

Board/Committee:	POLICY & ORGANISATION BOARD
Date of Meeting:	WEDNESDAY, 05 JULY 2023
Title:	PROPOSALS FOR THE REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES
Author:	ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER
Status:	FOR DECISION

Purpose

To advise the Board of the Council's statutory responsibilities for reviewing UK Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places and to agree the recommendations as set out in this report.

Recommendations

1. To approve the creation of an Electoral Task and Finish Group to carry out the formal review of Gosport's UK Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places.
2. To agree to the terms of reference for the Electoral Task and Finish Group as outlined within this report
3. To agree to the timetable of the review as outlined within this report.
4. To approve the membership of the Electoral Task and Finish Group as per paragraph 2.17 – with members to be confirmed at a later Policy & Organisation Board.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Council is required by Section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, and also under Section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 to carry out reviews of Polling Districts and Polling Places for the Parliamentary Constituency.
- 1.2 This compulsory review must be started and completed between 01 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.
- 1.3 The review will not consider the boundary of the Parliamentary Constituency, and the arrangements put in place following the review will be used for all Principal Area elections held within the Borough of Gosport.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 A 'review' is all the steps set out in Schedule A1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983), and information on what these steps are included in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The length of the review process is not prescribed by law, however, the time allowed for consultation should be sufficient to enable interested persons and groups to read and understand the proposals, gather comments and responses with any alternative arrangements that they may wish to submit.
- 2.3 A '**Polling District**' is the area created by the division of a constituency into smaller parts within which a 'Polling Place' can be determined which is convenient to electors.
- 2.4 A '**Polling Place**' is the building or area in which 'Polling Stations' will be selected by the Returning Officer
- 2.5 A '**Polling Station**' is the room or building where the poll takes place. It is chosen by the relevant Returning Officer for the election and publicised on the Notice of Poll and communicated to electors on the Poll Card.
- 2.6 The current list of Polling Districts and Polling Places (along with the current electorate count and access arrangements) is included in this report at Appendix 2.

Notice of Review

- 2.7 The Council has to give notice that it is conducting a review in accordance with the relevant regulations including seeking responses from the electorate, bodies or persons with expertise in access for persons with disabilities on their proposals.
- 2.8 The Council must have regard to the accessibility to disabled persons of potential polling stations in any place which it is considering designating as a polling place or the designation of which as a polling place it is reviewing. Guidance on accessibility issues provided by the Electoral Commission will inform the review process.
- 2.9 It is proposed that the 'Notice of Review' will be published on Monday, 4 February 2024 on both the Council website and also in the Hampshire Independent publication.
- 2.10 Representations will be sent to the Head of Electoral Services for collation, before circulation to members of the Electoral Task and Finish Group for discussion and consideration. The closing date for these initial representation and comments is proposed to be Friday, 29 March 2024.

2.11 A copy of the Notice of Review is included in this report at Appendix 3.

Timetable for the Review

2.12 As stated in paragraph 1.2, the review must be started and completed between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.

2.13 The review is to be broken down into five stages:

- Stage 1 – Notification of the review;
- Stage 2 – Consultation;
- Stage 3 – Concluding the review (consideration of the all representations received etc.) by the Electoral Task and Finish Group, and the proposed changes to P&O Board;
- Stage 4 – Report and debate at P&O Board of the proposals by the Electoral Task and Finish group and the recommendation of proposals to Full Council for decision;
- Stage 5 – Publishing the conclusions of the review to the public, (including the reasons for choosing each particular Polling District and Polling Place must be given).

Stage	Dates	Notes
1 – notification	Monday, 04 February 2024	Publication of the Notice of Review
2 - consultation	Monday, 04 February to Friday, 29 March 2024	
3 – Electoral Task and Finish Group	Meetings start on Monday, 20 May through to Friday, 21 June 2024	Gap between Stage 2 and 3 due to 2024 elections and purdah period. Meetings to be held following the annual and adjourned Council meeting, and as frequently as necessary, and scheduled with site visits etc.
3 – consultation on draft proposals	Monday, 01 July through to Friday, 30 August 2024	
4 – P&O Board meeting	Held in September 2024	
4 – Full Council meeting	Held in October 2024	
5 – published conclusions	October 2024	Day after Full Council meeting

Implementation of the changes in the Electoral Register for the Borough of Gosport	Sunday, 01 December 2024	Publication of the annual Electoral Register following completion of the annual electoral registration canvass
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Electoral Task and Finish Group

