation should include the location of the polling place and any other relevant information regarding the polling place at issue, stating specifically why it is inaccessible or does not meet the reasonable requirements of the electors.

7.7 A representation may also include for consideration specific proposals for changing the place that has been designated as the polling place.

### The decision-making process of the Commission

7.8 Upon receipt of a representation, we will request all relevant documentation from the local authority and will show the authority the representation.

7.9 The (Acting) Returning Officer is entitled to make observations on the representation submitted to us and should give a report on the polling station(s) which would likely be used should the representation be successful.

7.10 The documentation from the local authority, the observations of the (Acting) Returning Officer and any other relevant information will be taken into consideration, in conjunction with the representation.

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7.11 We may seek advice from persons with expertise on accessibility issues when making our decision.

7.12 We will set out in writing our conclusions and the reasons for our decision. Our decision will be issued to the person(s) who made the representation, the local authority and the (Acting) Returning Officer. The decision and related documents will also be published on our website. Local authorities are advised to publish the outcome of the appeal in the same way as the results of the review were published.

7.13 We may direct the local authority to consider any alterations to the polling places that we deem necessary under the review. After two months, if the local authority has failed to make the alterations, we can itself make the alterations as if the local authority had implemented them.

7.14 Representations should be sent to:

Legal Counsel  
The Electoral Commission  
3 Bunhill Row  
London EC1Y 8YZ  
Tel: 020 7271 0500  
Fax 020 7271 0505  
Email: [appeals@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:appeals@electoralcommission.org.uk)

7.15 Further information on previous appeals, including the decisions made by the Commission can be found on [our website](#).

## 8 Making amendments to polling places outside of the compulsory review period and carrying out interim reviews

8.1 If a polling station becomes unavailable, the (Acting) Returning Officer should consider whether another polling station could be designated within the polling place. Changing the polling station within the polling place would not require a review.

8.2 If a building becomes unavailable before an election, the polling place can be changed by the local authority in accordance with their decision making arrangements. If delegation procedures are in place, for example to a committee of the council, these should be followed as set out in the council's constitution and the person or persons who are entitled to make changes to polling places should be contacted.

8.3 Between compulsory reviews, all polling places and polling stations used should be kept under consideration, and an evaluation of their suitability carried out after each election. If any changes are identified as being

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desirable, the same steps should be followed as for conducting the compulsory review.

8.4 The council can carry out an interim review and change some of their polling districts and polling places before the end of the 5-year cycle, but the same processes should be undertaken for the affected areas as for the compulsory review. Without going through these processes, the council will have difficulty evidencing their decision making and explaining how they took into consideration the views of disabled persons and the reasonable requirements of electors.

## Appendix A - templates

The following templates have been designed for use in evaluating the suitability of buildings as polling places and polling stations.

**Part A** – to be completed by the local authority with the details of the current polling places.

**Part B** – to be completed by the local authority to evaluate external areas' access and facilities both outside the perimeter of the building and within the boundary of the building itself.

**Part C** – to be completed by the local authority to assess internal access to the polling station, but excluding the polling station itself (i.e. covering the corridors leading to the polling station accommodation, but not the area in which polling will be carried out), and the facilities available within the building. Should the proposed building, room or area to be used as the polling station have direct access to the road/pavement or external parts, Part C can be excluded from this assessment.

**Part D** – to be completed by the (Acting) Returning Officer with the details of the area that is, or is likely to be, used as the polling station(s).

*(If local authorities already have up-to-date detailed information to assist with the completion of Parts B, C and D, this can be inserted into the individual templates together with any diagrams and/or photographs to enable the building to be re-assessed on a site visit. The information should be verified as part of the visit.)*

**Part E** – to be completed by the local authority with any comments or complaints received from stakeholders as part of the consultation exercise. Completion can provide evidence that the review considered the submissions as part of the formal evaluation process.

Any alternative proposals or suggestions put forward for new polling places/stations should be evaluated using the templates, and the results should be collated to facilitate the provision of appropriate feedback.



