



Full Council Report

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL

Date **17 JANUARY 2024**
Title **POLLING DISTRICTS AND PLACES REVIEW 2024**
Report of **DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND RETURNING OFFICER**

1. Executive Summary

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

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 THAT the Isle of Wight Council adopts the scheme of polling districts and polling places as set out in Appendix 2 (attached). This resolution is to be effective for the purposes of proceedings preliminary or relating to any election to be held on or after 1 February 2024.

3. Background

- 3.1 The current scheme of polling districts and polling places was last considered by the Isle of Wight Council in November 2020, and was necessitated by the need to amend a number of polling districts due to the introduction, in 2021, of revised electoral divisions for the Isle of Wight Council, resulting from the implementation of The Isle of Wight (Electoral Changes) Order 2020.
- 3.2 Regardless of the date of the previous review, the Council has a statutory duty to review the polling districts and polling places scheme every five years, as directed by section 18C of The Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended). The last statutory review commenced in October 2018, and this review is required as part of the five-yearly cycle of reviews.

4. Corporate Priorities and Strategic Context

Responding to climate change and enhancing the biosphere

- 4.1 The Council's Climate and Environment Strategy and Action Plans have been considered, as well as the impact of the decision on the Island's designation as a

UNESCO Biosphere and the biodiversity, environment, and sustainable growth of the area designated. It is noted that the council has set a target to achieve net zero emissions:

- in its business and delivery of services by 2030;
- across the school estate by 2035; and
- as an island by 2040.

- 4.2 The impact assessment tool was be used to assist in the determination of the overall impact of the recommended decision, and the overall impact is rated as a three, meaning “No impact or neutral impact”.

Economic Recovery and Reducing Poverty

- 4.3 The report author has considered the contribution that this decision can make to reducing the numbers of residents, and especially children, who are living in poverty (particularly those living in absolute poverty). The report sets out polling stations that will be accessible, and where residents wish not to attend a polling station other low cost alternatives are available, such as postal votes.

Impact on Young People and Future Generations

- 4.4 It has been confirmed by the Service Manager for Children’s Strategic Development and Commissioning that this decision will not have any impact on young people and future generations.

Corporate Aims

- 4.5 By ensuring that electors are able to access polling stations as effectively as is reasonably practicable, the Isle of Wight Council can ensure that electors are able to participate in the democratic process of electing their representatives.
- 4.6 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 the Corporate Plan 2021 – 2025, by putting “the Island’s people at the heart of everything we do” and “being community focused”.

5. Consultation And Engagement

- 5.1 Details of all those who were consulted in the compilation of this report are included in Appendix 1, along with responses received. Few suggestions for change were received.

6. Financial / Budget Implications

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 This report recommends that the two polling districts comprising the electoral division of Ryde West be combined into one single polling district. As a result, there will be a small decrease in hire charges as one building will be used as a polling station instead of two, and there will also be a small decrease for polling station staff

costs of £435 per poll as one fewer presiding officer and one fewer poll clerk will be required. However, in the case of all but Isle of Wight Council elections these costs will be borne by other bodies.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 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 18C 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. The last statutory review commenced in October 2018, and this review is required as part of the five-yearly cycle of reviews

8. Equality And Diversity

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 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 or by proxy rather than visit their polling station in person.
- 8.4 This report does not introduce any new or revised Policy or Procedure nor is it a significant decision, and so an equality impact assessment has not been undertaken.

9. Property Implications

- 9.1 There are no Property implications arising from this decision.

10. Options

- 10.1 It is 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 2 (attached). This resolution is to

be effective for the purposes of proceedings preliminary or relating to any election to be held on or after 1 February 2024.

(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.

11. Risk Management

11.1 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.

11.2 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.

11.3 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.

12. Appendices Attached

12.1 Appendix 1 - Details and analysis of responses to the consultation, including final recommendations.

12.2 Appendix 2 – Proposed scheme of polling districts and places with effect from 1 February 2024.

13. Background Papers

13.1 The following document has been referred to in the compilation of this report:

- [Agenda and minutes of the meeting of the Isle of Wight Council held on Wednesday 18 November 2020](#)

Contact Point: Clive Joynes, Elections and Local Land Charges Manager, ☎ 823380
e-mail clive.joynes@iow.gov.uk

CLAIRE SHAND
*Director of Corporate Services and
Returning Officer*

CLLR JONATHAN BACON
*Cabinet Member for Children's Services,
Education and Corporate Functions*