- 2.15 The appointment of the Electoral Task and Finish Group lies with the Policy and Organisation Board, and is contained within the Council Constitution (Part 3, Schedule 9, Annex 1).
- 2.16 The Electoral Task and Finish Group is to be comprised of five Elected Members, assisted and advised by the Head of Electoral Services, with the Senior Democratic Services Officer providing the Secretariat for the group.
- 2.17 The Electoral Task and Finish Group does not have to follow the political balance rules of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and it is there proposed to contain the following:
- Liberal Democrat Party – 3 seats;
 - Conservative Party – 1 seat;
 - Labour Party – 1 seat.
- 2.18 As per the rules regarding Task and Finish Group as contained in the Constitution, nominations from Political Group Leaders must be submitted to the Borough Solicitor before this Policy and Organisation Board meeting, for ratification by the Board.
- 2.19 The terms of reference for the Electoral Task and Finish Group must be agreed by the Policy and Organisation Board, and these are included in this report at Appendix 4.
- 2.20 As well as covering the standard processes during the review (as outlined in Appendix 1), the Returning Officer would like the Task and Finish Group to also consider the following and make recommendations:
1. Look at the Polling Districts within the Alverstoke Electoral Ward as one of the Polling Districts (AL2) is currently above the new Electoral Commission guidance for the allocation of electors at a Polling Station. AL2 as of 01 June 2023 has 2,378 electors. The 2023 Electoral Commission guidance states a maximum of 2,250 electors allocated per Polling Station;
 2. Look at the Polling Districts within the Leesland and Newtown Electoral Ward as one of the Polling Districts (LN3) is currently above the new Electoral Commission guidance for the allocation of electors at a Polling Station. LN3 as of 01 June

2023 has 2,464 electors. The 2023 Electoral Commission guidance states a maximum of 2,250 electors allocated per Polling Station;

3. Look at the Polling Districts within the Harbourside and Town Electoral Ward as one of the Polling Districts (HT2) has a very low electorate count allocated to its Polling Station compared to the other two Polling Districts. As of 01 June 2023 this Polling District has 607 electors allocated to it;
4. Look for an alternative Polling Place/Station as notification has been received from Lee-on-the-Solent Infant School that the space used previously is now in use as a nursery. This Polling Place is used for both Lee East (LE2) and Lee West (LW3) Polling Districts
5. Visit and assess any new buildings within the Borough for possible use as Polling Stations; as the use of schools is becoming more difficult with regards to safeguarding issues if the schools remain open to pupils.

2.21 The Task and Finish Group will also need to consider any future residential developments that will come 'on-stream' during the five years from when these changes take effect, until the next statutory Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places.

3.0 Risk Assessment

3.1 The Council has to comply with its statutory obligation and conduct the review before the end of January 2025.

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 P&O Board should adopt in full the processes as outlined in this report to ensure that the Council and the ERO complies with statutory legislation.

Financial Implications:	None
Legal Implications:	Contained in the report
Crime and Disorder:	N/A
Equality and Diversity:	Task and Finish Group to be fully briefed on “Considering Accessibility Issues” per Electoral Commission Polling District Review Guidance.
Equality Impact Assessment:	Recommend EIA screening form be completed by the Gosport Returning Officer by Stage 3 and submitted for review. EIA and review findings to be appended to Board report at Stage 4 for Full Council decision.
Service Improvement Plan:	N/A
Corporate Plan:	This process aligns with the Strategic Priority to ‘Deliver effective services’
Risk Assessment:	Risks will be considered when looking at the possibility of moving to any alternative Polling Place or Polling Station. It is believed there will be no unmitigated risks. For example new Polling Places will be visited and assessed regarding their suitability for use as a Polling Station by the Electoral Task and Finish Group.
Background papers:	None
Appendices:	
Appendix 1	Schedule A1 – Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places from the Representation of the People Act 1983
Appendix 2	Current list of Polling Districts and Polling Places (along with the current electorate count and access arrangements)
Appendix 3	Notice of Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places
Appendix 4	Terms of Reference for the Electoral Task and Finish Group
Report author/Lead Officer:	Graeme Jesty

Appendix 1: Schedule A1 – Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places from the Representation of the People Act 1983

“SCHEDULE A1

Section 18C

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

- 1 The relevant authority must publish notice of the holding of a review.
- 2 The authority must consult the returning officer for every parliamentary election held in a constituency which is wholly or partly in its area.
- 3 (1) Every such returning officer must make representations to the authority.
(2) The representations must include information as to the location of polling stations (existing or proposed) within polling places (existing or proposed).
(3) The representations must be published in such manner as is prescribed.
- 4 (1) The authority must seek representations from such persons as it thinks have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.
(2) Such persons must have an opportunity—
(a) to make representations;
(b) to comment on the returning officer’s representations.
- 5 Any elector in a constituency situated in whole or in part in the authority’s area may make representations.
- 6 Representations made by any person in connection with a review of polling places may include proposals for specified alternative polling places.
- 7 On completion of a review the authority must—
(a) give reasons for its decisions in the review;
(b) publish such other information as is prescribed.”

