

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Constitutional & Electoral Working Group	Date:	21 October 2014
	Council		20 November 2014
Subject:	Polling District and Polling Places Review 2014		
Report Of:	Returning Officer		
Wards Affected:	All Wards		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	1) Consultation response – Barton and Tredworth		
	2) Consultation response – Longlevens		
	3) (A)RO response		
	4) Extract from the minutes of the Constitutional and Electoral Working Group, 21 October 2014		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To outline the recommendations for Gloucester City Council following the consultation period for the 2014 Polling District and Polling Places Review.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Constitutional and Electoral Working Group is asked to note the representations received during the consultation period and, subject to any amendments, **RECOMMEND** to Council that no changes be made to polling districts or polling places.
- 2.2 Council is asked to **RESOLVE** that:
- (1) No changes be made to polling districts or polling places at this time.
 - (2) That the Returning Officer's decision to move the polling station for L2 (Kingsway) to Kingsway Community Centre be endorsed.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 In accordance with the provisions of the Representation of the People act 1983 and Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006, the Council must undertake a review of the polling districts and polling places within its area every four years. Section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 provides that

the next such review must take place in the period of 16 months from the 1st October 2013.

- 3.2 The last review took place in 2011.
- 3.3 It is the Council's responsibility to ensure that all electors have access to a polling station which is considered to be as suitable as possible for voting purposes. The local authority must take measures to ensure that, where possible, polling stations are accessible to disabled electors. Polling stations must be located in the polling district they are serving unless there are special circumstances. It should also be in a location which is easy for electors from all areas of the district to find.
- 3.4 The Council is required to publish any correspondence submitted in respect of this Polling District and Polling Places/Station Review.
- 3.5 The Council must adhere to the following regulations whilst conducting the Polling District and Polling Places/Station Review:
- The authority must publish notice of the holding of a review
 - The authority must consult the (Acting) Returning Officer in a constituency which is wholly or partly in its area
 - The (Acting) Returning Officer must make representations to the local authority which must include information as to the location of polling stations (existing or proposed) within polling places (existing or proposed)
 - The local authority must publish the (Acting) Returning Officer's representations within 30 calendar days of receipt, in such manner as is prescribed
 - The authority must 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 returning officer's representations
 - Any elector in a constituency situated in whole or in part of the authority's area may make representations
 - Representations made by any person in connection with a review of polling places may include proposals for specified alternative polling places
 - On completion of a review, the authority must give reasons for its decisions in the review and publish such other information as is prescribed.
- 3.6 The consultation period for the review ran from 11 August – 23 September. Details of the consultation were placed on the Council's website and the following were notified directly:
- All Councillors, by post and by email
 - Local contacts for parties who have had nominated candidates at GCC Elections
 - All current polling stations
 - MPs for both Gloucester and Tewkesbury
 - (A)RO for both Gloucester and Tewkesbury
- 3.7 In total two responses were received. The responses are appended to this report and have been published on the Council's website. Comments received are taken into consideration as far as reasonably practicable, along with any comments received in the course of any elections that have taken place.

Polling District H3

- 3.8 The first submission related to the polling station for polling district H3. We considered the location and size of the current polling station and determined that it was big enough to hold the current polling stations assigned to it. This venue has been used for a long time; to date we have had no other complaints and there were not any other representations received during the consultation period concerning this venue. Therefore, our recommendation would be that this station remains unchanged.

Polling District C5

- 3.9 The second submission related to the use of Tredworth Junior School as a polling station for polling district C5 and has been raised repeatedly over a number of years. The School has expressed their view that they do not want the school to be used as a polling station again in future. They feel that the timing of the election is so close to the exam period that it jeopardises the children's performance and is disruptive to their routine. Alternative locations have been considered on a number of occasions; however, the options in this polling district remain limited. St Paul's Church is a large church at the end of Tredworth Road and is likely to have a hall which would be suitable for use, however, it sits outside the boundary for polling district C5 and the distance for electors to travel could be considered to be too far; Parry Hall could also be considered, but it is also further for electors to walk and is outside of the Ward. There is a church building situated directly adjacent to the school which would make a very good alternative, however, we have been informed a number of times that we would not be allowed to use this building. The ward Councillors for Barton and Tredworth have been consulted directly on this issue and their views were that it should either remain at Tredworth School or possibly consider moving it to Hatherley of St James Schools instead.
- 3.10 For these reasons it is recommended that the polling station remains at Tredworth School.

Polling District L2A

- 3.11 During the elections in May 2014 comments were received regarding disabled access to the polling station for polling district L2A. Following inspection it is proposed that a ramp be provided at this polling station.

4.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 There are no alternative options. A review is required by legislation.

5.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 The current polling stations are considered to be in good locations for the majority of electors and are fit for purpose.

6.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 6.1 It is proposed that, following consideration of the representations received, no changes be made to polling districts or polling places in the Gloucester City voting area at this time.
- 6.2 The Council will formally publish its final report on the Review of Parliamentary Polling Districts and Places within the Gloucester Constituency on 24 November 2014.
- 6.3 The next review must be conducted by 1 December 2020, as required by the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (subject to any necessary changes following possible amendments to the City Council boundaries).

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 Changes to polling stations may result in a small increase or decrease in costs, which will be covered by existing budgets; however, as no changes are proposed, there are no financial implications arising from this report.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report)

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 Any changes made to the location of a polling station must adhere to the following rules:
 - (a) the authority must seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in its area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
 - (b) the authority must 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;
 - (c) the authority 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;
 - (d) the polling place for a polling district must be an area in the district, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate any area wholly or partly outside the district;
 - (e) 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.

(Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report)

9.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 9.1 There are no risk management implications resulting from this report.

10.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

- 10.1 As part of the review process, local authorities must have regard to accessibility issues and must take measures to ensure that, where possible, polling stations are accessible to disabled electors.
- 10.2 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

11.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

- 11.1 There are no community safety implications resulting from this report.

Sustainability

- 11.2 There are no sustainability implications resulting from this report.

Staffing & Trade Union

- 11.3 There are no issues relating to trade unions arising from this report.

Background Documents: None