

For publication

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES IN THE NBOROUGH OF CHESTERFIELD (EC010)

Meeting:	Employment and General Committee
Date:	28 November 2022
Directorate:	Corporate
Report By	Democratic and Elections Manager
For publication	

1.0 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 Following the Local Government Boundary Commission's (LGBC) review of Chesterfield Borough Council's boundaries to report on the Interim review of polling places and polling districts and to seek approval to revised proposals

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the proposals arising from the Interim review of polling places and polling districts detailed in Appendix A of the report to the meeting be approved
- 2.2 That the Returning Officer be authorised to designate different polling places for those where there are currently concerns should this prove possible or where a polling place becomes unavailable in the future.

3.0 Report details

- 3.1 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a duty for all polling districts and polling places to be reviewed every four years. The next compulsory review must be started and completed between 1st October 2023 and 31st January 2025.
- 3.2 ppenreview and has changed the electoral arrangements for Chesterfield Borough Council and therefore there is the requirement to conduct an **interim** review of polling districts and polling places. The Council must carry out a review of the arrangements under which its area is divided into polling districts and by which polling places are provided within those districts. The review covers both the whole area governed by the Borough Council and any parliamentary constituencies that come within it.

- 3.3 A polling district is a geographical sub-division of a larger electoral area such as a ward, county division, parliamentary constituency, etc.
- 3.4 A polling place is an area within the polling district in which a polling station is located. There is no legal definition of a polling place so it could be defined very widely (perhaps even the whole polling district) or quite narrowly (the building concerned). The polling station is the actual room or part of the building where voting takes place. So, for example, where voting takes place at a school, the polling station is the room in which voting takes place, the polling district is the wider area within which the building is located.
- 3.5 The designation of polling districts and polling places is, by law, the responsibility of the Council for the area. The designation of polling stations is a matter for the Returning Officer who may, if he/she chooses, provide more than one polling station within a polling place. This has been our long standing practice for some polling places.

4.0 The Process for The Review

- 4.1 The steps that must be taken in carrying out a review, and the persons to be consulted, are determined by legislation are as follows:
- (a) A review begins with the Council drawing up its proposals and publishing a notice at its offices and on its website, that the review is to be held. For this review that was done on 16 September 2022.
 - (b) The Returning Officer for any other parliamentary constituencies partly contained in this Borough must be consulted on the Council's proposals and invited to make comments on them. A copy of the proposals was sent to the Returning Officer for North East Derbyshire who had no comments
 - (c) Representations on the proposals must be sought from persons having particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.
 - (d) Electors have the right to make representations and details were published on the council's website and social media on how people could view the proposals and make comments.
 - (e) In addition, comments were sought from Members of Parliament for the constituencies affected by the review, from borough councillors, parish councils and

local political parties and these views have been taken into consideration.

- (f) Once all consultations necessary have been carried out the Council must consider the responses and decide whether to confirm its proposals with or without modifications. The results of the review must be published. There is then an opportunity for various categories of persons, not less than 30 registered electors in a constituency, to make representations to the Electoral Commission that the Review has not been properly conducted. If the Commission agrees, following consideration of comments made on the objection by the Returning Officer, it may direct the Council to make any alterations it sees necessary to the polling places designated.

4.1 The approach taken in carrying out the review of this Council's polling districts and polling places has been based on the electoral team's knowledge of the existing districts and places, informed by comments from the public, the owners of premises used as polling stations, the views of local councillors and feedback from presiding officers and inspecting officers in recent elections.

5.0 **Accessibility For persons With Physical Disabilities**

5.1 Returning officers have been required for some years now to have regard to accessibility issues for people with disabilities when designating polling places. Extensive guidance and direction in this regard is issued by the Electoral Commission. All of the premises used for polling stations in this Borough are accessible 'so far as is reasonable and practicable'. Sometimes portable ramps are provided to assist voters confined to wheelchairs. Polling station staff are also asked to give whatever assistance is possible should this be required. This issue is one upon which feedback is sought from presiding officers after elections have taken place.

5.2 It cannot be said, however, that every polling station is completely accessible to all voters no matter what their degree and kind of disability. For example, adequate parking very close to the entrance may not be available; there may be a ramped entrance but there may still be a lip or threshold to cross; the access path to the station may not be a smooth and even as would be desirable. In some locations it is only possible to use a mobile polling station which has more limited accessibility than larger, fixed premises.

5.3 This report recommends that the Returning Officer be authorised to designate different polling places for those where there are currently concerns should this prove possible or in the event that a polling station becomes unavailable in the future.

6.0 **Recommendations**

6.1 That the proposals arising from the 2022 review of polling places and polling districts detailed in Appendix A of the report to the meeting be approved.

6.2 That the Returning Officer be authorised to designate different polling places for those where there are currently concerns should this prove possible or where a polling place becomes unavailable in the future.

7.0 **Reasons for recommendations**

7.1 To comply with The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.

Decision information

Key decision number	1150
Wards affected	All wards

Document information

Report author	
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Background documents	
Working maps available from the Elections Office, Town Hall, Chesterfield S40 1LP	
Appendices to the report	
Appendix A	Proposals following the 2022 review of polling places and poling districts