

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Polling Districts and Polling Places Review Sub-Committee

Date of Meeting: 15th September 2011
Report of: Democratic and Registration Services Manager
Subject/Title: Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 2 June 2011, the Constitution Committee authorised the publication of the notice of the Polling Districts and Polling Places Review and appointed this Sub Committee with delegated powers to undertake the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places as required by the Electoral Administration Act 2006.
- 1.2 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a statutory duty for local authorities to carry out a review of their parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places by 31 December 2007; and at least every four years thereafter.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 To devise a proposal for the new Polling District, Polling Place and polling station arrangements for consultation.

3.0 Wards Affected

- 3.1 All wards are affected.

4.0 Local Ward Members

- 4.1 As above.

5.0 Policy Implications

- 5.1 Recent implementation of the Cheshire East Boundary Review and the conduct of local Elections based on the new ward boundaries in May 2011 means that this is now an opportune time to conduct the Review.

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 Costs incurred will be met from existing budgets.

7.0 Legal Implications

- 7.1 The legal implications are set out in the body of this report.

8.0 Risk Management

- 8.1 Undertaking this Review is a statutory duty. Delegating the power to conduct the Review to a Sub Committee of the Constitution Committee was considered the most effective way for the Review to be conducted, and will ensure that representations received can be fully considered. This approach will also ensure sufficient flexibility to ensure that the process is completed by the statutory deadline.

9.0 Background

- 9.1 A **Polling District** is the area created by the division of a constituency, ward or division into smaller parts within which a Polling Place can be determined which is convenient to electors. Several changes to polling districts are proposed in each ward as a direct result of the recent Borough ward boundary review.
- 9.2 A **Polling Place** is the building or area in which Polling Stations will be selected by the Returning Officer. It may be helpful for the Sub Committee to consider designating the polling district as the polling place in the majority of cases, as this gives flexibility for alternative polling stations to be identified by the Returning Officer, should an existing polling station become unavailable at short notice at election time.
- 9.3 The **Polling Station** is the room or building where the poll takes place which is chosen by the Returning Officer for the election.

- 9.4 The Review has three stages:-

9.4.1 The Preliminary Stage

The first stage of the process involved giving notice of the Review. This was published at the end of June 2011.

9.4.2 The Proposal Stage

The Authority must now devise a proposal for the new Polling District and Polling Place arrangements. There is no requirement to change any existing arrangements, however, any change or decision to make no change must be supported by a reason. All interested parties, including elected members and disability groups, will be notified of the review and invited to make representations.

In practical terms, suitable polling stations should ideally be identified first so that these can be used to build polling places and then polling

districts. The aim should be to identify polling stations within the ward in question.

In making a decision on the proposals, there are two key factors which must be addressed:

- The reasonable requirements of the electors
- The accessibility for disabled persons to the probable Polling Stations within the Polling Place.

9.4.3 The Consultation Stage

The consultation stage is for representations and comments on the local authority proposals for Polling Districts and Places. There are two parts to this:

- A compulsory submission from the Returning Officer
- Submissions from other persons and bodies.

- 9.5 Following the consultation stage, the Authority must make its final decisions on the review, taking into account all the representations received.
- 9.6 The last formal review of Polling Districts and Polling Places was undertaken by the three former district councils in 2007. Since that time, Polling Stations have been reviewed at election time by the Returning Officer. If any changes have been deemed necessary, where time has permitted, Ward Members have been informally consulted and any changes made.
- 9.7 The function of carrying out this statutory review rests with full Council under the current Constitution.
- 9.8 The timetable for the review is attached (Appendix A).
- 9.9 To assist the Sub-Committee with this task, the following are appended to or circulated with this report:
- A list of existing polling arrangements with proposed changes and representations (Appendix B); and
 - A set of maps together with a corresponding set of summary issues in respect of each ward.

These documents use the following colour coding:

Black text - existing position

Red text - initial proposals

Blue text - any representations received to date

10.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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