



**West Devon
Borough
Council**

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

To assist any interested party who may wish to make representations, the Council has put together the following information.

Definition of a Parliamentary Constituency, a Ward, Polling District, Polling Place and Polling Station

- **Parliamentary Constituency**

The area designated by the Boundary Commission which is represented by a Member of Parliament (MP) in the House of Commons. This cannot be changed by the review – it is the division of the constituency into polling districts and places that is under review

- **Wards**

The District is divided into areas known as “Wards” which are represented by District Ward Councillors. Ward boundaries cannot be changed by this review – it is the division of wards into polling districts and polling places that is under review.

- **Polling Districts**

A polling district is the area created by the separation of a ward into smaller parts, within which a polling place can be determined which is most convenient for the electors

- **Polling Places**

A polling place is the area or building in which the number of polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer.

- **Polling Station**

A polling station is the room or area in which voting takes place. This must be located within the polling place that has been designated for the particular polling district. The number of polling stations to be accommodated within a polling place is the decision of the (Acting) Returning Officer for the election.

Timetable for the Review

The Council is required to publish notice of the holding of a review. This has been carried out by way of notices posted at the council offices in Kilworthy Park, Tavistock and St James Street, Okehampton. It has also been published on the Council's website. Copies of the notice have also been sent to Town and Parish Clerks for display. The timetable for the review is set out below:

Commencement of Consultation	29 July 2014
Closing date for representations	29 August 2014
Consideration of all representations	1- 8 September 2014
Publication of any changes to draft Order	9 September 2014
Consideration of any amendments to draft Order	16 September 2014
Report to Full Council	07 October 2014
Completion of review and Publication of final Polling District Places Order	By 31 December 2014

Criteria for Polling Places and Polling Districts

The Electoral Commission has set out guidance to assist in assessing the current arrangements and any proposals for change. As part of the assessment of the suitability of polling district boundaries, the following should be considered:

Are the boundaries well defined? For example. Do they follow the natural boundaries of the areas? If not, is it clear which properties belong in the polling district?

Are there suitable transport links within the polling district, and how do they relate to the areas of the district that are most highly populated? Are there any obstacles to voters crossing the current polling district and reaching the polling place e.g. steep hills, impassable major roads, railway lines, rivers?

There are also a number of factors that must be considered when reviewing existing polling places or assessing new polling places, including:

The location: is it reasonably accessible within the polling district? Does it avoid barriers for the voter such as steep hills, major roads, rivers, etc.? Are there any convenient transport links?

Size: if required, can the polling place accommodate more than one polling station? If multiple polling stations are required, is the polling place ample enough to accommodate all voters going into and out of the polling stations, even where there is a high turnout?

Suitability: is the building readily available in the event of any unscheduled elections? Is there any possibility that the building may be demolished as part of a new development? Is the building accessible to all those entitled to attend the polling place?

The Electoral Commission recognises that the choice of polling station will often be a balance between the quality of the building, in terms of access and facilities, and the proximity of the building to the electors it is intended to serve; and that there may be circumstances where the polling place might fall wholly or partly outside the polling district

because suitable alternatives are not available in the relevant area.

Although it is Council policy to avoid the use of schools where possible, there may be locations where there are no other suitable premises in the area. For the purposes of elections, the (Acting) Returning Officer is entitled to use free of charge, subject to covering the cost of heating, lighting and caretaking charges, schools maintained or assisted by a local authority as well as those schools that receive grants made up of monies provided by Parliament. In conducting this review, it is proposed that, in order to minimise the risk of long queues at a polling station, as far as possible, that no more than 2500 voters should be assigned to a polling station for local elections. It should be noted that the number of postal voters in each polling district is a relevant consideration in this regard. In the event of a combined and/or Parliamentary Election, given more complex arrangements and higher voter turnout, it may be necessary to review these numbers. In all circumstances, consideration is given to whether a polling place is capable of accommodating more than one polling station if necessary.

Presiding Officers are encouraged to make comments and observations regarding the suitability of polling stations to which they are allocated and Polling Station Inspectors visited all polling stations during the recent elections in May 2011. Any comments will be taken into account when conducting the review.

