



**Licensing, Health and Safety and General Purposes Committee  
Wednesday, 20 November 2019**

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>REPORT TITLE:</b> | <b>CONCLUSION OF STATUTORY REVIEW<br/>OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND PLACES<br/>2019</b> |
| <b>REPORT OF:</b>    | <b>Director: Governance and Assurance<br/>(Monitoring Officer)</b>                 |

**REPORT SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is for the Committee to consider the outcome of the consultation pursuant to the statutory review of polling districts and polling places 2019.

**RECOMMENDATION/S**

That the Committee considers for approval the proposed changes and recommendations contained in this report and agrees the Council's Polling Districts and Polling Places with effect from 1 January 2020.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 The local authority has a statutory duty to undertake a full review of their Parliamentary polling districts and polling places within the Borough and make such changes as are considered necessary to ensure they remain accessible to all electors.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 No other options were considered. It is a statutory requirement to undertake the review.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Council has a duty under the Representation of the People Act 1983 to divide Wirral Borough into Polling Districts and to designate Polling Places for each Polling District.

- 3.2 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 placed a duty on all local authorities to undertake a full review of their Parliamentary polling districts and polling places every four years.

- 3.3 This was amended by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, which provides that there must be a review of all "polling districts" and "polling places" within each "compulsory period". "Compulsory period" is defined as:-

- a) the period of 16 months beginning with the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013; and
- b) the period of 16 months beginning with the 1<sup>st</sup> October of every fifth year after that.

- 3.4 The "compulsory period" determines that the next full review must be started and completed between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive).

- 3.5 Local government election arrangements are not automatically part of this review, however, as they are the same for both Parliamentary and local government elections within the Wirral area, it is considered sensible to conduct both reviews together.

- 3.6 The specific areas of focus for the review are polling districts and the location of polling places and polling stations within the Borough.

- 3.7 The term 'Polling District' refers to 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.

- 3.8 The term 'Polling Place' refers to the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer.

- 3.9 The term 'Polling Station' refers to the room or building where the poll takes place for each election.

**3.10** Whilst there is no statutory requirement to review polling districts and polling places in the years between such full reviews, the Council's Electoral Services evaluates the effectiveness and suitability of polling places and stations following each election and reports any issues/changes required to the Licensing, Health and Safety and General Purposes Committee as necessary, thereby ensuring that the Borough's electors continue to have the best facilities for voting which are practicable in the circumstances.

**3.11** The purpose of the review is to principally ensure that:

- a. all electors in the Borough have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
- b. so far as reasonable and practicable, the polling districts, places and stations are accessible to all electors including those who are disabled and when considering the designation of a polling place to have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons; and
- c. where there is no fully accessible building conveniently located for the electors in an area, where it is necessary to use a place where the access is not ideal then every reasonable adjustment must be undertaken to provide access for all Electors.

### **3.12 Notification of the Review**

**3.13** The review formally commenced on 19 August 2019 with the publication of a formal notice on the Council's website, and notices circulated to all Council One-Stop Shops.

**3.14** Notification of the review and how to participate was sent to elected representatives, local political party offices and local disability and community groups, and a press release was issued to provide general notification of the review.

### **3.15 Consultation**

**3.16** The consultation period began on 19 August 2019 and ended on 18 October 2019.

**3.17** Representations and comments were sought from electors, Councillors, MPs, the (Acting) Returning Officer and those with expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for disabled people with regards to existing Polling Districts and Places.

### **3.18 Outcome of Consultation**

**3.19** During the consultation, Electoral Services received representations from electors and Ward Councillors. The representations were received in the form of eleven emails and one letter from the public, and six emails from Ward Councillors.

**3.20** Five emails commented they were satisfied with the current arrangements; seven email and one letter related to requests for changes to polling places; two emails related to requests for changes in polling district boundaries; and three emails commented on the general dissatisfaction with using schools as polling places.

