

MEETING:	COUNCIL
DATE:	4 FEBRUARY 2011
TITLE OF REPORT:	REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS
REPORT BY:	RETURNING OFFICER

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards Affected

Aylestone, Belmont, Kington, Ledbury, Ross-on-Wye East, Ross-on-Wye West, St Martin's and Hinton, Three Elms, and Tupsley

Purpose

To report the outcome of the recent review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations following the direction by the Election Commission to review any polling station with an electorate of between 2000 and 2500, and seek approval to proposed changes to polling districts within Ledbury ward.

Recommendation

THAT Council:

- (a) **Notes the outcome of the review (summarised at Appendix A); and**
- (b) **Approves the creation of a new polling district within Ledbury ward (based on the New Mills estate) to facilitate a reduction of the electorate in polling districts N-UC and N-UE.**

Alternative Options

- 1 Alternative options were considered as part of the review and consultation process, as set out in Appendix B.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 2 The recommendations are to ensure compliance with the directions from the Electoral Commission, and to facilitate effective engagement with the democratic process.

Introduction and Background

- 3 At the 2010 Parliamentary Election some problems were encountered at a handful of polling stations around the country at the close of poll largely due to a number of voters not being able to cast their vote by the 10pm deadline; it is important to note that there was no such problems in Herefordshire. The Electoral Commission produced an interim report on the issues experienced across the country and recommended that local authorities conduct an immediate review of polling districts and polling places to address the problems highlighted in its report. Additionally, the Electoral Commission has also issued directions, for the forthcoming referendum, recommending that no polling station should have more than 2500 electors voting at it. Appendix B outlines the review recently undertaken.

Key Considerations

- 4 In accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983 (s18A to 18E) local authorities have a responsibility for determining and keeping under review polling districts and polling places within their area, whilst Returning Officers are responsible for selecting polling stations within each polling place. The whole of the area of Hereford City is defined as a polling district and the Parish Wards within the City are defined as polling places. For the remainder of Herefordshire, each Parish is defined as a polling district and polling place.
- 5 At the 6 May Parliamentary election, in Herefordshire, 167 polling stations were available for the electorate to vote at. The polling stations opened at 7.00am and closed at 10.00pm as per legislation. The minimum staffing levels for a polling station were one Presiding Officer and one Poll Clerk. At the largest polling station, in terms of electorate there was one Presiding Officer and three Poll Clerks allocated.
- 6 In response to the Electoral Commissions directions for a review of polling places and polling stations after last years Parliamentary election and taking account of feedback received locally, this review looked at arrangements in the Aylestone, Belmont, Kington, Ledbury, Ross-on-Wye East, Ross-on-Wye West, St Martin's and Hinton, Three Elms and Tupsley wards.
- 7 A full review of polling places, polling districts and polling stations was undertaken in 2008 and, in accordance with Section 18 C (4) of the Representation of the People Act 1983, a further full review must be undertaken in 2012.
- 8 The Returning Officer has authority to determine the location of polling stations within polling districts, but changes to polling districts/places require the approval of Council. Attached as Appendix A to this report is a schedule of recommendations arising from the review.
- 9 Council approval is sought in respect of proposals to make changes in respect of polling districts within Ledbury ward. Current voting arrangements in that ward cannot continue because of the excessive numbers of electorate allocated to two of the four polling places (N-UC and N-UE having an electorate of 3278 and 2988 respectively).
- 10 Following consultation on the options, as set out in Appendix B, it is proposed to create a new polling district (N-UF) based on the New Mills estate and including some roads to the east of The Homend (a map is contained within Appendix B for clarity). The polling station for this new district would be based at the Ledbury Primary School campus, using either the primary school itself, or the Children's Centre, or the Co-Location Team Building; it is unlikely to necessitate school closure. The transfer of electorate into this new polling district will reduce the electorate within the N-UC and N-UE areas to within the recommended guidelines.

Community Impact

- 11 The implementation of the recommendations of the review will make it easier for residents to exercise their democratic right to vote.

Financial Implications

- 12 In implementing the recommendations of the review there will be some additional costs relating to accommodation and the need for additional polling station staff, however these costs can be met from within existing budgetary provision.

Legal Implications

- 13 The Returning Officer is required by statute to advertise any changes to polling places, polling districts and polling stations. Any changes to polling districts will need to be advertised and included in the Registers of Electors in time for May elections (March Registers)

Risk Management

- 14 The implementation of the recommendations of the review will reduce the risk of voters having to queue at polling stations or not being able to cast their vote.

Consultees

- All Members of the Council
- All Parish and Town Councils
- Local Members of Parliament
- Local MEPs
- Local Political Organisations
- Herefordshire Association of Local Councils
- Age Concern
- Local Disability Groups

Appendices

- A Summary of recommendations from the Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations.
- B Summary of current arrangements/options considered

Background Papers

- Electoral Commission Circular 19 2010
- Electoral Commission Directions to Counting Officers
- Consultation responses

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF FOR POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS IN HEREFORDSHIRE 2010 – 11

Ward	Polling Districts	Polling stations	Decision by	Proposal	Recommendation
Ledbury	N-UA, N-UB, N-UC, N-UD, N-UE	Ledbury Community Centre, St Katherine's Hall	Council	To reduce numbers in polling districts N-UC and N-UE by adding a new polling district based on the New Mills estate and add 2 new polling stations	To add polling district N-UF and polling stations at the Primary school campus and the Leisure Centre.
Belmont	H-CA, H-CB, H-CC, H-CD	Belmont Community Centre, Scout Hut, Blackmarston Road	Returning Officer	To reduce numbers going to Belmont Community Centre	Add new polling station at Northolme Community Centre.
Three Elms	H-JJA, H-JJB, H-JJC, H-JJD, H-JJE	Holy Trinity Church Hall, Westfields Hall, Hereford Leisure Centre	Returning Officer	To reduce numbers at Westfields Hall	Add new polling station at Westfields Hall
Tupsley	H-KKA, H-KKB, H-KKC, H-KKD	Braadlands Primary school, WRVS Riverside Learning Centre, Hampton Dene Primary school	Returning Officer	To reduce numbers at Hampton Dene Primary school	Add new polling station at Hampton Park United Reform Church Hall for H-KKC polling district.
Aylestone	H-AA, H-AB, H-AC, H-AD	Bryngwyn Court, RNCB The Gardner Hall, RNCB QB2, The Rose Garden	N/A	To minimise electors in H-AC having to walk up and down College Green Hill	No change at present but to be reviewed in the future.
Kington	N-TA, N-TB, N-TC	Markwick Close	N/A	No change	To keep numbers under review

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
John Jones, Electoral Services Manager on (01432) 260110

		Community Centre			
Ross-on-Wye East	H-DDA, H-DDB, H-DDC	Ross-on-Wye Y Zone Youth Centre, Tudorville Youth Centre, Larruperz Community Centre	N/A	No change	To keep numbers under review
Ross-on-Wye West	H-EEA, H-EEB, H-EEC	Brampton Abbots C of E Primary school	N/A	No change	To keep numbers under review
St Martin's and Hinton	H-FFA, H-FFB, H-FFC, H-FFD, H-FFE, H-FFF, H-FFG	Hinton Community Centre, Saxon Community Hall, Hunderton & Belmont Residents Assoc, Pentwyn Court, Redhill Golden Jubilee Hall	N/A	No change	To keep numbers under review