

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

Summary

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 (EAA 2006) introduced a duty on all local authorities in Great Britain to review their UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places at least once every four years. The first such review had to be completed by the end of 2007. This report outlines the steps the Council is taking to comply with this duty and the timetable for public consultation and consideration of representations by Council.

Background

Every relevant authority is responsible for dividing its area into polling districts for UK Parliamentary elections and for keeping polling districts under review. For local government elections, although there is no requirement to sub-divide county electoral divisions or district wards into polling districts, it is considered good practice to do so. Polling district schemes for local government elections, must, so far as possible, mirror the scheme in place for parliamentary elections.

The Council must have undertaken and completed the review by 31 December 2011. In reality, this review should be completed by 21 November 2011 to enable the Register of Electors to be published by 1 December 2011 to reflect any changes to the present scheme of polling places and polling districts.

Definitions

A polling district is a geographical sub-division of an electoral area such as a district council ward.

A polling place is a geographical area in which a polling station is located. There is no legal definition of what a polling place is. The polling place can either be designated as tightly as a building in the polling district used for polling (ie. a church hall) or as widely as the entire polling district.

A polling station is the area, normally a building, where voting takes place. One or more polling stations may be provided within a polling place.

The Rules

When designating polling districts and polling places, the Council must seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.

Furthermore, unless there are special circumstances that lead the Council to determine otherwise, each parish must be in a separate polling district.

The Council must also seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places it designates are accessible to all electors, including taking into account the accessibility needs of disabled persons.

The designation of polling districts and polling places are matters for which the Council is responsible. The Returning Officer is responsible for providing a sufficient number of polling stations within those polling places.