



Report of:
The Returning Officer

Report to:	Council
Date:	22 November 2018
Subject:	Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (LDS329)

Decision Proposal:	Council Decision
Relevant Cabinet Members:	Councillor Kelham Cooke, the Deputy Leader of the Council
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Approved for publication:	Councillor Kelham Cooke, the Deputy Leader of the Council E-mail: kelham.cooke@southkesteven.gov.uk Date: 8 November 2018

SUMMARY

This report sets out proposals for revised polling districts and polling places following a review required by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2012.

RECOMMENDATION

It is the recommendation of the Returning Officer for South Kesteven District Council that:

1. Council approves the proposals setting out changes to polling places as detailed in paragraph 2.2 of report LDS329
2. Council approves the proposals setting out changes to polling districts as detailed in paragraph 2.3 of report LDS329
3. Council approves the revised polling districts for the Stamford St Mary's Ward and delegates authority to the Chief Executive as the Returning Officer to approve any additional polling station in consultation with the Ward Members
4. That the approved revised polling districts and polling places take effect from the publication of the Electoral Register on 1 December 2018.

1. BACKGROUND TO REPORT

- 1.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 places a duty on the Council to divide the District into polling districts and to designate polling places for each of these districts. The Council also has a duty to keep those arrangements under review.
- 1.2 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires the Council to undertake compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places every five years. The Council is required to complete the next compulsory review between October 2018 and January 2020.
- 1.3 Although the compulsory review is not required to be completed until 2020, the review has been timed to enable any proposed changes to be implemented before the elections of District and Parish Councillors, which will take place on 2 May 2019.
- 1.4 The purpose of the review is to ensure that electors have reasonable facilities for voting and that so far as is reasonable and practicable, polling places are accessible to voters who are disabled.
- 1.5 It is proposed that the revised polling districts and polling places, as detailed on **Appendix 1**, will take effect from the date of the publication of the electoral register on 1 December 2018.
- 1.6 Polling Districts are, in effect, sub divisions of electoral wards. Each parish or parish ward is automatically a polling district in its own right but then that area can be broken down into further polling districts dependent on the size of the parish and the number and location of the electors. Responsibility for determining polling district boundaries lies with the Council itself.
- 1.7 The Council must designate a polling place for every polling district. In determining where polling places should be located the Council must seek to ensure that all the electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practical in the circumstances and that, so far as is reasonable and practical, polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled.

- 1.8 A schedule of the proposals outlined in this report, together with the polling arrangements for all polling districts within the district, are detailed on the Schedule of Polling Places attached at **Appendix 1**. Any changes to the current polling place arrangements are identified in the proposal column of the schedule.

Review and Consultation Process

- 1.9 Public notice of the review was given on 2 October 2018 and full details of the review were placed on the Council's website.
- 1.10 Prior to the commencement of the review, initial consultation was undertaken of the existing polling districts and polling places with District Councillors.
- 1.11 Draft proposals were prepared and published on 5 October 2018 and consultation on these draft proposals was undertaken from 5 October to 26 October 2018. The consultation invited comments from all District and County Councillors, all Parish/Town councils, local political parties and the Acting Returning Officer for the constituencies partly within the South Kesteven area.
- 1.12 The Notice of Review, which invited comments, was sent to Parish and Town Councils for display on their notice boards.
- 1.13 A total of 28 responses to the consultation have been received and these have been summarised and incorporated into **Appendix 1**. Comments received are listed against the relevant Ward.
- 1.14 Changes are proposed in the following areas of the District:

Proposed changes to Polling Stations:

- Casewick Ward - Baston Parish
- Grantham Arnoldfield Ward
- Grantham Barrowby Gate Ward
- Grantham St Wulfram's Ward
- Lincrest Ward - Welby Parish
- Peascliffe and Ridgeway Ward - Great Gonerby Parish
- Stamford All Saints Ward
- Stamford St John's Ward
- Viking Ward – Claypole Parish

Proposed amendment to polling district boundaries:

- Grantham Barrowby Gate Ward
- Stamford St George's Ward
- Stamford St Mary's Ward

2. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Where changes have been identified or where comments have been received as part of consultation process, various options have been considered in each case and these are detailed below:

2.2 Polling Station Locations

2.2.1 Casewick Ward - Baston Parish:

Currently residents of the Parish of Baston vote at Baston C E Primary School. Following complaints from parents and residents regarding the use of the school at the 2017 elections, The Barn, Main Street, Baston, which is a community facility, has been considered as an alternative venue. The Barn is centrally located in the village, has a ramp available at one entrance and offers good facilities and car parking.

Proposal:

To relocate the polling station from the Baston CE Primary School to The Barn, Main Street, Baston.