Appendix 2: Current list of Polling Districts and Polling Places (along with the current electorate count and access arrangements)

Polling District & Ward	Polling Place	Current Electorate¹	Access Arrangements
AL1	Alverbank Country House Hotel, Stokes Bay Road	1,050	Temporary Access Ramp – 3 foot
AL2	Gomer Junior School, Pyrford Close	2,378	Temporary Access Ramp – 3 foot
AL3	The Parish Centre, Green Road	1,513	Level Access
AN1	The Parish Centre, Green Road	1,665	Level Access
AN2	Gosport District Scout Activity Centre, Clayhall Road	1,000	Temporary Access Ramp – 3 foot
AN3	St Francis Church Hall, Clayhall Road	945	Level Access
AN4	St Francis Church Hall, Clayhall Road	59	Level Access
BP1	Freedom Church, Netherton Road	1,138	Permanent Access Ramp
BP2	Solent Evangelical Church, Forton Road	1,602	Level Access
BP3	Gosport Borough Football Club, Privett Road	1,484	Permanent Access Ramp
BR1	Bridgemary Methodist Church, Prideaux Brune Avenue	1,500	Level Access
BR2	Bedenham Primary School, Bridgemary Avenue	1,429	Temporary Access Ramp – 6 foot
BR3	Woodcot Primary School, Tukes Avenue	1,583	Level Access
EL1	Elson Junior School, Exmouth Road	1,474	Level Access
EL2	Elson Junior School, Exmouth Road	1,270	Level Access
EL3	Freedom Church, Netherton Road	1,852	Permanent Access Ramp
FO1	5th Gosport Scout Group, St Lukes Road	1,662	Permanent Access Ramp
FO2	Solent Evangelical Church, Forton Road	868	Level Access
FO3	Gosport Sea Cadets Unit, Royal Clarence Yard, Weevil Lane	1,252	Permanent Access Ramp
FO4	Salvation Army Hall, The Crossways	778	Level Access
GV1	Grange County Junior School, Grange Lane	229	Level Access
GV2	Grange County Junior School, Grange Lane	1,131	Level Access
GV3	Youth, Arts and Media Centre, Nimrod Community Centre, Falcon Meadows Way	1,213	Level Access
GV4	Youth, Arts and Media Centre, Nimrod Community Centre, Falcon Meadows Way	1,880	Level Access
HD1	Hardway, Elson & Districts Community Association, Coombe Road	1,593	Level Access
HD2	Hardway, Elson & Districts Community Association	1,953	Level Access
HD3	Explosion! Museum of Naval Firepower, Heritage Way	1,112	Level Access
HT1	St Mary's R.C Church Hall, Mumby Road	1,719	Temporary Access Ramp – 3 foot
HT2	Club Hampshire Centre, The Anchorage	607	Level Access
HT3	Haselworth Primary School, Stone Lane	1,286	Level Access
LE1	Lee Community Centre, Twyford Drive	1,718	Level Access
LE2	Lee-on-the-Solent Infant School, Elmore Road	1,302	Level Access
LE3	Lee Community Centre, Twyford Drive	1,517	Level Access
LN1	St Mary's RC Primary School, Anns Hill Road	1,360	Permanent Access Ramp

¹ Electorate as of Thursday, 01 June 2023

Polling District & Ward	Polling Place	Current Electorate	Access Arrangements
LN2	Thorngate Halls, Bury Road	1,386	Permanent Access Ramp
LN3	The Queens Social Club, Queens Road	2,464	Temporary Access Ramp – 3 foot
LW1	St Faith's Church, Victoria Square	1,728	Level Access
LW2	Lee Methodist Church, Studland Road	1,178	Level Access
LW3	Lee-on-the-Solent Infant School, Elmore Road	1,444	Level Access
PC1	Woodcot Primary School, Tukes Avenue	1,394	Level Access
PC2	Peel Common Infant School, The Drive	1,236	Level Access
PC3	The Carisbrooke Arms, Carisbrooke Road	1,681	Temporary Access Ramp – 6 foot
RH1	Rowner County Junior School, Tichborne Way	1,455	Level Access
RH2	6th Gosport Scout Group, Acorn Close	1,789	Level Access
RH3	Grange County Junior School, Grange Lane	1,197	Level Access
TOTAL		62,074	

Appendix 3: Notice of Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places



NOTICE OF REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACT 1983

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES (PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS) REGULATIONS 2006

Gosport Borough Council is commencing a review of polling districts and polling places in its area.

