

POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS REVIEW 2018

Electoral Registration Office

REVIEW METHODOLOGY

Introduction

All local authorities must review their UK Parliamentary polling districts, polling places and polling stations at least once every five years. The next compulsory review must now be started and completed between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020. Local Authorities must comply with a number of legislative requirements regarding the location and accessibility of Polling Districts and Polling Places. This review is a mandatory process comprising a number of specified steps set out in Schedule A1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

Plymouth City Council has drafted a set of criteria to evaluate Polling Districts and Polling Stations and to determine its recommendations for change or no change to each of Plymouth's 116 Districts and 114 Polling Stations.

Scope of the review

The review will consider the 116 polling districts and 114 polling stations. The review will make proposals for:

- The creation or removal of districts,
- "Change" or "no change" to the boundaries between districts,
- "Change" or "no change" to the referencing of those districts,
- "Change" or "no change" to the polling stations within those districts.

Not in scope

City ward boundaries and parliamentary constituency boundaries are not in scope of this review.

The review will not be able to consider comments regarding neighbouring parliamentary constituencies, local authority boundaries, the names of local authorities or other electoral areas within or bordering Plymouth City.

Review Criteria

Polling Districts and Polling Stations will be assessed for their suitability in relation to:

- Criteria set out in the Electoral Administration Act 2006 Section 18B (appendix 1)
- Schedule A1 of the 1983 Representation of the People Act (appendix 2)

In addition to this, Plymouth City Council has identified desirable criteria for assessing polling stations and defining Polling District Boundaries that meet priorities identified locally.

Criteria for assessing polling stations

Mandatory Criteria

- A venue accessible for all
- A venue within 1 mile safe walking distance
- No more than 2,000 polling station electors (on 2020 electorate numbers) at a venue, unless the venue is capable of being a dual polling station (2 polling stations within one building)
- Polling station graded at least satisfactory for access and amenities at inspection
- Polling station is within the ward

Desirable Criteria

(The need of the electorate for each specific district will inform whether the following criteria apply)

- Minimise the use of mobile polling stations
- Whenever possible, minimise the use of schools
- A venue compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act
- If possible, no less than 1,000 polling station electors registered to vote at each polling station as this delivers poor value for money, unless significant growth is anticipated to take place within a 5 year period
- Polling station is within the polling district
- Polling station graded good or excellent for access and amenities at inspection

Criteria for defining Polling District Boundaries

Mandatory Criteria

- No more than 2,000 polling station electors (on 2020 electorate numbers) to minimise future queues at polling stations
- A choice of suitable polling station exists within the polling district
- Increase the number of polling districts in wards where the average electorate per ward is likely to exceed 2,000 polling station electors per station. For example, for an electorate of 11,000 people in a ward, there should be 6 polling districts, not 5

Desirable Criteria

(the varying characteristics and context of each district will be taken into account when applying the following criteria)

- A voter will not walk past a polling station for another polling district to get to their polling station
- Boundaries are set such that usable polling stations exist towards the centre of the polling district rather than towards the edges, taking into account geographical obstacles that may hinder access (i.e. double carriageway, stream or steep hill)
- Both sides of a street will be in the same polling district, unless existing natural and man-made physical barriers dividing a ward make this impractical to voters.

Notes

Non-contentious polling district review recommendations will go in as one submission whereas contentious recommendations, those cases when all parties cannot agree to the recommendations, will be presented individually for full Council approval.

With regard to councillor and political party engagement, due to the requirement of getting full Council approval in September 2019, party groups will be engaged with throughout the consultation period beginning 1 October 2018.

The ARO submissions will list streets per polling district but will not include an electorate figure per street – just a polling district total.

Glossary of terms

Polling District - A polling district is a geographical sub-division of an electoral area.

Polling Place - A polling place is the area in which the Returning Officer selects the polling station. In Plymouth, polling places represent the same area as the polling district to allow a greater degree of flexibility in deciding where a polling station should be located. A polling place will always be set to “the whole of the polling district”.

Polling Station - The polling station is the room or building where the poll takes place.

References

The Representation of the People Act 1983: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1983/2

Electoral Administration Act 2006:

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/22/introduction

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/22/section/16>

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2013/6/section/17/enacted>

Appendix A – Electoral Administration Act 2006 Part 4 – Review of Polling Places

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/22/part/4>

18 B Polling places at parliamentary elections

- (1) A polling place is to be designated for each polling district in a constituency.
- (2) But subsection (1) does not apply if the size or other circumstances of a polling district are such that the situation of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electors or any body of them.
- (3) A relevant authority must—
 - (a) designate the polling places for the polling districts in its area, and
 - (b) keep the polling places in its area under review.
- (4) The following rules apply—
 - (a) the authority must seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in its area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
 - (b) the authority must seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled;
 - (c) the authority must have regard to the accessibility to disabled persons of potential polling stations in any place which it is considering designating as a polling place or the designation of which as a polling place it is reviewing;
 - (d) the polling place for a polling district must be an area in the district, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the district;
 - (e) the polling place for a polling district must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station.
- (5) If no polling place is designated for a polling district the polling district is to be taken to be the polling place.

APPENDIX B SCHEDULE A1 - Review of polling districts and polling places

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/22/part/4>

- 1 The relevant authority must publish notice of the holding of a review.
- 2 The authority must consult the returning officer for every parliamentary election held in a constituency which is wholly or partly in its area.
- 3 (1) Every such returning officer must make representations to the authority.
(2) The representations must include information as to the location of polling stations (existing or proposed) within polling places (existing or proposed).
(3) The representations must be published in such manner as is prescribed.
- 4 (1) The authority must seek representations from such persons as it thinks have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.
(2) Such persons must have an opportunity—
 - (a) to make representations;
 - (b) to comment on the returning officer's representations.
- 5 Any elector in a constituency situated in whole or in part in the authority's area may make representations.
- 6 Representations made by any person in connection with a review of polling places may include proposals for specified alternative polling places.
- 7 On completion of a review the authority must—
 - (a) give reasons for its decisions in the review;
 - (b) publish such other information as is prescribed.”