



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**



Council

Thursday, 23 November 2023

Karen Bradford
Chief Executive and Returning Officer

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

This report details the proposals of future polling districts and polling places following the compulsory review of polling arrangements.

Recommendations

That the Council:

- 1. Approves the schedule of polling districts and polling places detailed in Appendix 1.**
- 2. Approves the relocation of the Deeping St James polling station for polling district DJB3 from the Deeping St James CP Primary School to the Deepings Methodist Church.**
- 3. That the approved revised polling districts and polling places take effect from 1 December 2023.**

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Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?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?	All 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 one polling place from one venue to another with no additional polling stations identified.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 The Council has a legal duty under 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 full review was carried out in 2018 and the next full review is required to be completed before 31 January 2025.
- 1.3 An interim review was undertaken in 2022 as part of the Council's duty to keep polling arrangements under review between the five yearly compulsory reviews when a number of changes to polling places were made.
- 1.4 The review has been conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the guidance issues by the Electoral Commission.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Assistant Director (Governance and Public Protection) and Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 places a duty on the Council to divide the District into polling districts, to designate polling places for each of these districts and to keep the arrangements under review.
- 2.2 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 also requires the Council to undertake compulsory reviews every five years. The Council is required to complete this next compulsory review between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.
- 2.3 Although the compulsory review is not required to be completed until 31 January 2025, the review has been timed to enable any proposed changes to be implemented before the Police and Crime Commissioner elections which will take place on 2 May 2024. In addition the General election can be held at any time before 28 January 2025 and it is considered appropriate for the polling places review to be completed as early as possible to ensure certainty of polling places for this election if it is called at short notice.
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 Changes to Parliamentary constituency boundaries will take effect at the next Parliamentary General election and as a result changes to the polling district reference codes for some areas are proposed to reflect the new constituencies.
- 2.6 The timetable for the review was as set out in the table below:

Event	Date
Publication of the notice of review	2 October 2023
Publication of (Acting) Returning Officer's proposals	6 October 2023
Consultation period	6 – 27 October 2023
Changes to polling places and districts implemented	1 December 2023

- 2.7 It is proposed that the revised polling places and polling district references as detailed at Appendix 1 will take effect from the date of the publication of the electoral register on 1 December 2023.
- 2.8 In the event that a polling place becomes unavailable during an election period, the Chief Executive has delegated authority within the Council's constitution to

make any changes to polling places in exceptional circumstances, in consultation with the Ward Member(s).

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 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 electors have such reasonable facilities for voting and so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place should be accessible to electors who are disabled.
- 3.2 The Electoral Commission provides a checklist to assess the suitability of buildings for use as polling places which includes considerations such as sufficient space, level access, width of doorways and access corridors and parking facilities for polling staff and disabled people.
- 3.3 As part of the Council's duty to keep the arrangements under review an interim review was undertaken in 2022 when a number of changes to polling places were made. As a result, further minimal change to polling places are proposed as part of this full review.
- 3.4 The changes made to polling places in 2022 were in place for the elections held on 4 May 2023. No complaints or negative feedback were received at these elections in relation to any of the changes implemented at the 2022 interim review.
- 3.5 One recommendation of a change of polling place is proposed for the area listed below:

Ward/Polling District	Current polling place	Proposed new polling place
Deeping St James Ward Polling District DJB3	Deeping St James Community Primary School, Hereward Way, Deeping St. James PE6 8PZ	The Deepings Methodist Church, Church Street, Deeping St James, PE6 8HF

- 3.6 It is proposed that the polling places for all other polling districts remain unchanged as detailed at Appendix 1.
- 3.7 The current polling districts include references to the Parliamentary constituencies with the suffix of '1' used to indicate the current Grantham and Stamford constituency, '2' for the Sleaford and North Hykeham constituency and '3' for the South Holland and the Deepings constituency.
- 3.8 New Parliamentary constituencies will take effect at the next General election which must be held by January 2025. As a result, changes to polling district reference codes are proposed in some instances to align the polling district code to the new Parliamentary constituencies. The proposed coding maintains the

current ward grouping structure with a change to the suffix numbering to identify the new constituencies as below:

Future Parliamentary Constituency	Proposed polling district references
Grantham and Bourne	***1
Rutland and Stamford	***2
South Holland and the Deepings	***3

4. Other Options Considered

4.1 During the review the following options have been considered following comments and feedback received as part of the consultation process.

4.2 Deeping St James Ward (polling district DJB3)

4.2.1 Deeping St James Community Primary School is a well established polling station for this polling district and accommodates two polling stations due to the large number of electors. In May 2021 the polling station was temporarily relocated to the Deepings Methodist Church in Church Street to minimise the use of school premises as a result of the Covid pandemic.

4.2.2 Two alternative premises have been considered during this review: the Deepings Methodist Church and the Open Door Baptist Church. Whilst both venues offer good facilities for a polling station, the Methodist Church is considered to be the most suitable venue as an alternative to the school. The Open Door Baptist Church has a suitable room which could be used with a car park, however the gravel car park/entrance and the busy Spalding Road could potentially be problematic at a high turnout election with cars entering and leaving the premises via the single car entrance throughout the day.

