

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE**  
**2023**

21 September

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**Statutory Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2023**

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

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1.1 that the communications plan for the review in appendix 1 be agreed.**

**2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 At the meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on the 24 July 2023 it was agreed that the statutory review would formally commence on 2 October 2023.

2.3 The statutory review covers, Polling Districts (a geographical area, which tend not to cross Ward or Parish Boundaries), Polling Place (a building or area where Polling Stations are located) and Polling Stations (the room or area where polling takes place, the decision on location of the polling station is decided by the (Acting) Returning Officer).

2.4 The review consists of four stages:

- Stage 1 – Notification
- Stage 2 – Consultation
- Stage 3 – Concluding the Review
- Stage 4 – Publication

- 2.5 The (Acting) Returning Officer must make a submission regarding current and any proposed polling stations.
- 2.6 The Committee had requested a communications plan to be considered before the review commences, this is attached in appendix 1.
- 2.7 There will be a dedicated webpage on the Council's website which will have all the information on current polling districts, places and stations. The webpage will also inform those interested how to respond in terms of suggesting changes to polling districts, places or stations.

Interested parties including members of the public will be able to:

- Write directly to the Electoral Services Manager.
- Download and email the form on the webpage.
- Complete the electronic form on the webpage.

Officers will write to interested parties and stakeholders including All Ward Councillors, the MP, County Councillors, Parishes and local interest groups including organisations that deal with different forms of disability where voting in person could pose a difficulty.

- 2.8 Officers will be contacting individuals or organisations that have commented on their own polling station and invite them to make representations.
- 2.9 Information regarding the review will also be sent to Parish Clerks to post on their websites/parish notice boards.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Review will be undertaken as required under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Electoral Administration Act 2013, and in accordance with relevant Electoral Commission Guidance.
- 4.2 a) Authority to set Polling District boundaries and to designate polling places rests with the Council (Statutory elements of the Council's Constitution under the Local Government Act 2000). 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, the Equality Act 2010 and the Elections Act 2022.
- 4.3 "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."
- 4.4 The Elections Act 2022 has placed new considerations for Local Authorities in regard to polling places. Key considerations are accessibility and checking voter's ID to ensure polling stations have suitable space to allow polling station staff to check documents and provide a privacy screen or separate area for confidential conversations.

**5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS**

**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

- 5.1 This report deals with statutory functions but relates to the strategic purpose of an effective and sustainable council.

**Climate Change Implications**

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

**6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

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

**Operational Implications**

- 6.2 The review will take up a large amount of Officer in time in dealing with consultation, producing statistics, maps and reporting back to this Committee.

**7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

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

**8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Appendix 1 – Communications Plan

Local Government Boundary Commission for England Guidance

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Relevant statutory provisions

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**9. REPORT SIGN OFF**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Name and Job Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Hotham	9 September
Head of Service		Sent 8 September
Financial Services		Sent 8 September
Legal Services		Sent 8 September