2.2.2 Grantham Arnoldfield Ward – Polling District GAA1 and Grantham Barrowby Gate Ward – Polling District GBA1:

Residents in polling districts GAA1 and GBA1 have previously voted at Newton House Care Home on Barrowby Road. Following the County Council elections held in May 2017, the care home became unavailable and an alternative venue was found at short notice for the General election. A portable building was sited on the car park of the Muddle Go Nowhere public house (now known as the Miller & Carter). The newly built Poplar Farm School has been considered as an alternative venue. No other alternative premises in the area have been identified.

Proposal:

To relocate the polling station to the newly built Poplar Farm School, Helmsley Road, Grantham. The proposed room at the school has direct access from the front of the building ensuring minimal disruption to the school and confirmation has been received that the school intends to remain open on polling day. This venue will be the location for 2 polling stations – for the Grantham Arnoldfield and Grantham Barrowby Gate Wards.

2.2.3 Grantham Springfield Ward – Polling District GSC1:

The room provided at Walton Girls' High School has two steps at the entrance causing potential access difficulties. Due to fencing around the school which must remain locked during school hours there are no other rooms available on the site. The following alternative venues have been considered as part of the review:

- Grantham Squash Club – no suitable provision available on the ground floor; also outside polling district/ward
- Bethesda Evangelical Church – not available
- The Farrier Public House – no suitable accommodation available

Options available for voters unable to access the polling station via the stepped entrance at Walton Girls' High School during school opening hours are:

- a) To be accompanied by school staff a short distance to the alternative disabled access which requires access through a locked gate; or
- b) A ballot paper to be taken outside of the polling station to the voter to mark in private (a table and temporary polling booth can be provided underneath the covered canopy area); or
- c) Provision of a temporary ramp – because of the close proximity of a wall and the two steps at the entrance, ramping of the entrance is difficult. Initial enquiries have identified that the cost of purchasing a purpose built temporary ramp for this site is likely to be around £4000 plus VAT. The specific ramp requires professional fitting by two persons to install and remove at each election, at a cost of approximately £1000 plus VAT per election.

Proposal:

That the polling station remain at Walton Girls' High School and that options a) and b) detailed above are provided to any voters unable to gain access.

2.2.4 Grantham St Wulfram's Ward – Polling Districts GWC1 and GWD1:

Part of the Grantham St Wulfram's Ward currently vote at the Council's Witham Room. Because of building works to the Council's offices and civic suite, the Newton Room at the Guildhall Arts Centre has been considered as an alternative venue. This location is close to the current venue and provides good level access.

Proposal:

That the polling station for polling districts GWC1 and GWD1 be relocated to the Newton Room at the Guildhall Arts Centre.

2.2.5 Lincrest Ward – Welby Parish:

The polling station previously designated for the Welby Parish was the Crown and Anchor Public House. Following closure of the Crown and Anchor in 2017, the polling station was relocated to the St Bartholomew's Church. The Crown and Anchor has now reopened and will again be able to offer premises for use as a polling station.

Proposal:

That the polling station be returned to the Crown and Anchor Public House for future elections.

2.2.6 Peascliffe & Ridgeway Ward – Great Gonerby:

Currently residents of Great Gonerby vote at St Sebastian's Primary School. At recent elections, reports have been received that some voters have found the access door to the polling station difficult to open.

The Great Gonerby Social Club has been considered as an alternative venue. The Social Club is located close to the school, provides good access and facilities and has a large car park.

Proposal:

To relocate the polling station from the St Sebastian's School to the Great Gonerby Social Club.

2.2.7 Stamford All Saints Ward – Polling District SAC1 and Stamford St John's Ward – Polling District SJB1:

Residents in polling districts SAC1 and SJB1 have previously voted at the Danish Invader Public House, Empingham Road, Stamford.

Following the County Council elections in 2017, the function room at the Danish Invader was unavailable for the June 2017 General election and a portable building was hired and sited in the pub car park. For the Stamford St John's Ward by-election held in March 2018, the polling station was relocated to the Stamford Rugby Club, Hambleton Road, Stamford. During the consultation, concern was raised by Ward members that the rugby club would be rebuilt in the near future and may not be available. Confirmation has since been received that the current premises will continue to be available for the 2019 elections and until such a time as a replacement is built.

Proposal:

That the polling station be relocated to the Stamford Rugby Club for future elections.

2.2.8 Viking Ward – Claypole Parish:

Currently residents of the Parish of Claypole vote at the Claypole Primary School Hall. The Claypole Village Hall has been considered as an alternative venue to the School. The Village Hall is centrally located in the village and has good car parking facilities. Although the village hall has steps to the main entrance an alternative entrance is available with a temporary ramp provided.

Proposal:

That the polling station is relocated to the Claypole Village Hall.

2.3 Proposed changes to polling district boundaries

2.3.1 Grantham Barrowby Gate Ward – revision of boundary between polling districts GBA1 and GBB1:

The number of electors registered to vote at the proposed Poplar Farm School is relatively high and is increasing due to the Poplar Farm development. To address this, it is proposed that the polling district boundary for the Grantham Barrowby Gate Ward be modified between polling districts GBA1 and GBB1. This would involve approximately 400 electors registered in Barrowby Gate,

Bradford Close, Durham Close, Wakefield Close, York Way, Coles Way, Neals Crescent and Lamplight Square. The proposal would reduce the number of potential voters at the Poplar Farm School by approximately 400 and relocate these to the Table Tennis Centre. In addition, this proposal would result in the whole of Coles Way being contained in one polling district instead of being split across two as it is currently.

