



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Council

26 January 2023

Karen Bradford
Returning Officer

Interim Review of Polling Places

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

This report details proposals for changes of some polling places following an interim review of polling places and polling stations.

Recommendations

That the Council:

1. Approves the proposals setting out changes to polling places detailed in Appendix 1, recommendations 1 to 11.
2. That the approved revised polling places take effect from the 4 May 2023 elections.

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?

No

What are the relevant corporate priorities?

High performing Council

Which wards are impacted?

Belvoir, Bourne East, Grantham Barrowby Gate, Grantham Earlesfield, Grantham Harrowby, Grantham Springfield, Isaac Newton and Peascliffe and Ridgeway Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report. The proposals seek to relocate polling places from one venue to another with no additional polling stations identified.

Completed by: Alison Hall-Wright, Assistant Director of Finance

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 The Council has a legal duty under the Section 18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983 to undertake a compulsory review of polling districts and polling places every five years. The last review was carried out in 2018 and the next full review is due to be undertaken between October 2023 and January 2025.
- 1.3 In the period between compulsory reviews, the Council is required to keep polling arrangements under review. This review seeks to review polling stations in certain wards in advance of the elections taking place in May 2023.
- 1.4 The review has been conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and guidance issued by the Electoral Commission.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Assistant Director of Governance and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Diversity and Inclusion

- 1.5 To ensure inclusivity, access audits and consultation should be carried out on all venues proposed as polling stations. This review concentrates on a number of changes of location for polling stations and discussion during the equality impact assessment process gave assurances of physical access to all proposed sites. People who are unable to vote at a polling station have alternative means of voting available to them – postal or proxy votes. An impact assessment has been completed.

Completed by: Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 A polling place review seeks to establish the most suitable voting arrangements for electors. Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council has a duty to divide the District into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each of these districts.
- 2.2 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 also requires the Council to undertake compulsory reviews every five years. The Council reviewed all polling districts and polling places as part of a compulsory review in 2018 and must complete the next full compulsory review between October 2023 and January 2025.
- 2.3 In the period between compulsory reviews, the Council is required to keep polling arrangements under review.
- 2.4 This interim review has been undertaken to consider any changes that may be necessary in advance of the District and Town/Parish Council elections taking place in May 2023.
- 2.5 At the County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner elections held in May 2021 it was necessary for a number of polling places to be temporarily changed. These changes were made by the Chief Executive using powers under electoral law and the Council's Constitution. The changes were necessary either due to venues no longer being unavailable or as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic in relation to minimising the use of schools and sheltered housing community rooms.
- 2.6 This interim review focused on the areas where a temporary change was made in 2021 and proposes to permanently relocate a number of the polling stations for future elections.
- 2.7 Following the completion of the review, two further venue changes are proposed for the areas of Belton and Manthorpe and Denton. These additional proposed changes are detailed at recommendations 1 and 11 in Appendix 1.

2.8 Recommendations to change the polling place are proposed for the following areas:

	Ward and Polling District	Proposed Arrangements
1	Belvoir Ward Polling Districts BLA1 (Denton) and BLD1 (Wyville-cum-Hungerton)	St Andrew's Church, Denton replaces The Welby Arms, Denton as the polling place.
2	Bourne East Ward Polling District BNK1	Bourne Corn Exchange replaces Meadow Close Communal Room as the polling place.
3	Bourne East Ward Polling District BNM1 (Twenty)	Bourne Corn Exchange replaces Twenty Village Hall as the polling place
4	Grantham Barrowby Gate Ward Polling District GBA1	Grantham and District Indoor Bowling Club replaces Poplar Farm School as the polling place
5	Grantham Barrowby Gate Ward Polling District GBB1	Grantham and District Indoor Bowling Club replaces the Table Tennis Centre as the polling place
6	Grantham Earlesfield Ward Polling District GEA1	Grantham West Community Centre replaces the Table Tennis Centre as the polling place
7	Grantham Harrowby Ward Polling District GHA1	The Church of the Ascension Hall replaces the Canterbury Close Communal Room as the polling place
8	Grantham Harrowby Ward Polling District GHC1	The Church of the Ascension Hall replaces the Central Place Communal Room as the polling place
9	Grantham Springfield Ward Polling District GSC1	The Bethesda Evangelical Church replaces the Walton Academy as the polling place
10	Isaac Newton Ward Polling District INH1 (South Witham)	South Witham Village Hall replaces the Children's Centre as the polling place
11	Peascliffe and Ridgeway Ward Polling District PCC2 (Belton and Manthorpe)	St John's Church Community Hall replaces Manthorpe Playgroup Hall as the polling place.

2.9 It is proposed that the polling places for all other polling districts will remain unchanged.

2.10 Full details of the proposals for the polling districts listed in paragraph 2.8 above where changes are recommended, together with details of responses received during the consultation, are included in **Appendix 1**.

2.11 A list of all polling districts and polling places, including those areas where no change is being proposed, is included at **Appendix 2**.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 The polling places for nine of the polling districts outlined in paragraph 2.8 above and within Appendix 1 were temporarily changed for the 2021 elections using the Chief Executive's powers under electoral law and the Council's Constitution to select an alternative where necessary in the lead up to an election.
- 3.2 At the 2021 elections, no complaints were received in relation to any of the temporary changes or venues used.
- 3.3 The changes being proposed in this report, if approved, will implement permanent changes for future elections from May 2023 onwards.
- 3.4 The Elections Act 2022 will introduce the requirement for electors to show an approved form of photo identification before voting in a polling station with effect from the May 2023 elections. Polling stations will need to have sufficient space to be able to provide a private area to allow electors to choose to have their identification viewed in private. This may be achieved through privacy screens requiring a larger space to be made available within the polling station.
- 3.5 The Council must have regard to the guidance for polling place reviews and ensure that all electors have reasonable facilities for voting and that every polling place is accessible to electors who are disabled as far as is practicable.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 The options considered during the review include retaining the current polling places where available or relocating to the alternative proposed venues as detailed in Appendix 1.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 The Council must keep polling districts and polling places under review. The recommendations have been prepared based on the feedback provided both during the review and at the elections held in May 2021 when the majority of the changes were made on a temporary basis.
- 5.2 The arrangements proposed in the review enable the Council to designate the most appropriate polling places and polling stations for voters that provide suitable access, space and facilities for voting.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Public notice of the review was given on 8 September 2022 and full details of the review were published on the Council's website. A press release was issued supplemented by social media posts in September and October 2022.

- 6.2 Prior to the commencement of the review, initial consultation was undertaken of the existing polling places and any suggested changes with all current District Councillors.
- 6.3 Draft proposals were prepared and published on 12 September 2022. A public consultation was undertaken from 14 September to 7 October 2022. The consultation also invited comments from all District and County Councillors, Parish and Town Councils and local political parties.
- 6.4 The Notice of Review, which invited comments, was also sent to Parish and Town Councils for display on their notice boards.
- 6.5 Following completion of the review, further consultation was undertaken for proposed changes for the areas of Denton and Belton and Manthorpe with the District Ward Councillors, County Councillors and Parish Councils.
- 6.6 A total of 21 responses to the consultation were received and these have been summarised and incorporated into both Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. Comments received are listed against the relevant Ward.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 Electoral Commission Guidance on the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/electoral-administrator/returning-officer/polling-place-reviews>
- 7.2 Notice of Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places and draft proposals www.southkesteven.gov.uk/pollingreview

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Schedule of polling place changes
Appendix 2 - Full list of polling districts and proposed polling places.