- 3.21** Three emails were received that related to areas not considered to be part of the review. One email was a general offer to use their Church hall and two emails commented on Ward boundaries.
- 3.22** The Council's (Acting) Returning Officer submitted comments on 2 September 2019, as required by legislation, on both existing and proposed polling stations and with the exception of five polling districts, the comments stated that the current arrangements offer the most reasonable facilities for voting. Five polling districts were commented on in respect of proposed changes to polling district boundaries and polling places.
- 3.23 Conclusion and recommendations**
- 3.24** The review has been useful in that, due to the small amount of representations received requesting changes, the public and elected representatives are largely satisfied with the current arrangements and so it is recommended that the majority of polling districts and polling places remain unchanged.
- 3.25** In respect of the representations received requesting changes to some polling district boundaries and polling places along with two polling places being unavailable, it was necessary to look at and consider alternative options.
- 3.26** In relation to using schools as polling places, the rules that govern the conduct of elections give the (Acting) Returning Officer a statutory right to use, free of charge, schools maintained or assisted by a local authority as well as those schools that receive grants made out of moneys provided by Parliament. This includes academies and free schools. Currently, forty five of the one hundred and three designated polling places are schools. This equates to less than half.
- 3.27** The decision to close the school falls on the headteacher and will usually depend upon whether arrangements can be made for voting to take place separately from the rest of the school premises. Where possible, the (Acting) Returning Officer and the school will make such arrangements for the school to remain open, however, pupil safety must always be considered as paramount and if the school decides to close on the day of the poll and it is not reasonably practicable to arrange an alternative day to try and make up the lost education, the school will be treated as if it had met the requisite 190 days for the purposes of the school year regulations.
- 3.28** Clear guidance is provided to schools on this matter so there should be no misunderstanding about the legal position and the need for schools to co-operate in making rooms available for polling station use. Any reluctance to use schools as polling places despite the statutory position would lead to an increase in the use of private buildings or mobile units even where the most reasonable facilities could be provided within a school which would then incur additional costs.
- 3.29** Ideally, there would be the choice of a range of fully accessible buildings, conveniently located for electors in the area. In practice, however, the choice of polling place will often be very limited and a school deemed the only suitable venue that complies with the Council's obligations.

- 3.30** An email was received from an elector who commented to stop using the current polling place for polling district GC (Bebington Ward) which is St Andrews C of E Primary School [Townfield Lane] and suggested using Mayer Hall or Civic Centre in Bebington instead. The suggestions were investigated by Electoral Services but were discounted on the basis that the Civic Centre is located in a different polling district and Mayer Hall is located at the opposite end of the polling district (as shown on the map in Appendix 1) and would result in some electors having to travel further to vote. The headteacher was contacted to discuss possible arrangements to allow the school to remain open during elections, however, the headteacher confirmed that they did not have any concerns about the school being used and that arrangements were in place in the event of any unscheduled elections. The (Acting) Returning Officer commented that the school offers the most reasonable facilities for voting. It is recommended that the status quo remains.
- 3.31** An email was received from a Councillor for Clatterbridge Ward who requested that the current polling place for polling district JA (Eastham Ward) which is Mendell Primary School [Allport Lane] be moved to Bromborough Methodist Church Hall [Allport Lane]. Concern was raised about the days children lose in school every time there is an election and they never get it back. Electoral Services has investigated the possible use of Bromborough Methodist Church Hall as a polling place. The Church was visited and has good facilities. It is located 100yds from the school (as shown on the map in Appendix 2) so there would be minimal impact on voters possibly having to travel further to vote. There would be additional costs for use of the Church who have yet to provide the exact amount and consideration should be given on the statutory guidance on the use of schools. Previous investigations into the possibility of the school remaining open during elections has proven unsuccessful. The (Acting) Returning Officer commented that Mendell Primary School offers the most reasonable facilities for voting. It is recommended that the status quo remains.
- 3.32** An email was received from an elector who commented that a review of the use of schools as polling places be carried out because of the interruption of a child's education just so people can vote. The elector gave the current polling place for polling district MD (Upton Ward) which is Fender Primary School [New Hey Road] as an example stating the school is closed each time there is voting taking place and that the school takes a lot of special needs children. The elector suggested using Woodchurch Community Centre as an alternative polling place and this was investigated by Electoral Services. However, it was discounted on the basis that the location of the building is at the far end of the polling district and sits on the boundary which runs alongside the M53 motorway (as shown on the map in Appendix 3) whilst the school is located in a central position within the polling district and is as close to electors as possible. The (Acting) Returning Officer commented that Fender Primary School offers the most reasonable facilities for voting. It is recommended that the status quo remains.
- 3.33** An email was received from an elector in respect of the current polling place for polling district UA (New Brighton Ward) which is SS Peter & Paul Primary School [Atherton Street/Sandringham Drive] encouraging the Council to seek an alternative polling place because the school is closed at least once a year and more when unexpected elections take place, with the effect that pupils receive less teaching than they should do. The elector went further to say it also causes additional problems for parents to make child care arrangements. The elector did not provide an alternative building.

