



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and Date of Committee	COUNCIL – 27 NOVEMBER 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 Andrew Brown – Head of Democratic and Electoral Services Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk
Purpose	To update Members on the review of the Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places within West Oxfordshire, following the public consultation which was in place from 24 September to 4 November 2024.
Annexes	Annex A – Consultation responses and recommendations Annex B – Schedule of polling districts and polling places
Recommendations	That Council Resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note the consultation feedback as set out in Annex A.2. Approve the recommended changes to polling districts and polling places as set out in Annex A.3. Approve the full schedule of polling districts and polling places set out in Annex B.4. Note that the Council will undertake a further review of polling districts and polling places following the Local Government Boundary Commission for England’s electoral review of West Oxfordshire District Council.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver the highest standard of service;• Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO

Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Constitution Working Group.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 A review of parliamentary polling districts and polling places within the West Oxfordshire District Council area has been undertaken. This process has involved inviting representations from such persons thought to have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons with varying disabilities. Representations were also sought from political parties within the district, the various political groups on the Council and from Town & Parish Councils and Parish Meetings.
- 1.2 The representations have been considered by the Constitution Working Group which has endorsed the recommended changes arising from the review which are set out in Annex A and summarised in section 3 below.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. A polling district is a geographical area and in England each parish is to be a separate polling district. This means that a parish must not be in a polling district which has a part of a different parish within it unless special circumstances apply. Those special circumstances could arise if, for example, the parish has only a small number of electors and it is not practicable for the parish to be its own polling district.
- 2.2. A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be located. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district. It is considered that polling places should always be defined more specifically than simply the polling district - for example, by designating the name of the polling place (normally a particular building or area and its environs).
- 2.3. The Council is required to review polling districts and polling places within its area every 5 years and West Oxfordshire District Council is due to complete a review by the end of January 2025.
- 2.4. Full Council on 13 March 2024 resolved to carry out the statutorily required review of Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places within West Oxfordshire and agreed that the consultation responses and representations would be considered at the 25 September 2024 or the 27 November 2024 meeting of full Council.
- 2.5. The review has been overseen by the Constitution Working Group which has responsibility within its terms of reference for considering any review of polling districts and polling places.
- 2.6. The aims of the review were to ensure that:
 - All electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable.
 - Every polling station is accessible to voters with additional needs.
- 2.7. The review did not consider Parliamentary Constituency, County Division, District Ward or Town/Parish Council boundaries. It did consider the polling districts which make up these areas.

3. PROPOSED CHANGES

- 3.1. The current polling districts were found to be generally fit for purpose as in the main they follow parish and parish ward boundaries. The Council consulted on possible changes in 14 locations across the district and received over 60 responses which have been carefully considered.

- 3.2. The proposed change/action for each of the 14 locations are set out in in Annex A and are summarised in a table at the end of Annex A. For some of the locations the outcome of the review is that there is no change proposed.
- 3.3. Additional polling districts are recommended for the Windrush Leys town ward (Witney South) and the Windrush Quay town ward (Witney East). It is also proposed that Witney Central is divided into two polling districts and that an additional polling district is created within Witney West. The changes are intended to enable electors to vote within a more local vicinity.
- 3.4. Changes are proposed to polling places as follows:
- Use of Asthal Village Hall for electors in Swinbrook for 2025 only while works take place at Swinbrook Village Hall.
 - Polling place to be sought for new polling district in Witney Central.
 - Polling place to be sought for new Witney Leys polling district.
 - Polling place to be sought for new polling district in Witney West.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1. The review is statutorily required, so there is no option other than to complete the review by the end of January 2025.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The additional costs and savings arising from the proposed changes are set out in Annex A and will be contained within existing budgets.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. 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.
- 6.2. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 amended the 1983 Act to require that local 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 review must therefore be completed by 31 January 2025.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 7.1 The changes to polling districts and polling places are not expected to have any adverse impacts on any groups with protected characteristics.
- 7.2 Polling places are inspected regularly to ensure they meet accessibility requirements for voters.

8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The changes to polling districts and polling places are not expected to have any significant climate or ecological impacts.

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

9.1 There are no significant risks in relation to this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.

(END)