Proposal:

To revise the polling district boundary to relocate 2 small areas from polling district GBA1 to GBB1 as shown at Map 1 of Appendix 2.

2.3.2 Stamford St George's Ward - Revision of polling district boundaries:

During the consultation period, a response was received from a ward member requesting that consideration be given to voters in Recreation Ground Road being able to vote at a more convenient polling station. To address this, it is proposed that the internal polling district boundaries be modified to relocate parts of polling districts SGA1 and SGC1 (as shown at **Map 2 on Appendix 2**). This would involve a change of polling station for approximately 461 electors registered in this area. The proposal would allow 187 electors who currently vote at Stamford Free Church and 274 electors who currently vote at Edmonds Close Communal Room, to vote at Essex Road Communal Room, which is located closer than their current polling place.

Proposal:

To revise the polling district boundaries as shown on Map 2 of Appendix 2.

2.4 Stamford St Mary's Ward – Suggested changes:

During the consultation, a comment was received from a Ward member suggesting that an additional polling station be considered for residents in the area south of the river. St Martin's Church has been suggested as a possible venue.

Voters in the identified area currently vote at the Stamford Arts Centre, St Mary's Street, Stamford.

St Martin's Church has been assessed with regards to suitability for use as a polling station, using guidelines provided by the Electoral Commission. The Church is well situated within the area. The area of the church identified for the polling station is the Burghley Chapel situated at the rear of the church. The Chapel has direct level access with level footpaths leading to the entrance. However the following concerns have been identified:

- Width of access door to the Burghley Chapel, which when open, is less than the recommended minimum for accommodating standard wheelchairs and motorised wheelchairs;
- Limited space for provision of two polling stations (two polling stations are required at a County Council election to accommodate the two electoral divisions voting at this venue);

- The entrance to the Church on High Street St Martin's has a number of steps with level access from Park Lane at the rear. Any voter arriving at the High Street St Martin's entrance who is unable to access the steps would need to travel a considerable distance via Barnack Road and Park Lane to the Chapel entrance (a distance of 280 metres).

A room at The George Hotel Business Centre has also been considered as an alternative venue however the costs associated with the hire were prohibitive.

The provision of an additional polling station in the Stamford St Mary's Ward will continue to be explored. To enable an additional polling station to be introduced in the future, it will be necessary to amend the polling district boundaries to create a separate polling district for the area south of the river. It is therefore proposed that the internal polling district boundaries be modified to relocate parts of the current polling district SMB1 to create a new polling district SME1 (as shown at **Map 3 on Appendix 2**). This would enable polling districts SMD1 and SME1 to be relocated to another polling station should a suitable venue be found.

Proposal:

It is proposed that the polling station for the areas within these polling districts remain at the Stamford Arts Centre at the present time. The provision of an additional polling station in this part of the Stamford St Mary's Ward will continue to be explored. It is recommended that Council delegates authority to the Chief Executive as the Retuning Officer to approve any additional polling station in this Ward in consultation with the Ward Members.

3. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

4. RISK AND MITIGATION

- 4.1 Risk has been considered as part of this report and no specific high risks were identified.

5. ISSUES ARISING FROM IMPACT ANALYSIS (EQUALITY, SAFEGUARDING etc.)

- 5.1 Analysis of potential impact has been carried out to ensure any barriers to voting can be removed or at least mitigated through the necessary use of reasonable adjustment. Electors are able to vote by alternative means if they are unable to attend a designated polling station.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. COMMENTS OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The proposals, if implemented, will have no financial implications. In the event of the inclusion any additional polling stations, the likely cost to the Council is expected to be approximately £700-£800 per polling station. Provision is made in the 2019/20 budget for the cost of the 2019 District Council elections. Costs for other types of elections are recharged to other bodies.

8. COMMENTS OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

- 8.1 The Council has a legal duty under section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 to complete a review of polling districts and polling places by 31 January 2020. Subsequent compulsory reviews must be held every five years.
- 8.2 The review has been conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the guidance issued by the Electoral Commission

9. COMMENTS OF OTHER RELEVANT SERVICES

- 9.1 None

10. APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Schedule of revised proposed polling districts and polling places, consultation feedback and list of streets for Town areas.
- Appendix 2: Maps showing proposed polling district boundaries for parts of the Grantham Barrowby Gate, Stamford St George's and Stamford St Mary's Wards
- Appendix 3: Equality Impact Initial Analysis

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Notice of Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places
<http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=23868&p=0>
- Electoral Commission Guidance on the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places
<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/electoral-administrator/polling-place-reviews>
- Acting Returning Officer's Draft Proposals
<https://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=23873&p=0>