

REPORT TO COUNCIL

REPORT OF: RETURNING OFFICER

REPORT NO. DEM013

DATE: 17th April 2008

TITLE:	Electoral Administration Act 2006: Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places, and Polling Stations
FORWARD PLAN ITEM:	Yes
DATE WHEN FIRST APPEARED IN FORWARD PLAN:	1 st November 2007 to 29 th February 2008
KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL:	N/A – Legislative requirement for Council decision

COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION:	Access & Engagement Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ray Auger	
CORPORATE PRIORITY:	Category M: Statutory requirement	
CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS:	Minor	
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT IMPLICATIONS:	Unless exempt, this report is a public document and available from the Council's website: www.southkesteven.gov.uk	
INITIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT	Carried out and appended to the report: Yes, to previous report DEM010	Full impact assessment required: Yes
BACKGROUND PAPERS:	Electoral Commission circular on guidance for conducting the review; report DEM010 to Council on 03.03.08	

1. INTRODUCTION

At the last meeting of the Council on 3rd March 2008, members considered a report prepared by the Returning Officer about new legislative requirements under the Electoral Administration Act 2006 that requires each local authority to undertake a complete review of all polling districts, polling places and polling stations within their area. The report included details of the final proposals for the new polling districts, polling places and polling stations within the urban wards for approval by the Council.

The Council resolved:

- (1) That the proposals for the new polling districts and polling places as appended to report DEM10 be approved, taking into account all representations made;*
- (2) That the Council authorises the publication of the final proposals as required by legislation prior to re-publication of the current electoral register on 1 May 2008; and*
- (3) That the information in report DEM10 be referred to the Engagement Policy Development Group as part of the ongoing review of polling districts and polling places.*

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is recommended to

- (1) approve the amended proposals for the polling districts and polling stations for the Harrowby ward in Grantham;**
- (2) authorise the publication of the final proposals as required by the legislation;**
- (3) approve the incorporation of these changes as part of the annual publication of the electoral register on 1st December 2008, having regard to the time and resources required in order to implement the work.**

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

3.1 During debate at the last Council meeting, a number of issues were raised by some ward representatives on proposals to change or amalgamate some polling stations and access for disabled voters. Concerns were also raised that polling districts should take account of additional residential development. The Electoral Services Officer advised that there was a statutory obligation on the Returning Officer continually to keep polling districts and polling stations under review.

3.2 The Council agreed the proposals as presented with the caveat that the Engagement PDG give consideration to the issues raised as part of the ongoing review of polling districts and polling places. As there was a scheduled meeting of the Engagement PDG on 27th March, it was opportune to refer the issues raised at Council to that meeting. Members of the PDG considered specific issues relating to the Greyfriars ward and Harrowby ward in Grantham and disabled access to the polling station located at the Essex Road GOPD scheme in Stamford taking into account representations made by ward members and the advice of the Electoral Services Officer. The resultant recommendation from the PDG was to propose changes to the Harrowby ward to provide for four polling districts instead of three and to reinstate use of the Belton Lane school as a polling station (see attached appendix).

3.3 The implementation of the outcome of the review has been deferred pending referral back to the Council. Subject to approval of changes to the Harrowby ward, the implementation work to integrate the changes within the electoral software and GIS systems can proceed. Given that this will now take some six to eight weeks to implement and having regard to there being no major elections this year, the Returning Officer recommends that the register is not now re-published but that the changes will be effective for the autumn 2008 canvass and the annual publication of the register on 1st December 2008.

4. COMMENTS OF CORPORATE HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES (SECTION 151 OFFICER)

(As supplied with report DEM010):

The Service Manager has confirmed that the proposals can be contained within existing budget provision and are likely to result in £2,000 savings compared to previous arrangements.

5. COMMENTS OF THE LEGAL SERVICES MANAGER (MONITORING OFFICER)

(As supplied with report DEM010):

This review was essential to rationalise the allocation of polling places throughout the district and the polling districts in urban areas. The legislation does not allow for review of polling districts for rural areas. These districts must remain the same as the parish boundaries.

The last review was carried out in 1997. Since that time polling places have been added without consideration of existing places and polling districts in urban areas have increased substantially in size.

This work has been undertaken as a statutory requirement. It has involved considerable staff time to complete to this stage and the use of temporary staff has been necessary to enable the operation of the normal statutory service to continue.

Further work will be necessary after the recommendations have been agreed to allow the integration of these proposals within the software system ready for re-publication of the electoral register.

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

Lena Shuttlewood
Democracy Service Manager
01476 406119
e-mail: l.shuttlewood@southkesteven.gov.uk

Sue Gibson
Electoral Services Officer
01476 406125
e-mail: s.gibson@southkesteven.gov.uk