

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

Portfolio Holder Decision

REPORT AUTHOR: Sandra Matthews
Principal Elections Officer, Electoral Services

SUBJECT: Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

1. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The next compulsory review must now be started and completed between 1 October 2013 and 31 January 2015 (inclusive).
2. Powys has two parliamentary constituencies; Brecon & Radnorshire and Montgomeryshire. Each constituency is divided into polling districts and polling places.
3. The location of proposed polling districts and places are the responsibility of the Local Authority and the locations of the polling stations are the responsibility of the Returning Officer. When designating polling districts, the Authority must
 - (a) seek to ensure that all electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
 - (b) and ensure unless there are special circumstances that lead the Authority to determine otherwise, that each community is in a separate polling district.
5. Strictly speaking the statutory review of polling districts and polling places is confined to parliamentary polling districts and places only. Whilst Local Government arrangements are not automatically part of the review, the Electoral Commission have advised that polling districts and places for parliamentary and local government elections should wherever possible be the same. Therefore we propose to conduct a review of both arrangements simultaneously.
6. For the avoidance of any doubt it is confirmed that the required review will not consider the boundaries of the parliamentary constituencies or the borders and names of local authorities and electoral areas within local authorities or warding arrangements of communities.

7. Schedule A1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983 sets out the steps and procedures which the County Council must follow in undertaking any review of polling districts and polling places. The Council is required to consult on existing arrangements, publishing a statutory notice of the review, which will be displayed at Council Offices, public libraries, in the local press and on the electoral services website. Powys County Council is also required to consult the Returning Officer and to actively seek representations from such persons as it thinks have particular expertise in relation to: access to premises; or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.
8. Additionally all key stakeholders in the electoral process will be given the opportunity to participate. Accordingly the review process will engage with all members of the County Council, Community Councils, elected representatives, constituency political parties and any elector in the constituencies will have the opportunity to make representations on existing arrangements.
9. It may, of course, be the case that, as a result of the consultation process, proposals come forward for alterations to polling districts and polling places which the Council may wish to adopt as part of the final arrangements at the County Council meeting on the 22 January 2014.
10. It is proposed that discussions will take place with those individual Councillors where proposals to change are being put forward or being suggested in relation to polling districts/places within/affecting their electoral divisions. Accordingly the views of the relevant local members will be fully articulated in the final Council report in January.
11. The review timetable must be manageable and must allow adequate time for consultation on existing arrangements and also the consideration of representations. The Review will be completed in time to publish the Register of Electors on 7 March 2014, thereby avoiding any unnecessary confusion that could be caused to Political Parties and candidates by re-publishing again ahead of the European elections in May 2014. We consider that the following timetable would meet these requirements.

Review Schedule	Period or Date
Notice of Review (Commencement)	25 October 2013
End of consultation period (6 wks)	6 December 2013
Consideration of representations received and consultation with local members on proposals	December/January
Powys County Council	22 January 2014
Publish Review Result (subject to Council Approval)	31 January 2014
Publication of Register of Electors	07 March 2014

12. A detailed commentary on the review process will be available via the Members Information Bulletin and every member of the Council will have the opportunity to engage in the review and put forward any views and representations he/she may wish.

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
That the Portfolio Holder notes the contents of this report and endorses the arrangements for dealing with the review outlined in the report.	To put in place appropriate arrangements to undertake a review of polling districts and polling stations in accordance with legislative requirements.

Person(s) To Action Decision:	Sandra Matthews
Date By When Decision To Be Actioned:	As indicated in report

Relevant Policy (ies):			
Within Policy:	N/A	Within Budget:	Y

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Relevant Portfolio Member(s):	County Councillor G W Ratcliffe
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Background Papers used to prepare Report: