

Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations 2014

Cabinet Member: Cllr Mrs Brenda Hull
Responsible Officer Electoral Services Manager

Reason for Report: Polling districts, polling places and polling stations are required to be reviewed every 5 years.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. That polling districts, polling places and polling stations remain unchanged.
2. That a recommendation for a county divisional change for Silverton North be made (see paragraph 4.2)
3. That a report be prepared for Council in 2017 seeking justification for change (see paragraph 4.3)

Relationship to Corporate Plan: None

Financial Implications: None

Legal Implications: None

Risk Assessment: Polling station staff and town/parish clerks were consulted on polling premises to ascertain the risks of using buildings as polling stations. Comments from these will be fed into election risk assessments.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In accordance with the Electoral Administration Act 2013, section 17 requires each authority to carry out a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations by 31 January 2015 and every 5 years after that date. This review has now taken place.
- 1.2 **Polling District** - Each parish is a separate polling district (or multiple polling districts for warded parishes) and is a sub-division of the parliamentary constituency.
- 1.3 **Polling Place** - A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district. The polling places for all polling districts in Mid Devon are designated as the whole polling district.
- 1.4 **Polling Station** - Polling stations are the rooms or areas within the polling place where voting takes place.

2.0 Consultation and Comments

- 2.1 The town and parish clerks and chairmen of parish meetings were consulted and asked to publish a Notice of Review on public notice boards, raise the matter at their council meetings and provide a copy of meeting minutes, recording any comments. There were no issues to arise from the consultation with the town/parish councils and parish meetings. All responses indicated satisfaction with current arrangements.
- 2.2 Election staff at polling stations and polling station inspectors are asked to complete feedback questionnaires regarding the suitability of the polling station at every election. Comments are fed back and acted upon where appropriate and possible. There were no comments arising from the Presiding Officer's reports in May 2014 that indicated that a change of polling station was necessary.
- 2.3 Elected Members were consulted and one issue was raised concerning Silverton (see item 3 below).
- 2.4 A Notice of Review and list of current polling stations was published on the Council's website. There were no comments received in response to this.

3.0 Parish boundary issue - Silverton

- 3.1 There was one response from an elected Member regarding Silverton parish. The request was that the warding arrangement be removed so that all of Silverton parish falls within Silverton District Ward (currently Silverton North is in Cadbury Ward). The request was because the Member reported that most people in Silverton North Ward relate to Silverton rather than Cadbury. The county divisions would be similarly affected as the county division boundary also divides the parish. (Silverton North is currently in Newton St Cyres & Sandford, whereas Silverton Village is in Cullompton Rural). Therefore, the request requires that the boundaries of the district wards and county divisions be changed so that Silverton parish isn't divided between either.
- 3.2 The residents of Silverton North Ward were consulted and there were no objections to the proposal. One letter was received asking for further information as to the reasoning and financial implications of amending the boundary arrangements. The financial implications of the review itself and electoral costs are minimal.
- 3.3 Devon County Council was consulted and it would have no objection to the change to county divisions.
- 3.4 However, Mid Devon District Council does not have any powers to change district and county boundaries and the warding to the parish cannot be removed unless the parish boundaries are coterminous with district and county boundaries. The district and county boundaries could only be changed by an electoral review (to be undertaken by the Local Boundary Commission for England) but even this process would not guarantee that the boundaries would change. An electoral review looks at the total number of councillors elected to an authority and the total numbers of wards/divisions, boundaries of

wards/divisions and ward/division names. An electoral review doesn't look at a single boundary but the totality.

- 3.5 An electoral review of Mid Devon would look at the council size (total number of councillors) and all the wards for the district. The Commission completes electoral reviews for two reasons – either at the request of a local authority i.e. to look at council size, or intervenes where a local authority has poor levels of electoral equality. The Commission intervenes where a local authority triggers either one or both intervention criteria. These are where 30% of wards vary by more than 10% or where one ward has a variance of more than 30%. Mid Devon doesn't trigger either of these intervention criteria as only 17% of wards vary by 10% and the largest variance of a ward in Mid Devon is Upper Culm which has a variance of 13%.
- 3.6 The Commission is, however, currently undertaking a review of Devon County Council. As part of this review the county division boundary could change. The district ward boundary would not. The Commission is currently consulting on division patterns for Devon and the Council or any interested party can have a say on where the division boundaries should go. This consultation ends on 19 January 2015. Therefore, the division boundary dividing Silverton could change as part of the county review but the ward boundary could only change if the Council requests a review of Mid Devon.

4.0 Recommendations

- 4.1 That polling districts, polling places and polling stations remain unchanged.
- 4.2 That a recommendation for a county divisional change concerning Silverton North be made to the Local Government Boundary Commission before 19 January 2015. If successful, the county boundary change would be the first step towards making Silverton parish coterminous with the other tiers of government. Mid Devon District Council could then request a review of the district boundaries. The Commission has advised that it would probably not instigate a review on the Silverton issue alone. However, any electorate changes as a consequence of residential development from 2015 onwards could provide a representation variance which may qualify for a review and the Silverton case would then be looked at.
- 4.3 That a report be prepared for Council in 2017 to consider the justification for requesting a review, arising from increased development or a desire to alter the total number of members in time for elections in 2019.

5.0 Date of Next Review

- 5.1 October 2019

Contact for more Information: Jackie Stoneman, 0188 234214 –
jstoneman@middevon.gov.uk

Circulation of the Report: Ward Member, Returning Officer, All District Councillors