A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of an electoral area. A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations are located.

We are looking for feedback on any aspect of polling districts and/or polling places currently used and invite representation and comments from any resident and particularly disabled residents within the Gosport Constituency; interested persons; and from such persons as may have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.

Although the review is of polling districts and polling places it is accepted that polling stations are inexorably linked to the review and representations and comments are invited regarding those polling stations currently used.

If your representations and comments include suggestions as to alternative arrangements please identify premises suitable for use as polling places, wherever possible.

Information regarding the current polling districts and polling places may be found on the Council's website: <https://www.gosport.gov.uk/sections/pollingreview2024>

Representations and comments should be sent in writing by Friday, 29 March 2024 to:

Head of Electoral Services
Gosport Borough Council
Town Hall, High Street
Gosport, Hampshire, PO12 1EB
E-mail: electoral.registration@gosport.gov.uk

Representations and comments received by Friday, 29 March 2024 will be taken into account by the Electoral Task and Finish Group meetings starting on Monday, 13 May 2024 in determining draft proposals. Draft proposals will then be published and further comments invited between Monday, 01 July and Friday, 30 August 2024. Final proposals will be considered first by the Policy and Organisation Board in September 2024, and then by Full Council in October 2024 and implemented by 01 December 2024.

Details of any representation received including the (Acting) Returning Officer's will be made available for inspection at the Town Hall and on the Council's website.

Peter Baulf
Borough Solicitor
Monday, 04 February 2024

Appendix 4: Terms of Reference for the Electoral Task and Finish Group

Statutory requirements

Under Schedule 1A of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended), there is a requirement for a full review of polling districts and places to be undertaken for all parliamentary constituencies within 16 months of every fifth year, commencing with 1 October 2023.

Polling districts

The review will consider and propose polling districts with the aim of ensuring that:

- the borough is divided into polling districts;
- each polling district offers reasonable facilities for voting for all its electors, as far as is practicable in the circumstances;
- each Electoral Ward is contained within one Electoral Division.

Polling places

The review will consider and propose polling places with the aim of ensuring that:

- all electors in a constituency within the Borough have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
- polling places can provide polling stations which are suitable for use by all sections of the community, with appropriate access for disabled voters;
- polling places are located in an area of the polling district unless special
- circumstances make it necessary to designate an area that is wholly or partly outside the polling district;
- polling places are not so large that it is not clear to electors how they will be able to gain access to the polling station.

Key Processes in the Review of polling districts and polling places:

1. Report to P&O Board with recommendation to set up Task and Finish Group, along with background information on district/polling places and electorate information;
2. Publish notice of the review;
3. Invite consultation with local groups and interested parties;
4. Report to P&O Board with recommendations following the consultation;
5. Report to Full Council with recommendations for approval;
6. Final proposals published, together with all representations received;*
7. Restructured register of electors published.

* On completion of the review, the Council is required to give reasons for its decisions in respect of the designation of both polling districts and polling places, and must publish:

- all correspondence sent to the Acting Returning Officer in connection with the review;

- all correspondence sent to any person whom the authority thinks has particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability;
- all representations made by any person in connection with the review;
- the minutes of any meetings held;
- details of the agreed designation of polling places and polling districts;
- details of where the results of the review have been published.

Action/Stage	Date(s)
Report to P&O Board with recommendations to set up the Electoral Task and Finish Group, along with background information on current Polling Districts, Polling Places, electorate and access arrangements	Wednesday, 05 July 2023
Approval of P&O Board minutes by Full Council	Wednesday, 19 July 2023
Stage 1 – Notification (publication of notice of review	Monday, 04 February 2024
2 - Consultation	Monday, 04 February to Friday, 29 March 2024
3 – Electoral Task and Finish Group	Meetings start on Monday, 20 May through to Friday, 21 June 2024
3 – Consultation on draft proposals	Monday, 01 July through to Friday, 30 August 2024
4 – P&O Board meeting to review the proposals and recommendations from the Electoral Task and Finish Group	Held in September 2024
4 – Full Council meeting to approve the recommendations from P&O Board	Held in October 2024
5 – Publish conclusions	October 2024
Implementation of the changes in the Electoral Register for the Borough of Gosport	Sunday, 01 December 2024