


REPORT TO

General Purposes and Arbitration Committee

30 September 2019

Subject:	Statutory Polling District and Polling Places Review 2019
Director:	Director of Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer Surjit Tour
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer(s):	Zoe Armstrong Deputy Electoral Services Manager 0121 569 3215

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the committee:

1. Considers and agrees the proposed changes to polling districts and polling places as set out in Appendix 1 to this report to take effect at all elections from 1 December 2019.
2. Considers and agrees the proposed changes to polling places as set out in Appendix 2 to take effect at all elections immediately.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report sets out proposed changes as a result of the statutory polling district and polling places review.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR VISION 2030

- 2.1 Ambition 10 - Sandwell now has a national reputation for getting things done, where all local partners are focused on what really matters in people's lives and communities.
- 2.2 The proposals of the review of polling districts, places and stations helps ensure that the electorate can effectively engage in democracy arrangements and influence the future direction of the Council.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Section 18B of the Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983 states the authority must designate the polling places for the polling districts in its area. Each polling district must have a polling place and it is the duty of the council to designate polling places and keep them under review. The council is required, so far as is reasonable and practicable, to designate polling places which are accessible to disabled electors.
- 3.2 Paragraph 25 of Schedule 1 to the RPA 1983 states that the Returning Officer must provide a sufficient number of polling stations, shall allocate electors to those polling stations, and those polling stations shall be in the polling place for that district.
- 3.3 Consultation took place from Friday 28 June 2019 to Friday 30 August 2019 with consultees including all Elected Members, MPs, local Political Parties and local disability charities.
- 3.4 A summary of the responses from the consultations outlining the proposed changes to polling districts and polling stations is included in Appendix 3.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Appendix 1 details the proposed changes to polling districts and polling stations following the statutory review.
- 4.2 Section 18C (1) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) states that local authorities must carry out and complete a review of polling districts and polling places in the period specified by section 18C(2)(a) of the RPA 1983.
- 4.3 All local authorities must review their UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places at least once every five years.
- 4.4 The next compulsory review must be started and completed between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive).

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

- 5.1 The Acting Returning Officers, all Elected Members, MPs, local Political Parties and local disability charities have been consulted in relation to the alternative polling stations and polling places detailed in Appendix 1.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 Alternative options to the existing provision of polling stations are detailed in Appendix 1

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The financial implications have been set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 Section 18B of the RPA Act 1983 states the authority must designate the polling places for the polling districts in its area. Paragraph 25 of Schedule 1 to the RPA 1983 states that the Returning Officer must provide a sufficient number of polling stations, shall allocate electors to those polling stations, and those polling stations shall be in the polling place for that district.
- 8.2 A building should not be designated that does not have access for the disabled if another suitable building is available in the polling district. However, a building would not be a more suitable polling place if it were so far removed from most of the electors in the polling district.
- 8.3 Section 18C (1) (RPA 1983) states that local authorities must carry out and complete a review of polling districts and polling places in the period specified by section 18C(2)(a) of the RPA 1983. Paragraph 25(1) of Schedule 1 to the RPA 1983 states that the Returning Officer must provide sufficient numbers of polling stations and allot electors to those polling stations. The next compulsory review must be started and complete between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive). The review will undertake all the legislative steps set out in Schedule A1 to the RPA 1983.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 The Review included use of the Electoral Commissions Evaluation Checklist which addresses equality and diversity issues relevant to polling districts, places and stations as seen in Appendix 3. Accessibility for members of minority or disadvantaged groups is a key issue in the selection of suitable polling Stations.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1 The proposals are in line with data protection regulations.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 The Council is under a statutory duty to ensure a polling place exists in each of its polling districts unless special circumstances apply.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

12.1 Not applicable

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

13.1 Not applicable

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

14.1 Not applicable

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 The recommendations will help ensure that elections and referenda held within the borough are conducted effectively.

15.2 The planned actions also ensure that the Council complies with its statutory obligations as outlined in the report.

16 APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Recommendations for changes to Polling Districts and Polling Places for all elections from 1 December 2019.

Appendix 2 – Recommendations for changes to Polling Stations to take effect immediately.

Appendix 3 – Summary of Consultation Responses

Appendix 4 - Equality Impact Assessment

Surjit Tour
Director of Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer