

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

COUNCIL

**REVIEW OF UK PARLIAMENTARY POLLING DISTRICTS
AND POLLING PLACES**

OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To report on the requirement to undertake a compulsory review of local UK Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places.
- 1.2 The review will have no impact upon the polling districts or places for the council's local district elections and town and parish elections in May 2019.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 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 by 31 January 2020 (inclusive). (Subsequent compulsory reviews must be started and completed within the period of 16 months that starts on 1 October of every 5th year after 1 October 2013).
- 2.2 A "review" is all the steps set out in Schedule A1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA1983). The review process, from the publication of a notice of a review until the publication of the documents at the end, must take place and be completed by 31 January 2020
- 2.3 The length of the review process is not prescribed within the legislation, provided that all the steps required by it 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.
- 2.4 Guidance received from the Electoral Commission indicates that local authorities will need to decide when to carry out the review within the

specified period taking into account other statutory duties and processes the (Acting) Returning Officer and his staff will be carrying out in that time period and how the review will fit into these. In particular, in the period leading up to 31 January 2020 (Acting) Returning Officers will need to consider the following -

- **The Canvass** – Any canvass period will be a busy time to commence/conduct a review. Consideration will need to be given to resource requirements during the canvass period as there will be overlap between canvass activity and the review.
- **Publication of the Electoral 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. The outcome of the review may impact upon the 2020 canvass, with the new registers being published on 1 December 2020.
- **Elections during the review period** – During the review period there may be scheduled and unscheduled polls. In each case there will be no direct impact on the polls but consideration will have to be given to interaction and implementation of outcomes of the review for future election processes. (During the review period, there will be the council's own local district elections and town and parish council elections).
- **Scheduling approval of the proposals** - It will be necessary to factor into the timetable the most likely scheduled date of a council meeting where the detailed review proposals will be formally considered and approved.
- **Changes to electoral boundaries** – A number of local authorities may also have their electoral boundaries reviewed during the forthcoming 16 month period. Although these will need to be considered, where the polling district/place review is to be carried out before the new electoral boundaries are in force, it will need to be based on the current electoral boundaries, but should take any new boundaries into account. For example; any parts of existing areas that maybe split when new boundaries come into effect could be made into separate polling districts as part of the review. Similarly, registers may need to reflect current and future polling districts. (The pending outcome of the 2018 parliamentary boundary review (Yorkshire and Humber) may therefore have to be taken into consideration,

subject to parliamentary consideration, approval and subsequent legislative requirements being made.

- 2.5 The compulsory review relates specifically to the review of polling districts and polling places in relation to parliamentary elections. 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 will be taken into consideration as part of the review. (The review will have no impact upon the polling districts or places for the council's local district elections and town and parish elections in May 2019).

Overview of the Legislative Requirements

- 2.6 All councils 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 in 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).
- The polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station.

- 2.7 Councils must also comply with the following access requirements. As part of the review, they must -

- Seek to ensure that all electors in the 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.

2.8 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.

2.9 When carrying out the review, councils 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 the (Acting) Returning Officer within 30 days of receipt by posting a copy of them at the council'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 council'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.
- On completion of the review, give reasons for its decisions and publish -
 - (i) All correspondence sent to the (Acting) Returning Officer in connection with the review.
 - (ii) 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.
 - (iii) All representations made by any person in connection with the review.
 - (iv) 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.
 - (v) Details of the designation of polling districts and polling places within the local authority area as a result of the review.

- (vi) Details of the places where the results of the review have been published.

2.10 It is clear from the details contained in paragraph 2.4 above, together with the council's local district elections and town and parish council elections in May 2019, and the pending outcome of the 2018 parliamentary boundary review (Yorkshire and Humber), that the next 16 months will be a busy period for the Electoral Services. The capacity and resources available to deal with all the forthcoming requirements including the review of polling districts and polling places, will need to be carefully monitored with other resources and skills from the wider democratic services function being deployed as required.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 There are no options associated with the requirement to carry out a compulsory review of polling districts and polling places. Any options relate only to the timing of the commencement of the review, which will commence as soon as possible after 1 October 2018, as the 2018 canvass and associated new registers are completed.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

Financial

There are no financial implications associated with the review of polling districts and polling places. The work will be carried out by the Electoral Services team with any costs being met from within current budgets.

Staffing

Electoral Services will be dealing with a number of related issues over the next 16 months and the capacity of the current staffing arrangements to deal with all these issues will be carefully monitored. Additional resources and skills will be deployed from the wider democratic services function when necessary and appropriate.

Property and IT

There are no IT implications associated with this report. There may however be some property implications in relation to polling stations arising from the review.

5. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

5.1 The review of polling districts and polling places is a compulsory statutory requirement arising out of the Electoral Registration and

Administration Act 2013. Its impact has been assessed nationally and therefore at a local level it is not necessary to carry out an integrated impact assessment.

6. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DECLARED

6.1 The review of polling districts and polling places is a compulsory statutory requirement and consultations have taken place nationally in relation to its introduction.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 That council notes the requirement to conduct a compulsory review of parliamentary polling districts and polling places to be completed within the period of 16 months from 1 October 2018 to 31 January 2020 (inclusive) , and

7.2 That arrangements be made to commence the review of polling districts and polling places as soon as possible after 1 October 2018, as the 2018 canvass and associated new electoral registers are completed.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Civic Centre
Ashby Road
SCUNTHORPE
North Lincolnshire
DN16 1AB
Author: RAMell
Date: 3 September 2018

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report - The Electoral Commission - Guidance on Reviews of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations.