



PAPER E

Purpose: For Decision

Committee report

Committee	FULL COUNCIL
Date	18 SEPTEMBER 2019
Title	POLLING DISTRICTS AND PLACES REVIEW 2019
Report of	DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND RETURNING OFFICER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report details the consultation carried out, and responses received, during the recent statutory Polling Districts and Places Review, and makes recommendations to Full Council regarding the scheme of polling districts and places.

BACKGROUND

2. The current scheme of polling districts and polling places was last considered by the Isle of Wight Council in October 2014, following the introduction of The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, which required authorities to have completed a review by 31 January 2015 (regardless of when the last review was conducted), ahead of the general parliamentary election which was held in May 2015, and then to conduct such reviews once every five years.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

3. By ensuring that electors are able to access polling stations as effectively as is reasonably possible, the Isle of Wight Council can ensure that electors are able to participate in the democratic process of electing their representatives.
4. Facilitating electors to participate in this way may encourage them to engage with wider aspects of democracy and decision making, and will also contribute to delivering the core values of "Our Island - Our Vision", the Corporate Plan 2019 – 2022, by "Putting customers and our community at the heart of everything we do" and "Treating people fairly".

CONSULTATION

5. Details of all those who were consulted in the compilation of this report are included in Appendix A, along with responses received. Suggestions for change were confined solely to the Nettlestone and Seaview area polling district arrangements.

FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

6. The financial implications arising from this report are minimal, and any consequent changes to the arrangement of the Register of Electors can be easily implemented using the existing software used in the electoral registration office at no additional cost to the Isle of Wight Council.
7. This report recommends that two polling districts in Nettlestone (R1) and Seaview (R2) be combined into one single district. As a result there will be a small reduction in hire charges as only one building will be hired instead of two, and there will also be a small saving for polling station staff of £255 per poll as only one presiding officer will be required, rather than two. However, in the case of all but Isle of Wight Council elections these costs will be borne by other bodies.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8. As outlined above, the Isle of Wight Council has a statutory duty to review the polling districts and polling places scheme as directed by Section 18 C of The Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended). As indicated, under the 1983 Act, local authorities are required to undertake a review every five years.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

9. The council, as a public body, is required to meet its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equal opportunities between people from different groups and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
10. The recommendations in this report do not seek to introduce new, or to revise existing Isle of Wight Council policies or procedures, and there are no adverse implications for any aspect of equality and diversity. The requirements of the Equality Act 2010 have been considered, and the recommendations in this report do not have any adverse effect on any aspects of the protected characteristics as defined by that act.
11. As a result of the proposed change to the location of the polling station in the Nettlestone and Seaview area, some electors may have further to travel, whilst some will have their journey to the polling station reduced. The improvement in parking and in access for those with mobility issues is considered to outweigh any detrimental impacts to travel distances.

12. In a wider sense, any improvements to the provision of polling places and districts can only serve to increase an individual's ability to access all aspects of the democratic process. All polling stations are assessed to ensure that they offer good access for the disabled, and each review of polling stations seeks to improve on the quality and provision of polling stations. Electors may make a personal choice to exercise their right to vote by post rather than visit their polling station in person.
13. An Equality Impact Assessment of the effect of the implementation of the recommendation has been carried out, which concluded that there may be a small positive effect for disabled electors in the Nettlestone area as access to their polling station will be improved.

OPTIONS

14. The Isle of Wight Council may conclude the following:
 - (a) To implement the recommendations as follows:

THAT the Isle of Wight Council adopts the scheme of polling districts and polling places as set out in Appendix B (attached). This resolution is to be effective for the purposes of proceedings preliminary or relating to any election to be held after 1 December 2019. This scheme includes the amalgamation of the Nettlestone (R1) and Seaview (R2) polling districts into one single district.
 - (b) To modify the recommendations as they are set out in this report prior to resolution.
 - (c) To decide not to approve any or all of the recommendations within this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT

15. There are no risk implications for any financial, transactional or property related matters. Once the recommendations have been resolved by the council there are no perceived external factors which could prevent implementation taking place, and the recommendations are not considered to be counter-productive to any of the council's existing policies or objectives.
16. It is a statutory requirement to conduct a regular review of polling districts and places, and having undertaken open public consultation and following consideration of the limited responses received, the recommendation meets the legal obligations of the Isle of Wight Council in an open and transparent manner.
17. It is not considered that the recommendations or actions arising will in any way unlawfully infringe the rights of any individual or involve the council in acting outside of any rights or powers conferred upon it by Parliament.

EVALUATION

18. The recommendation to council is to implement the recommendations without further change or modification. The recommendations detailed below, and in Appendix B have been arrived at after a period of consultation, and best express the wishes of those in the areas concerned who responded to the consultation.
19. Should the council decide not to implement any or all of the recommendations then existing arrangements in those areas will continue as they are, without modification. This will mean that Nettlestone Primary School would continue to be the default polling station for the Nettlestone polling district, which, as outlined in Appendix B is not conducive to the running of the school.
20. Members should be aware that further polling places and district reviews must be carried out in the future, and it is currently proposed that a further review be carried out in the summer of 2020 in order to facilitate the introduction of new polling places and districts which will be necessitated by the implementation of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's review of Isle of Wight Council electoral divisions.

RECOMMENDATION

21. It is recommended:

Option A: THAT the Isle of Wight Council adopts the scheme of polling districts and polling places as set out in Appendix B (attached). This resolution is to be effective for the purposes of proceedings preliminary or relating to any election to be held after 1 December 2019. This scheme includes the amalgamation of the Nettlestone (R1) and Seaview (R2) polling districts into one single district.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

22. [Appendix A - Details and analysis of responses to the consultation, including final recommendations.](#)
23. [Appendix B – Scheme of polling districts and places with effect from 1 December 2019.](#)

BACKGROUND PAPERS

24. The following document has been referred to in the compilation of this report:
 - [Polling Districts and Places Review 2014 Places](#)
 - [Minutes of the meeting of the Isle of Wight Council held on Wednesday 15 October 2014.](#)

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