## Polling place / polling station – evaluation checklist

Part A – Current polling place details		
Polling place identifier		
Polling place name		
Polling place address		
Number of electors (If more than one polling station within the polling place, identify split of electors)		
Building availability for future elections/referendums		
Polling place review		
Check	√	Comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there suitable transport links?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there any access issues regarding main/busy roads, railways, rivers, etc.?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the polling place capable of accommodating more than one polling station together with the necessary staff and equipment? If so, could it accommodate all allocated voters going in and out of the polling stations, even where there is a high turnout?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the building readily available in the event of any unscheduled elections?</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there any possibility that the building may be demolished as part of a new development?</li> </ul>		

***Identify any complaints/comments received from stakeholders at previous electoral events***

Date reviewed:

Officer initials:

Part B – External areas access and facilities		
Check	(√)	Comments
• Are there good public transport links to the polling place?		
• Is the approach to the building safe and free from obstructions and does it have a dropped kerb?		
• Is the building clearly identifiable?		
• Is additional signage required between street and entrance?		
• Is there the facility to put up the required signage for polling day?		
• Are there parking facilities for disabled people?		
• Are there parking facilities for polling staff?		
• Does the approach to the building have external lighting?		
• Does the building have level access? Yes/No. If no –		
• Has a purpose built ramp been installed?		
• If so, does it have a handrail?		
• Does the ramp have a gentle slope?		
• Does the building require a temporary ramp or is there an alternative disabled access?		
• Is the entrance door wide enough for a disabled person using a motorised wheelchair?		
• Are the doors light enough for frail/elderly voters to open?		
• Can the 'Guidance for voters' notice be clearly displayed outside the premises, as required by the election rules?		
• Are there any external security concerns?		
• Can tellers be accommodated outside the building?		

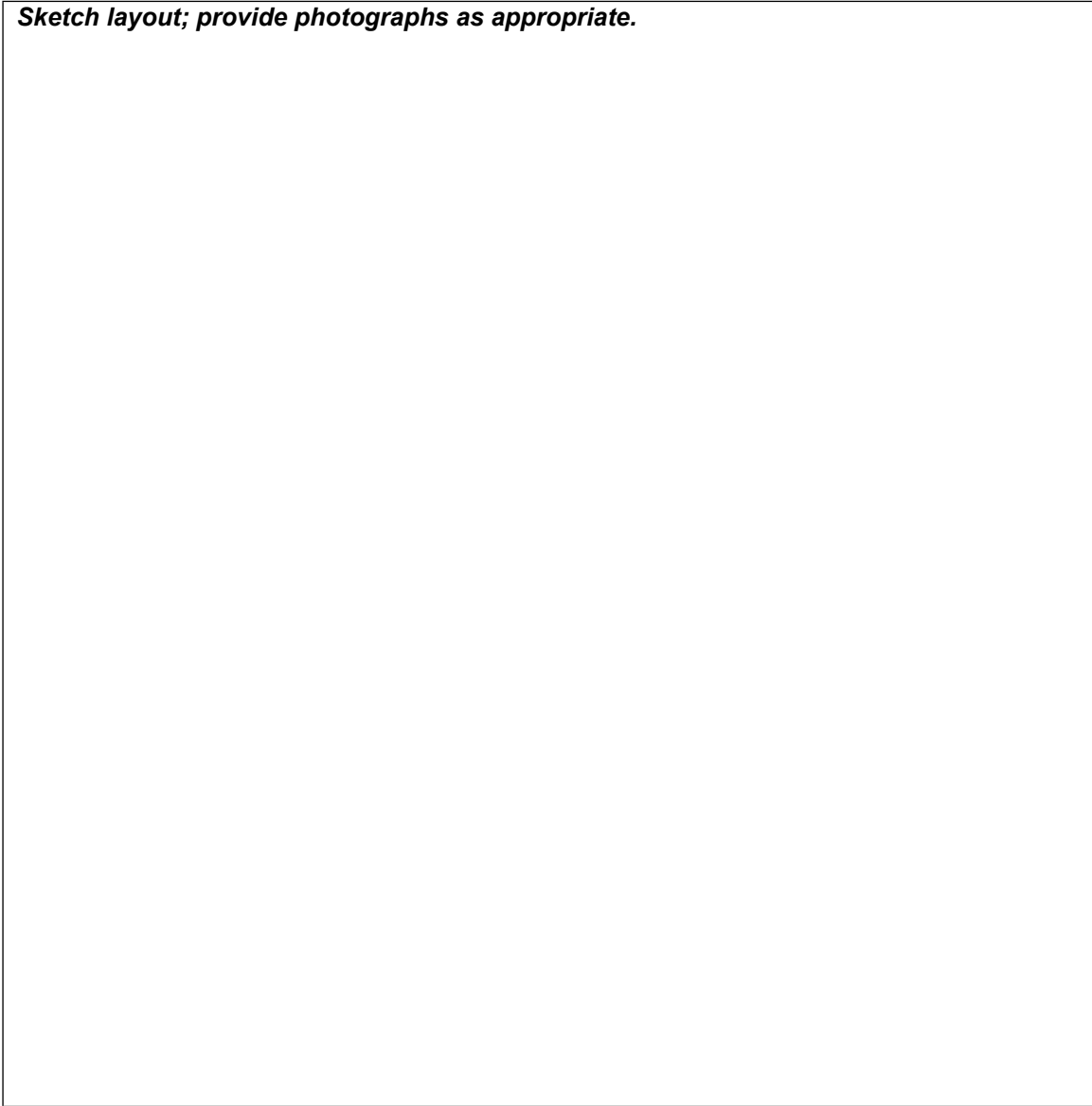
Date reviewed:

