

TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2019

Report Title	REVIEW OF POLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES
Purpose of Report	To ensure that all electors have reasonable voting facilities and that polling places are accessible to electors, including those with disabilities.
Recommendation(s)	That: (1) The draft Polling District Places Order be approved; and (2) A full review of polling districts is conducted ahead of the next full district council elections with a view to addressing the anomalies created within certain parishes by the 2016/17 review of Teignbridge Council's ward boundaries by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).
Financial Implications	Implications are referred to in 2.1 Martin Flitcroft, Chief Finance Officer Tel: 01626 215246 Email: martin.flitcroft@teignbridge.gov.uk
Legal Implications	Implications are referred to in 2.2 Karen Trickey, Head of Legal Services Tel: 01626 215119 Email: karen.trickey@teignbridge.gov.uk
Risk Assessment	Implications are referred to in 2.3 Cathy Ruelens, Electoral Services Manager Tel: 01626 215103 Email: cathy.ruelens@teignbridge.gov.uk
Environmental/ Climate Change Implications	Implications are referred to in 2.4 David Eaton, Environmental Protection Officer Tel: 01626 215064 Email: david.eaton@teignbridge.gov.uk
Report Author	Cathy Ruelens, Electoral Services Manager Tel: 01626 215103 Email: cathy.ruelens@teignbridge.gov.uk
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Gordon Hook, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Appendices	Appendix A – DRAFT Polling Places for Central Devon Appendix B – DRAFT Polling Places for Newton Abbot Appendix C – DRAFT Schedule of Polling Places and Designated Polling Stations
Part I or II	Part 1
Background Papers	None

1. PURPOSE

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 placed a duty upon each local authority to undertake a complete review of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places within their administrative boundaries by 31 December 2007 and, thereafter, on a regular four yearly cycle. An amendment to The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places to align them with the five year fixed term parliaments. In line with this legislation the current compulsory review commenced on 5 August 2019 and must be completed by 31 January 2020, although it is no longer aligned to the anticipated parliamentary five year cycle due to the unscheduled general election held in June 2017.

2. REPORT DETAIL

A polling district is a geographical sub-division of an electoral area. For voting purposes, each parliamentary constituency and every local government ward is divided into one or more polling districts. A polling place is a building or geographical area in which a polling station may be located.

Although the review concerns polling districts and polling places, polling stations are, to a certain extent, linked. Therefore, as part of the review, comments were also invited regarding the polling stations currently used and any suggested alternatives to them. Changes to polling stations may be made outside of a formal review if circumstances change to affect any existing arrangements. In addition, smaller reviews may be undertaken at any time, if required. In the event of a change to an existing polling station, either permanent or temporary, voters will be notified of the change by the Returning Officer on the official poll card.

As part of the current review information was published on the Council website and was sent to all Town and Parish Councils for consideration and comment.

Views were also sought from each of the following:

The (Acting) Returning Officer for Newton Abbot

The (Acting) Returning Officer for Central Devon

The Member of Parliament for Newton Abbot

The Member of Parliament for Central Devon

Teignbridge District Councillors

Devon County Councillors representing divisions within the Teignbridge area

Teignbridge Town and Parish Councils

Scope

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

Age UK Devon

Registered Political Parties who field candidates at elections in Teignbridge

A total of eleven responses have been received. Five respondents state they are happy with the current arrangements, four respondents raised issues concerning the 2016/17 boundary review conducted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), one respondent did not comment either way but simply attached a policy notice and one respondent commented on something which is not relevant to the current review.

During the District and Parish elections and European Parliamentary elections all held in May 2019, only one comment was formally received directly from a member of the public expressing displeasure at the location of their polling station.

2.1 Financial

The number of polling stations used for an election affects the overall cost of that election. This will affect the overall cost to District, Town and Parish Councils at their own contested elections only. Voters are allocated to polling stations in line with the Electoral Commission's recommended maximum numbers. Where there is good reason to create an additional polling station this is given full and proper consideration, including an evaluation of the potential increase in cost.

2.2 Legal

This review is being conducted in order to comply with our statutory duty to review polling districts and polling places.

2.3 Risks

A risk assessment is conducted on each building used as a polling station, with special attention given to mobile units. The wider risk is that electors may be disenfranchised if the polling place allocated to a polling district is too restrictive and does not give viable options for selecting an adequate number of polling stations to serve it.

2.4 Environmental/Climate Change Impact

Ensuring that voters, where possible, are able to attend the polling station closest to where they live reducing the need to travel distances in order to vote.

3. OPTIONS

Members and the affected Town Councils, have raised concerns surrounding the warding arrangements of three of the major Town Councils within Teignbridge, which were introduced as a result of the 2016/17 review of Teignbridge ward boundaries conducted by the LGBCE. In particular, the concerns relate to the small number of electors included in the Newton Abbot Brunel ward, Teignmouth Rowdens ward and Dawlish Teignmouth Road ward. There is insufficient time to conduct a full review of these arrangements before the current review is due to conclude on 31 January 2020. In addition, any changes decided upon could not take effect until the next full District and Parish elections in May 2023 as they must be brought in at the next normal elections. Therefore, upon discussion with the Returning Officer, it is proposed that Teignbridge Electoral Services address these particular issues with a dedicated review during 2021. This will allow time to fully consult with the relevant Town Councils, Councillors and affected members of the public and allow for any changes to be implemented in time for the 2023 elections.

As a result of the current review the polling place for each polling district is determined as the full area of the relevant parish so that subsequent selection of polling stations is not limited or restricted.

4. CONCLUSION

That:

The draft Polling Places District Order be accepted as is and recommended for approval by Full Council, in line with the recommendation of Executive on 31 October 2019; and

A full review of polling districts and electoral arrangements within the parishes of Dawlish, Newton Abbot and Teignmouth be conducted during 2021 in order to properly evaluate the concerns raised as a result of the 2016/17 boundary review conducted by the LGBCE.