

Meeting:	Audit and Governance Committee
Meeting date:	17 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

Audit and Governance Committee Report: Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

Subject of Report

1. The purpose of the report is to consider and approve the final recommendations of the Review of Polling Districts and Places.
2. 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.
3. The council must review polling districts and polling places at least every five years.

Policy Basis

4. The outcome of the review will be to:
 - Improve the way the council and its partners work together to deliver better services
 - Improve our focus on the needs of customers and residents in designing and providing services

Recommendations and Reasons

5. Audit and Governance Committee is recommended to:

- (i) Agree the final recommendations to the polling places and districts as set out in Annex 1 until the next statutory review, or until it is superseded by any subsequent review of any polling place or district.
- (ii) Publish the revised electoral register on 1 May 2025. *(Where the ERO has decided to revise their register by republishing it to incorporate the changes, the law requires that they 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.)*
- (iii) Delegate to the Chief Operating Officer, in their capacity as the Council's Returning, the power 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 Committee will be consulted, along with the relevant ward councillors. This will ensure that polling arrangements in the City remain fit for purpose for each election called.

Reason: To comply with statutory requirements and to give better flexibility with making decisions regarding polling places between statutory reviews.

Background

6. 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.
7. The following definitions may be helpful when reading the report and Appendices:
- “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.
8. At the meeting on 27 November 2024 the Audit and Governance Committee approved the commencement of a Polling District and Polling Place Review. This report sets out the responses received and the final recommendations to Polling Districts and Polling Places.
9. **Delegated authority for the Chief Operating Officer**
In addition to conducting the review, this report seeks delegated authority to enable the Chief Operating Officer, in their capacity as the Council’s Returning Officer, to make urgent changes to polling places, if necessary, to ensure that polling arrangements in the City remain fit for purpose for each election called. This delegation is sought for any review outside of a statutory review, for example, if a polling place became inaccessible at short notice before an election.

Consultation Analysis

10. The consultation in respect of the Polling Districts and Places Review was carried out between 5 December and 31 January 2025. Comments and representations received are set out in annex 2. The review was conducted in accordance with the Electoral Commission’s guidance on conducting such reviews.
11. To ensure a wide circulation of the consultation, it was made available on the Council’s website, paper copies were distributed, it was communicated via social media and several consultees

were directly informed.

12. The consultation was also translated into a British Sign Language video and an Easy Read document.
13. During the consultation period, a number of representations were received made up as follows:

Responder type	Number of responses
Voter / elector	53
Councillor	48
Other	4

14. A polling station accessibility audit took place during the May 2024 elections, conducted by Presiding Officers appointed at each station. 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.
15. Officers have undertaken visits to proposed revised polling stations, to ensure that they are accessible and suitable for electors and polling station staff.

Risks and Mitigations

16. Failure to undertake the review would represent a risk to the authority as the review is a statutory requirement.

Implications

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.

Equalities – 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.

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 1st October 2024 and ended on 31 January 2025.

Crime and Disorder, Information Technology and Property – None directly arising from this report.

Wards Impacted

17. All wards are involved in the review process.

Contact details

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

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Report approved:	Yes
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Background papers

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

Annexes

1. Final recommendations
2. Comments and representations received
3. Accessibility audit summary
4. Detailed list of polling places