Officer initials:

## External plan – B1

Show external layout, street name(s), car parking (including disabled car parking), ramps, steps, lighting, appropriate places for signage, etc.

***Sketch layout; provide photographs as appropriate.***



Date reviewed:

Officer initials:

Part C – Internal areas access and facilities		
Check	(√)	Comments
• Are all doors easy to open (including by wheelchair users) or do they need to be permanently locked back?		
• Are there any internal steps or obstructions/hazards?		
• Are any doormats level with the floor?		
• Is the floor covering non-slip (including in wet weather)?		
• Are there any corridors that may cause access problems?		
• Is there adequate lighting in the corridors?		
• Are there toilet facilities?		
• Is there a kitchen that staff can use?		
• Is the area adequately lit for day and night time?		
• Is there adequate space for signage?		
• How many polling stations can the building accommodate?		
• Does the building have a telephone available (land line) in the event of mobile network problems?		

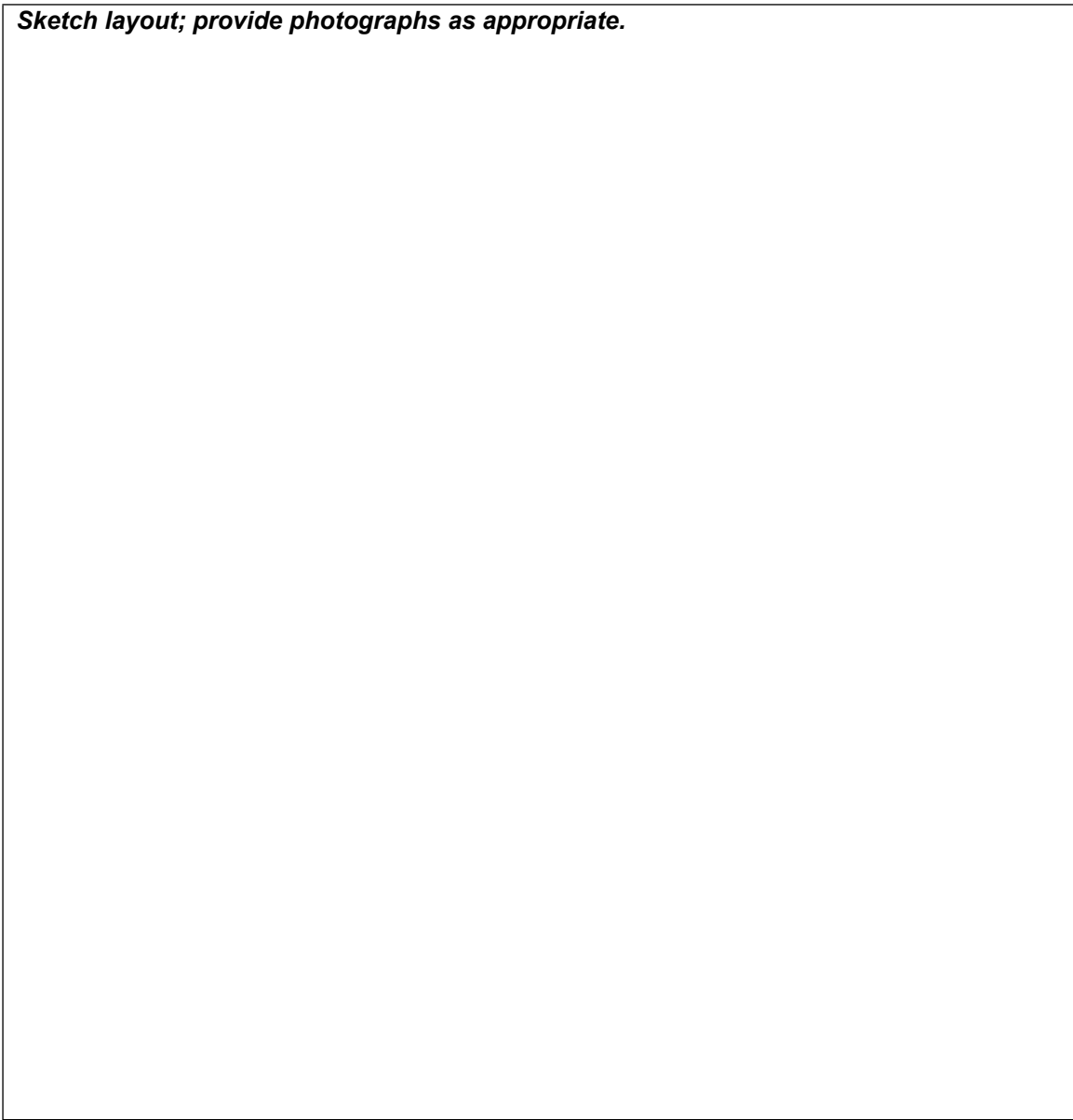
Date reviewed:

Officer initials:

## Internal access leading to polling station(s) – C1

Show internal areas of the building, excluding the actual polling station where voting will take place, including corridors that link to the polling station, kitchen and toilets, and highlight any possible signage requirements and potential hazards. Also indicate door swing direction and ease of opening, any areas of poor lighting, and any areas of uneven floor, etc.

***Sketch layout; provide photographs as appropriate.***



Date reviewed:

Officer initials:

Part D – The polling station(s)		
Check	(√)	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there sufficient space to accommodate and manage the flow of a high volume of electors in the case of a high turnout of electors?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If multiple polling stations need to be provided, are there other rooms available, or can the space be clearly divided to provide adequate room for more than one polling station?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there sufficient space inside the polling station to comfortably accommodate staff, voters, polling agents and observers?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could ballot booths be positioned in a way that would preserve the secrecy of the ballot, even where there may be a high volume of electors?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there adequate lighting for day and night time?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there suitable furniture (tables and chairs) available for all types of election for polling staff and for those voters who may need to rest?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could motorised wheelchairs be accommodated?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can the official notices be clearly displayed, including the large-print version of the ballot paper(s)?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Date reviewed:

Officer initials:

## Internal – The polling station(s) – D1

Identify the size and shape of the area available for polling. Include the position of the door(s), any windows and how the furniture and equipment should be laid out to accommodate all those entitled to be inside the polling station, taking into account access requirements for all voters, including those in wheelchairs, and demonstrating how the space should be used to ensure the most efficient flow of voters and the effective administration of the voting process.

Part E – Comments from stakeholders during consultation
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Comment	Name/organisation	Response by (A)RO

# Agenda Item 4

Date reviewed:

Officer initials:

***Additional comments from (A)RO***

