

Meeting:	Council
Meeting date:	27 March 2025
Report of:	Bryn Roberts, Director of Governance
Portfolio of:	Cllr Claire Douglas, Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Policy, Strategy and Partnerships

Decision Report: Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

Subject of Report

1. This report presents Members with the outcome of the public consultation on proposals to amend some polling districts and polling places within the City of York Council area, following the statutory Polling District Review.

Benefits and Challenges

2. The council must, by law, review polling districts and polling places at least every five years.
3. Polling places must be accessible for electors. It can be challenging to identify suitable venues in each polling district, and this is often more difficult in rural areas.
4. Suitable, accessible polling stations can help to increase turnout at an election, and may be of benefit when recruiting polling station staff.

Policy Basis for Decision

5. The Representation of the People Act 1983 places a duty on the Council to divide the authority area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each polling district for the purpose of holding elections.

6. Polling places must be accessible for electors and should have suitable facilities for polling station staff who will be working in excess of 15 hours on polling day.
7. Contingency arrangements are important in the event that a polling place becomes unavailable or unsuitable at short notice in the lead up to an election, therefore, delegated authority is required to enable the Returning Officer to make changes to the polling scheme in order to ensure the safe delivery of the election.

Recommendation and Reasons

8. Council is recommended to:
 - i. approve the final recommendations of the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places, as set out at Annex 1
 - ii. delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer, acting in their capacity as the Council's Returning Officer, to make urgent changes to the polling scheme during a statutory election period, where time does not permit a report to be presented to the Audit and Governance Committee. Where such urgent changes are proposed, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee and relevant ward councillors will be consulted.

Reason: To ensure that polling arrangements within the City remain fit for purpose for all elections.

Background

9. The following rules must be adhered to when designating polling districts and polling places:
 - each parish in England and community in Wales must be a separate polling district, unless there is a good reason for this to not be the case.
 - a polling place must be designated for each polling district, unless the district is so small or remote that it doesn't matter where the polling station is.

- the polling place must be in the district, unless there's a good reason to put it outside the district (for example, if there's no accessible polling place in the district).
 - the polling place must be small enough so that electors in different parts of the district can easily find it.
10. The following definitions may be helpful when reading the report and Annexes:
- “Polling districts” are geographical electoral areas into which wards and constituencies may be sub-divided.
 - “Polling places” are the buildings or areas designated by the council where electors in a polling district go to vote in person.
 - “Polling stations” are the number of issuing desks in the building or area that is the designated polling place.
11. The Audit and Governance Committee, at its meeting on 27 November 2024, approved the commencement of a Polling District and Polling Place Review. This report sets out the responses received to the statutory consultation on that review.
12. The final recommendations for Polling Districts and Polling Places, shown at Annex 1, were approved by Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting on 18 March 2025 and are recommended to Council for adoption.

Consultation Analysis

13. To ensure a wide circulation of the statutory consultation, it was made available on the Council’s website and communicated via social media channels. In addition, to avoid digital exclusion issues, paper copies were made available and distributed as widely as possible. Several consultees were informed directly.
14. The consultation was translated into a British Sign Language video and an Easy Read document.
15. During the consultation period, a number of representations were received, and these are shown at Annex 2.
16. A polling station accessibility audit took place during the May 2024 elections, conducted by Presiding Officers appointed at each station, with a ‘mop-up’ exercise carried out subsequently. This

audit has been taken into consideration alongside the consultation responses when preparing the revised schedule of polling places. A summary of the audit can be found at Annex 3 and includes the mitigations proposed to address issues that were recorded.

17. Officers have undertaken visits to proposed revised polling stations, to ensure that they are accessible and suitable for electors and polling station staff.

Organisational Impact and Implications

18. **Equalities and Human Rights** – The Council's Returning Officer has a duty to ensure that polling places are reasonably accessible. So far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places that have been designated are accessible to electors with disabilities as required by legislation.

Financial – the review incurred costs of £769.50 for the production of British Sign Language video and £250.00 for the Easy Read translation. If implemented as recommended, it is likely that the review will result in reduced costs for the delivery of elections.

Human Resources – None directly arising from this report.

Legal - In accordance with S18A-E of the Representation of the People Act 1983, local authorities must undertake a review of all polling districts and polling places used for parliamentary elections every five years. The current compulsory review period began on 1 October 2024 and ended on 31 January 2025.

Procurement – None directly arising from this report.

Health and Wellbeing – None directly arising from this report.

Environment and Climate – None directly arising from this report.

Affordability – None directly arising from this report.

Data Protection and Privacy – None directly arising from this report.

Communications – None directly arising from this report.

Economy – None directly arising from this report.

Risks and Mitigations

19. Failure to approve the review would represent a risk to the authority as the review is a statutory requirement.

Wards Impacted

20. All wards were involved in the review process.

Contact details

For further information please contact the authors of this Decision Report.

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Background papers

- **Electoral Commission Guidance:**
[Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations | Electoral Commission](#)

Annexes

1. Final Polling District and Polling Place Review recommendations
2. Comments and representations received
3. Accessibility audit summary – May 2024 Polls
4. Detailed list of polling places