The Role of the (Acting) Returning Officer

Whilst it is for the Council to decide on the creation of polling districts and the location of polling places, it is for the (Acting) Returning Officer to decide how many polling stations are required for each polling place. The (Acting) Returning Officer must allocate electors to the polling stations in such manner as he or she thinks most conducive to the smooth running of polling day. The Council must consult the (Acting) Returning Officer as part of the review and the (Acting) Returning Officer must comment during any review on both the existing polling places and polling stations; and on any proposed changes.

Other Representations

The Council is also required to seek representations from those with expertise in relation to access to premises and facilities for disabled people. Such persons must be given the opportunity to comment on the representations made by the (Acting) Returning Officer. Election candidates and agents, political parties and members of the Council will also be notified of the review.

Summary of Consultees

Any elector in the Constituency may make representations on the designation of polling districts or places. In addition, the Council has notified the following groups/individuals about the review:

The (Acting) Returning Officer for Central Devon
The (Acting) Returning Officer for Torridge & West Devon
The Member of Parliament for Central Devon
The Member of Parliament for Torridge & West Devon
West Devon Borough Councillors

Devon County Councillors representing divisions within the West Devon area.
West Devon Town and Parish Councils
Registered Political Parties & Election Agents
Age UK Devon
Living Options Devon
Scope
Tass
Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

Completion of the review

The revised Polling District Places Order must be approved and published by 31 December 2014.

The following information will be published on the Council's website and made available, on request, at the West Devon Borough Council Office, Kilworthy Park, Tavistock.

- all correspondence sent to the Returning Officer in connection with the review
- all representations made by any group or person in connection with the review
- proposals for the designations of polling districts and polling places
- details of the actual designations of polling districts and polling places agreed as a result of the review

Challenging the Review

Although the Electoral Commission has no initial role in the review process itself, it does have an important role in respect of considering representations and observations that a Council has failed to conduct a proper review on one of two grounds:

- that the Council has failed to meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency, or a body of them (i.e. the reasonable requirements of a particular area of the authority have not been satisfactorily met); or
- that the Council has failed to take sufficient account of the accessibility to disabled persons of polling stations within a designated polling place.

Representations based on any other grounds will not be considered by the Commission.

All representations made to the Commission must be made in writing either by post, email or fax and should include the location and any other relevant information, stating specifically why it is inaccessible or does not meet the reasonable requirements of the electors.

Who may make a representation to the Electoral Commission?

Section 18D (1) of the Representation of the People Act 1983, sets out who may make representations to the Electoral Commission namely;

- not less than thirty registered electors in the constituency (although electors registered anonymously cannot make a representation)
- a person (except the (Acting) Returning Officer) who made representations to the council when the review was being undertaken
- any person who is not an elector within the constituency but who the Electoral Commission feels has sufficient interest in the accessibility of disabled persons in the areas or has particular expertise in relation to the access to premises or facilities of disabled persons

The (Acting) Returning Officer is entitled to make observations on any representations made to the Commission.

What will the Electoral Commission do?

The Electoral Commission is required to consider any representations and observations and may direct the relevant council to make any alterations it sees necessary to the polling places designated by the review. Should a Council fail to make the alterations within two months of the direction being given, the Commission may make the alterations itself.

Proposals

Set out in Appendix A are details of current polling districts and polling places for the Central Devon Parliamentary Constituency

Set out in Appendix B are details of the current polling districts and polling places for that part of the Torridge & West Devon Parliamentary Constituency which is within the West Devon boundary

Set out in Appendix C are details of the polling stations used at the May 2014 elections with details of the total electorate allocated to each polling station.

Representations

Any persons wishing to make comments or representations regarding the proposals may do so. Any representations you wish to make should be **received by close of business (5pm) on 29 August 2014**

All representations must be made in writing either by post, e-mail or fax.

Representations by post should be sent to:

Electoral Services
West Devon Borough Council
Kilworthy Park
Tavistock
PL19 0BZ

Representations by fax should be sent to: 01822 813634

For any queries, please telephone the Electoral Services helpline on 01822 813665

All representations will be published on the Council's website as soon as possible after receipt. Even if you have already commented on the proposals, you may make further submissions in response to views and comments you see on the website.

The final decision will be taken by members of the Council and a notice of any alterations will be published on the Council's website no later than 31 December. Any changes will become effective at all elections held after that date.