4.2.3 The Methodist Church provides level access, a small off-road car park with two entrance points and a designated disabled parking space. The premises also provides a large room which can be used to divide into two polling stations plus a separate meeting room should it be necessary to further separate the two polling stations.

4.2.4 During the consultation, two comments were received from residents regarding the proposal to relocate to the Methodist Church with concerns relating to the car parking provision.

4.2.5 Although there are parking restrictions on Church Street, some parking spaces are available near to the Church. In addition agreement is being sought from the landlord of the Waterton Arms, located opposite the Methodist Church, to request if the pub car park could be used for additional parking on election days should it be required.

4.2.6 The Methodist Church is considered a good alternative venue to the school and will avoid future disruption to the school on polling day.

4.3 **Grantham Barrowby Gate Ward (polling district GBA1)**

4.3.1 During the consultation, the car park at the back of Tesco Express on the corner of Barrowby Gate and Winchester Road was suggested by Councillor G. Knight as a more suitable location for voters in this polling district as it is more central than the current venue at the Bowls Club. This option was investigated during the 2022 interim review but at that time it had not been possible to make contact with the owner of the site.

4.3.2 Further enquiries have established that the car park is required to be made available for access at all times by the business premises and flats on the site. The siting of a mobile polling station would involve the majority of the car park being unavailable for a period of three days to allow for the siting on the day before an election and collection on the day afterwards. As a result this option cannot be pursued further.

4.3.3 It is proposed that the polling place for voters in this polling district remain at the Grantham and District Indoor Bowling Club, Trent Road due to no venues being available within the polling district.

4.4 **Grantham Harrowby Ward (polling district GHC1)**

4.4.1 The polling place for this polling district was relocated to the Church of the Ascension Hall during the 2022 interim review and was used as the polling place for this polling district at the elections held in May 2023. No complaints or negative comments were received relating to the location of the polling station from voters at these elections. The Church Hall provides an excellent venue with good access and car parking facilities.

4.4.2 The option of relocating back to the previous venue in Central Place has been re-considered as part of this review. The Central Place Communal Room is situated on a cul-de-sac with only resident parking available. Although the Church of the Ascension Hall is a further distance for the residents on the western edge of the polling district, it is felt on balance to provide the more suitable venue with a larger voting space, good access and car parking facilities.

4.5 **Stamford All Saints Ward (polling district SAB1) and Stamford St John's Ward (polling district SJA1)**

4.5.1 The Malcolm Sargent Primary School is the designated polling place for these polling districts. During the consultation, a response was received from the school requesting that the use of the school be reconsidered because of the

inconvenience to the pupils and staff as well as security and safeguarding concerns.

4.5.2 At the elections held in 2021 during the Covid restrictions, it had been possible to relocate the polling station to the Danish Invader Public House located along Empingham Road, Stamford. The function room at the Danish Invader has a regular booking on Thursday evenings which were not taking place at the time of the 2021 elections.

4.5.3 Contact has again been made with the landlord of the Danish Invader who have confirmed that the premises cannot be made available for use as a polling station. It is therefore proposed that the Malcolm Sargent Primary School remain the polling station for these polling districts.

4.5.4 This will be kept under review and if the Danish Invader Public House can be made available, the option of relocating the polling station will be reconsidered.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

5.1 To ensure the most appropriate polling places and polling stations are designated for voters that provide suitable access, space and facilities for voting.

5.2 The changes proposed in this review also enable the Council to align polling district references to the new Parliamentary constituencies.

6. Consultation

6.1 Public notice of the review was given on 2 October 2023 and full details were published on the Council's website. A press release was issued supplemented by social media posts.

6.2 Prior to the commencement of the review, initial consultation was undertaken of the existing polling places with all current District Councillors. A total of 11 responses were received from District Councillors during this pre-consultation.

6.3 Draft proposals were prepared and published on 5 October 2023. A public consultation ran from 5 October until 27 October 2023. During this formal consultation period, comments were invited from all District and County Councillors, Parish and Town Councils and local political party representatives.

6.4 The Acting Returning Officer for the future Parliamentary Constituencies of Rutland and Stamford and South Holland and the Deepings have also been consulted on the proposals.

6.5 The Notice of Review and schedule of proposals was also sent to Parish and Town Council for display on their notice boards.

6.6 A total of 25 responses were received to the initial and formal consultation process. The responses have been summarised and incorporated into Appendix 1 against the relevant Ward to which they relate.

7. Background Papers

7.1 Electoral Commission Guidance on the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places [Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations | Electoral Commission](#)

7.2 Notice of Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places and schedule of draft proposals www.southkesteven.gov.uk/pollingreview2023

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 – Schedule of proposed polling districts and polling places

Sign-offs *(to be removed by Democratic Services prior to publication)*

	Name	Date
Finance	RW	1.11.23
Governance	GW	30.10.23
Director	KB	09.11.23
Cabinet Member		