

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Council	
MEETING DATE:	30 November 2023	
TITLE:	Review of polling districts and polling places 2023	
WARD:	All wards	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 – Polling districts and polling places, including proposed changes Appendix 2 – Copies of representations received		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 The Council has conducted a review of polling districts and polling places, in preparation for the police and crime commissioner elections in May 2024 and the next parliamentary election, which is due to take place by January 2025.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Council is asked to:

2.1 Approve the proposed changes to polling districts and polling places.

2.2 Authorise the Electoral Registration Officer to take the necessary measures to give effect to any new or amended polling districts, ensuring that the electoral register published on 1 December 2023 reflects the proposed changes.

3 THE REPORT

3.1 On Monday 23 October 2023 the Council published a notice of review of polling districts and polling places. Ward and parish councillors, as well as local electors, were invited to comment on the current polling scheme and to suggest any suitable and more accessible alternatives, if any were available. Views were also welcomed from any person or body with expertise in access for electors with any type of disability.

3.2 The deadline for representations was Monday 20 November 2023.

3.3 The Acting Returning Officer for the parliamentary constituency of Bath and the parliamentary constituency of North East Somerset and Hanham, and the Acting

Returning Officer for the constituency of Frome and East Somerset support the proposals for change which are detailed in Appendix 1.

- 3.4 In order to ensure consistency for electors voting in person at the polling station, changes to polling districts and polling places have been limited to those cases where an existing polling place is no longer available or where the voting experience at the polling place could be improved by reducing the maximum number of potential electors allocated to that polling place and thus reducing the risk of queues.
- 3.5 The proposed changes affect 12 wards: Bathwick, Combe Down, High Littleton, Keynsham North, Kingsmead, Lambridge, Moorlands, Paulton, Peasedown, Southdown, Walcot, Westmoreland. No changes are proposed for Bathavon North, Bathavon South, Chew Valley, Clutton & Farmborough, Keynsham East, Keynsham South, Lansdown, Mendip, Midsomer Norton North, Midsomer Norton Redfield, Newbridge, Odd Down, Oldfield Park, Publow & Whitchurch, Radstock, Saltford, Timsbury, Twerton, Westfield, Weston, Widcombe & Lyncombe.
- 3.6 The most extensive changes relate to the wards of Bathwick, Keynsham North, Kingsmead, Southdown and Walcot. In these cases, Electoral Services and the GIS Team have worked closely with ward councillors in order to significantly improve the current arrangements.
- 3.7 The full details of the proposed polling districts and polling places are included in Appendix 1.
- 3.8 All comments and representations received are recorded in Appendix 2. A number of representations were received from electors in Twerton ward, asking for the name of the ward to be changed to 'Twerton and Whiteway'. Changing the name of electoral wards falls outside the scope of the polling districts and polling places review and follows a separate legal process. The law requires the council to consult on potential changes to ward names before they are considered for a decision.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council has a duty to divide its area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each polling district.
 - “polling districts” are geographical electoral areas into which wards may be sub-divided;
 - “polling places” are the buildings or areas where electors in a polling district go to vote;
 - “polling stations” are the issuing desks in the building or area which is designated as the polling place.
- 4.2 The Electoral Administration Act 2006, as amended, introduced a duty on all local authorities in Great Britain to review their polling districts and polling places at least once every five years. The next compulsory review must be undertaken within a 16-month window between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.
- 4.3 In June 2023 the Boundary Commission for England concluded their review of parliamentary constituency boundaries. Once the Orders for the new parliamentary constituencies have been made, the new boundaries will be used

for the next parliamentary election, which must take place before 28 January 2025.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

5.1 The implementation of the review will require updates to the electoral register database to reflect the new polling district boundaries, which will be undertaken by the Electoral Services team.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

7.1 The proposed changes are aimed at improving the accessibility of the voting process.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 The proposed changes have no direct effect on climate change.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 None

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 Suggestions were invited from members of the public and any interested parties, including Bath & North East Somerset Councillors and Parish and Town Councils, and from people and organisations with particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.

Contact person	Aurora Loi Telephone: 01225 477431 Email: aurora_loi@bathnes.gov.uk
Background papers	Ward maps with new polling district boundaries are available at https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/electoralreviews .
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	