



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and Date of Committee	COUNCIL – 13 MARCH 2024
Subject	REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY POLLING DISTRICT AND POLLING PLACES
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Giles Hughes – Chief Executive and (Acting) Returning Officer. Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Sharon Ellison – Electoral Services Manager. Email: sharon.ellison@westoxon.gov.uk
Purpose	To update Members on the requirement to conduct a review of the Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places within West Oxfordshire, to put in hand the necessary initial steps, and to note the suggested timetable for the review.
Annexes	Annex A – Witney County Constituency - Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places; Annex B – Timetable for the Review of Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places.
Recommendations	That Council Resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Carry out the statutorily required review of the Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places within West Oxfordshire;2. Agree that, in accordance with the statute, the Acting Returning Officer for the Parliamentary Constituency of Witney; be requested to submit his representations on the review, to include information as to the location of polling stations (both existing and proposed) within Polling Places (both existing and proposed);3. Agree that the information in this report as to the processes and the timetable for the review be noted; and4. Agree that consultation responses and representations be considered at the meeting of Council to be held 25 September 2024/or 27 November 2024.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver the highest standard of service;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Initial meeting with the Constitutional Working Group took place on 13 February 2024.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The statutory responsibility for reviewing UK Parliamentary polling districts and places rests with each local authority. The Council is required to review their polling districts and polling places for the UK parliamentary constituencies at least once every five years.
- 1.2 The length of the review process is not prescribed provided that all the steps required by the legislation can be undertaken within it.
- 1.3 Time allowed for the consultation should be sufficient to enable interested persons and groups to read and understand the proposals, gather comments and respond with any alternative arrangements that they may wish to submit.
- 1.4 A public notice will be given stating the review will take place for all polling districts and polling places within West Oxfordshire including the location of polling stations. The Acting Returning Officer has been asked to make representations to include details of the location of existing polling stations together with any suggested alternatives.
- 1.5 The Council will welcome any person or body with expertise in access for persons with any type of disability to comment on the ARO's representations or on any other matter. Any comments should, if possible, give alternative places that may be used as polling stations.
- 1.6 Comments will also be welcomed from persons registered as electors within the District of West Oxfordshire.
- 1.7 The notice of review will be circulated as widely as possible, including parish and town councils, libraries, current polling premise locations, and other groups including those with disabilities, food bank and community areas across the District.
- 1.8 The Acting Returning Officer's representations will be published and will be available for inspection both online on the Council's website and at the Council Offices, Witney.
- 1.9 The final representations will be put forward to Council before concluding the review.
- 1.10 The new Register of Electors will be published to reflect any changes consequent to the review.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Sections 18A and 18B of the Representation of the People Act 1983 require that the Council must (i) divide its area into polling districts for UK Parliamentary elections; (ii) designate a polling place for every polling district; and (iii) keep the polling districts and polling places under review.
- 2.2. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 amended the 1983 Act by the amendment of Section 18C to require that Authorities must complete a review within the period of 16 months from 1 October 2023, and undertake and complete subsequent reviews within the period of 16 months beginning on 1 October of every fifth year after that. The next review must therefore be completed by 31 January 2025.

3. MAIN POINTS

- 3.1. The first part of the review consists of the publication of a Notice of the Review, and requesting the Acting Returning Officer to make representations to the Council, which must include information as to the location of polling stations (both existing and any proposed) within Polling Places (both existing and any proposed). The Council is then required to publish these representations and to invite representations from such

persons thought to have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons with varying disabilities. Representations would also be sought from political parties within the Constituency, the various political groups on the Council and from Town & Parish Councils and Parish Meetings.

- 3.2. The existing polling districts and polling places are included at Annex A, for the Councils' information.
- 3.3. As stated in paragraph 2.2 above, the review has to be completed within the period of 16 months beginning with 1 October 2023 and the suggested timetable referred to in paragraph 3.4 and in Annex B would comply with this and enable any changes to be effective (i) from publication of a revised electoral register on 1 February 2025; and therefore (ii) for the Oxfordshire County Elections scheduled to take place on Thursday 1 May 2025.
- 3.4. The timetable takes into account the need for an adequate period for consultation and the consideration of responses, and it is intended that a report will come back to this Council at its meeting to be scheduled for 25 September 2024/or 27 November 2024. In addition, the Electoral Registration Officer is under a statutory duty to publish a revised version of the register no later than 1 December 2024, *unless* there is an 'election' held during the Canvass, or where the introduction of new legislation is taking place. From 7 May 2024 through to 31 January 2025 the Electoral Registration Officer will be reviewing all Registered European Electors under the EA2022 legislation for "EU Citizen's Voting and Candidacy Rights". The Electoral Registration Officer can make the decision to Publish the Register on 1 February 2025.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1. The review is statutorily required, so there is no option other than to undertake it and to complete the review by the end of January 2025.
- 4.2. The Council could choose to vary the timetable as it saw fit, subject to the review being completed within the statutory period.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The only direct financial implications arising from this matter relate to the necessary publishing/advertisement of the proposals in due course. These are mandatory, and are anticipated to be in the region of £1,000 and will be accommodated within existing budgets.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 Failure to carry out a review would be a breach of the Council's statutory duties.

7. REASONS

- 7.1 To comply with the statutory requirement to conduct a review of polling districts and polling places.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

(END)