**3.34** In respect of the same polling place in paragraph 3.33, an email was also received from the Clerk to Governors with a letter attached from the Chair of Governors of SS Peter & Paul Primary School. The letter requests that, again, an alternative building be identified for use as a polling place rather than the school. The reasons for this request generally relate to concerns about the disruption to the school attendance and the challenges faced by families working full time balancing work and school closures. However, the concerns are not only directed at the school being used as a polling place. The Chair of Governors also mentions school closures due to other cultural events taking place in Wirral.

**3.35** Electoral Services has attempted to identify alternative buildings, however, other than the Church that the school is next to, there are no other buildings that could be used as a polling place. Unfortunately, the Church declined being used as a polling place. The (Acting) Returning Officer commented that SS Peter & Paul Primary School offers the most reasonable facilities for voting. It is recommended that the status quo remains.

**3.36** Proposals for changes to polling places and polling district boundaries are as follows with the comments of the (Acting) Returning Officer:

### **3.37 Polling Districts in Eastham Ward**

**3.38** An email was received from a Councillor for Eastham Ward who commented on the loss of Eastham Youth Centre (Youth Hub) in Lyndale Road which is the current polling place for polling district JD and a suggestion for an alternative venue. The Councillor also commented on a possible review of polling district boundary anomalies where residents in the same road have to vote in different polling places, specifically the boundary between polling district JA and JC around the Bettisfield Avenue area and also the boundary between polling district JC and JD along Heygarth Road.

**3.39** When reviewing the boundary around the Bettisfield Avenue area, part of the boundary between polling districts JA and JC runs down the middle of Bettisfield Avenue and so residents living in the even numbered properties vote at the polling place for polling district JA [Mendell Primary School] and residents living in the odd numbered properties vote at the polling place for polling district JC [Heygarth Primary School]. However, to resolve the anomaly, it was not a simple case of just moving the boundary that runs down the middle of Bettisfield Avenue and so the surrounding roads were looked at as well.

**3.40** When reviewing the boundary along Heygarth Road, most of the boundary between polling districts JC and JD runs down the middle of Heygarth Road and so residents living in the even numbered properties vote at the polling place for polling district JC [Heygarth Primary School] and residents living in the odd numbered properties vote at the polling place for polling district JD [Eastham Youth Centre]. Again, to resolve the anomaly, it was not a simple case of just moving the boundary that runs down the middle of Heygarth Road and so the whole boundary was looked at.

**3.41** The current polling place for polling district JD is Eastham Youth Centre (or Youth Hub) [Lyndale Avenue]. After the UK European Parliamentary election on 23 May 2019 it was confirmed by Steve Chan, Service Manager for Youth Support Service, Childrens Services, that the existing Youth Hub is due for demolition within the next 12 months

and would no longer be available for use as a polling place. The Councillor for Eastham Ward suggested the changing room at the Plymyard Sports Pavilion as a possible alternative polling place, however, the Sports Pavilion is located well within a different polling district and so this suggestion has been discounted.

**3.42** An email was received by another Councillor from Eastham Ward who suggested using Carlett Evangelical Church on Carlett Boulevard as an alternative building to replace the Youth Hub, however, when contacted by Electoral Services, the Church declined to be used as a polling place.

**3.43** As no other alternative building has been identified within polling district JD, I propose to move part of the boundary between polling districts JD and JE to encompass the Chapel of the Holy Spirit which would become the new polling place. This building has been inspected by Electoral Services (see Appendix 6) and is considered suitable for the purposes of being used as a polling place, therefore, it is recommended that the Chapel of the Holy Spirit [Eastham Rake] be designated as the polling place for polling district JD (Eastham Ward).

**3.44** Details of the proposals in respect of paragraphs 3.38 to 3.43 above are:

- 1) to resolve the polling district boundary anomaly around the Bettisfield Avenue area move part of the boundary between polling districts **JA** and **JC** north (as shown on the map in Appendix 7). Polling district JC would encompass 342 residential properties that include 721 electors of which 134 are postal voters. See table below.

