



Doncaster Council

Report

17 January 2020

**To the Chair and Members of the
ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE- EXTRAORDINARY
MEETING 27 January 2020**

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2019/20

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report provides details of the outcome of the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places and the Returning Officers final recommendations for future polling arrangements.

EXEMPT REPORT

2. N/A

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The Committee is asked to approve the report and the proposed changes to polling districts and places which are described in the appendix.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

4. Having accessible and well organised elections is key to public engagement in the democratic process. Comprehensive reviews ensure that there are appropriate polling districts and polling places available which contributes to the smooth and efficient operation of elections. This is key to ensure residents of the Borough are able to vote when an election occurs.

BACKGROUND

5. The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a requirement for local authorities to undertake a full review of polling places and polling districts every four years. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 prescribed a change to the timing of reviews such that reviews must be started and completed within the period of 16 months that starts on 1 October every fifth year after 1 October 2013.

6. The review involves an evaluation of each existing/proposed venue against issues such as accessibility, voter convenience and availability for polling (including at short notice). The Elections Team commenced the current review in August 2019 and the original intention had been to present the final findings of the review at the meeting of this committee on 26 November 2019. However, the decision to hold a General Election at short notice on 12 December resulted in a delay which required an extraordinary meeting of the committee to present the report in time to conclude the review by the statutory deadline of 31 January 2020. A revised timetable is included at appendix 3.
7. The consultation phase commenced with publication of the Notice of Review on 19 August 2019 and ended on 16 September 2019. Representations were invited from electors, elected Members, local political representatives, community groups and any other interested parties within the Doncaster district. A summary document describing the current polling scheme was published on the council's website with a link to maps of electoral boundaries. All documents were made available for inspection on request.
8. In addition, the Returning Officer routinely seeks to gather information on the suitability of polling places by requesting feedback (including any comments from voters) from polling staff at all elections and by requiring polling station inspectors to complete a check-list for all polling stations on their route at every election.
9. Following the consultation phase, the Returning Officer drafted proposals for a revised polling scheme and sought comments from those who had responded to the consultation and from all elected members and MPs. All those who responded were supportive of the proposals.
10. Following the 12 December parliamentary election, two new suggestions for alternative polling places (for polling districts BA/BB and UB) were received. Although the consultation phase was officially concluded, the suggestions were investigated and have resulted in recommendations for change. They are included in the Returning Officer's proposals for change.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

11. The review is a statutory function and must be carried out in accordance with statutory requirements.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

12. The recommendations and the reasons for them are set out in Appendix 1: Returning Officer Recommendations in Full and Appendix 2: Returning Officer – Proposals for Change

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

13.

Outcomes	Implications
<p>Doncaster Working: Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to good fulfilling work • Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish • Inward Investment 	
<p>Doncaster Living: Our vision is for Doncaster's people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster • More people can live in a good quality, affordable home • Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport • Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean • Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage 	
<p>Doncaster Learning: Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school • Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better • Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work 	
<p>Doncaster Caring: Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have the best start in life • Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust • Older people can live well and independently in their own homes 	

<p>Connected Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modern, efficient and flexible workforce • Modern, accessible customer interactions • Operating within our resources and delivering value for money • A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents • Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths • Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance 	<p>The Council has statutory duties to support elections</p>
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RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

14. As detailed within this report there is a statutory duties to carry out a Polling Places Review and there are statutory duties to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to enable electors to vote in Elections. The exercise detailed in this report achieves both of those requirements. Failure to do this would have led to reputational risk and breach of statutory duties.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer initials: SRF Date: 16/1/20]

15. Under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, the (Acting) Returning Officer is required to undertake a review of the UK Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places within the Doncaster area.

The arrangements detailed in this report are designed to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer initials:]

16. The review will be completed within existing budgets.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

17. Human Resources implications have not been requested.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

18. Technology implications have not been requested.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

19. Health implications have not been requested.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: SRF Date 16/1/20]

20. The Council has a duty to ensure Elections are well managed to allow all eligible electors to freely vote by secret ballot ensuring freedom of expression and political debate by exercising their vote

CONSULTATION

21. Information about the review and a request for representations was published on the council website and available at council offices and also was sent to:

- Members of Parliament for Doncaster constituencies
- All Councillors
- Parish Councils

BACKGROUND PAPERS

22. Previous EDSC reports.

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