

13 August 2020

Polling District and Polling Place Review

Purpose

1. To consider the postponement of a further Polling District and Polling Place Review in 2020.
2. To note that there will be a schedule of necessary polling district changes for Committee approval due to the new unitary boundaries that take effect from May 2021 and any approved Community Governance Reviews completed and approved in 2020.

Background

3. The Council was required by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 to undertake a compulsory review of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places which had be started and completed between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive). This was approved by Full Council on 26 November 2019.
4. The initial report to the Committee in December 2018 noted that the review would have to be based on existing boundaries as it would be completed prior to the revised unitary boundaries that would come into effect in May 2021. See extract below from December 2018 report:

As the polling district and polling place review is to be carried out before the new electoral boundaries are fully in force, it will need to be based on the current electoral boundaries. A further review will be undertaken prior to the unitary and parish elections in 2021 to reflect the new boundaries.

Main Considerations

5. There is no legal requirement to conduct a further review as the Council has met its legal obligation, but it is good practice to do so after a boundary review and once the boundaries are fully in force.
6. As the boundaries will not be in force until May 2021 and considering the current Covid-19 situation, it is proposed to hold a further review after the May 2021 elections. The May 2021 elections could be used to gather information to assist with the review and gain valuable feedback on any changes required. If there is a lack of feedback, then conversely a decision could be made to not hold a further review.
7. It is also relevant that the Council can alter and approve any polling district changes without the need for a full review. Following amendment by Full Council of the terms of

reference of the Committee, any such changes can be made by the Electoral Review Committee.

8. There will be a necessary requirement to alter several polling districts to reflect the changes to the unitary boundaries in order to run the May 2021 elections and this will incorporate any required changes as a result of the Community Governance Reviews completed and approved in 2020. The schedule of polling district changes will be provided to the Committee in October 2020 for approval.

Safeguarding Implications

9. There are no safeguarding implications.

Public Health Implications

10. There are no public health implications.

Procurement Implications

11. There are no procurement implications.

Equalities Implications

12. There are no equalities implications.

Environmental Implications

13. There are no environmental implications.

Financial Implications

14. There are no financial implications from deferring a further review beyond 2021.

Legal Implications

15. The Council has met its legal obligations in respect of conducting a review of polling districts and polling places, and may therefore choose to defer further review if necessary or appropriate.

Proposal

16. The Committee is asked to:
 - 1) Consider the postponement of the Polling District and Polling Place review until after the May 2021 elections
 - 2) Consider the need for a Polling District and Polling Place review if there is lack of feedback from the May 2021 elections that changes are required
 - 3) Note that a revised schedule of necessary changes to polling districts will be submitted for approval in Autumn 2020.

Ian Gibbons, Director of Legal and Governance

Report Author: Caroline Rudland, Head of Electoral Services,
caroline.rudland@wiltshire.gov.uk