**Move from Polling District JA to Polling District JC**

| Road/Street            | House No.'s           | No. of properties | No. of electors | No. of Postal Voters |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Bettisfield Avenue     | 1 – 49                | 25                | 63              | 12                   |
| Bronington Avenue      | 1 – 23<br>20 – 2      | 22                | 43              | 10                   |
| Crossdale Road         | named houses          | 17                | 38              | 7                    |
| Dale Road              | 1 – 15                | 8                 | 12              | 8                    |
| Dearnford Avenue       | 1 – 157<br>104 – 2    | 128               | 256             | 42                   |
| Dearnford Close        | 1 – 17<br>18 – 2      | 17                | 38              | 6                    |
| Plymyard Avenue (part) | 45 – 61<br>64 – 48    | 18                | 41              | 16                   |
| Raeburn Avenue         | 91 – 127<br>102 – 196 | 67                | 150             | 19                   |
| Redbrook Close         | 1 – 7<br>8 – 2        | 8                 | 19              | 1                    |
| Springhill Avenue      | 1 – 15<br>24 – 2      | 20                | 44              | 10                   |
| Wingate Road           | 1 – 23                | 12                | 17              | 3                    |

|              |            |            |            |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Total</b> | <b>342</b> | <b>721</b> | <b>134</b> |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|

After consulting with Eastham Ward Councillors, consideration was given to amending this proposal slightly by leaving Raeburn Avenue within polling district JA but after revising the proposed boundary this would not be the best solution.

- 2) to resolve the polling district boundary anomaly along Heygarth Road, move the whole boundary between polling districts **JC** and **JD** south (as shown on the map in Appendix 8). Polling district JC would encompass 141 residential properties that include 274 electors of which 43 are postal voters. See table below.

**Move from Polling District JD to Polling District JC**

| Road/Street            | House No.'s | No. of properties | No. of electors | No. of Postal Voters |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Chesterfield Road      | 1 – 85      | 43                | 83              | 11                   |
| Heygarth Road          | 1 – 199     | 96                | 188             | 32                   |
| Plymyard Avenue (part) | 113 – 115   | 2                 | 3               | 0                    |
| <b>Total</b>           |             | <b>141</b>        | <b>274</b>      | <b>43</b>            |

- 3) to resolve the issue of no alternative buildings available for use as a polling place in polling district JD, move part of the boundary between polling districts **JD** and **JE** south (as shown on the map in Appendix 9). Polling district JD would encompass the Chapel of the Holy Spirit and 43 residential properties on Eastham Rake that include 65 electors of which 8 are postal voters. See table below.

**Move from Polling District JE to Polling District JD**

| Road/Street         | House No.'s | No. of properties | No. of electors | No. of Postal Voters |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Eastham Rake (part) | 29 – 107    | 43                | 65              | 8                    |

**3.45** These proposals would result in the electorates across all of the polling districts being slightly more evenly distributed as follows:

- **JA** Polling District electorate will be reduced from 3264 to 2543. The Polling Station electorate will be reduced from 2637 to 2050. The polling place remains as Mendell Primary School [Allport Lane].
- **JC** Polling District electorate will increase from 1841 to 2836. The Polling Station electorate will increase from 1537 to 2355. The polling place remains as Heygarth Primary School [Heygarth Road].

- **JD** Polling District electorate will be reduced from 2687 to 2480. The Polling Station electorate will be reduced from 2263 to 2091. The proposed alternative polling place is the Chapel of the Holy Spirit [Eastham Rake].
- **JE** Polling District electorate will be reduced from 2081 to 2016. The Polling Station electorate will be reduced from 1813 to 1754. The polling place remains as Delamere Community Centre [Delamere Avenue].
- **JB** Polling District is not affected by these proposals.

Please refer to the table below:

| Polling District | 2 Sept 2019 electorate | 2 Sept 2019 postal voters | No. of electors moved + / - | No of postal voters moved + / - | Revised electorate | Revised postal voters |
|------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| JA               | 3264                   | 627                       | - 721                       | - 134                           | 2543               | 493                   |
| JB               | 1158                   | 149                       | 0                           | 0                               | 1158               | 149                   |
| JC               | 1841                   | 304                       | + 995                       | + 177                           | 2836               | 481                   |
| JD               | 2687                   | 424                       | - 207                       | - 35                            | 2480               | 389                   |
| JE               | 2108                   | 295                       | - 67                        | - 8                             | 2041               | 287                   |

**3.46** The (Acting) Returning Officer considers these proposals to offer the most reasonable facilities for voting.

**3.47 Polling District VC and VF (Wallasey Ward)**

**3.48** Electoral Services has identified that an anomaly exists with the boundary between polling districts VC and VF. Some properties in Wallasey Village are currently situated in polling district VC and electors in these properties vote at Wallasey United Reformed Church [Wallasey Village]. There does not appear to be a practical explanation as to why these properties are situated in polling district VC and so I propose that a small adjustment be made to move these properties into polling district VF to allow electors to vote at Wallasey Village Library [St Georges Road] which is closer. Details of the proposal are:

- 1) Move part of the boundary between polling districts **VC** and **VF** north (as shown on the map in Appendix 10) to encompass 15 residential properties on Wallasey Village. There are 20 electors of which 2 are postal voters. See table below.

**Move from Polling District VC to Polling District VF**

| Road/Street             | House No.'s | No. of properties | No. of electors | No. of Postal Voters |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Wallasey Village (part) | 30 – 48     | 15                | 20              | 2                    |

|  |           |  |  |
|--|-----------|--|--|
|  | 88A – 96A |  |  |
|--|-----------|--|--|

**3.49** The proposal is a modest adjustment, which aims to assist Electors. It does not have any significant impact on the number of Electors in each polling district. The electorates will be as follows.

**VC** Polling District electorate will be reduced from 2783 to 2763. The Polling Station electorate will be reduced from 2135 to 2117.

**VF** Polling District electorate will increase from 1823 to 1843. The Polling Station electorate will increase from 1521 to 1539.

Please refer to the table below:

| Polling District | 2 Sept 2019 electorate | 2 Sept 2019 postal voters | No. of electors moved + / - | No of postal voters moved + / - | Revised electorate | Revised postal voters |
|------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| VC               | 2783                   | 648                       | - 20                        | - 2                             | 2763               | 646                   |
| VF               | 1823                   | 302                       | + 20                        | + 2                             | 1843               | 304                   |

**3.50** The (Acting) Returning Officer considers this proposal to offer the most reasonable facilities for voting.

**3.51** Subject to Members approval of these proposals and recommendations, any changes will come into effect from the 1st January 2020 due to preparations for the UK Parliamentary General Election taking place on 12 December 2019 and the printing of poll cards before this meeting.

**3.52** A Notice of Conclusion of the Review will be published on the Council's website and displayed in One Stop Shops.

**3.53** Following the conclusion of the review, individuals will have a right to make representations to the Electoral Commission, although the Commission will only consider representations in respect of the review process not being conducted correctly.

**3.54** The Borough's polling districts and places will continue to be monitored each year and a full review carried out every five years as required.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**4.1** The Chapel of the Holy Spirit (polling district JD) has not stated an exact cost but other similar venues charge around £350.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1** The Council is under a statutory duty to complete a Polling Districts and Polling Places Review by 31 January 2020 as set out in paragraph 3.1 of this report.

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

**6.1** Undertaking this review impacted on resources in respect of officer time, particularly as the period of this review traversed the annual canvass of the Electoral Register. However, requirements were met from within existing resources.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

**7.1** The Review provides an opportunity for the Council to ensure accessibility to all Electors, mitigate any potential hazards and health and safety risks; and ensure that the Council addresses any identified risks affecting any potential Electors, particularly if they suffer from a disability.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

**8.1** Details of the consultations are set out within this report.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

**9.1** The Review has used the Electoral Commissions Evaluation Checklist which addresses equality and diversity issues relevant to Polling Districts, Places and Stations.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

**10.1** No such implications arise from this report.

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Kate Robinson  
Electoral Services Manager  
telephone: (0151) 691 8511  
email: [katerobinson@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:katerobinson@wirral.gov.uk)

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Polling District GC

Appendix 2 – Polling District JA

Appendix 3 – Polling District MD

Appendix 4 – None

Appendix 5 – None

Appendix 6 – Polling District JD Proposed Polling Place – Evaluation Checklist

Appendix 7 – JA & JC Proposed Boundary change

Appendix 8 – JC & JD Proposed Boundary change

Appendix 9 – JD & JE Proposed Boundary change and JD Polling Place

Appendix 10 – VC & VF Proposed Boundary change

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

| <b>Council Meeting</b>                      | <b>Date</b>       |
|---|-------------------|
| Review of Polling Districts and Places 2019 | 18 September 2019 |