

Report to: Council



Date of Meeting 21 February 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

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## Statutory review of Polling Districts

### Report summary:

The Council started its statutory review of Polling Districts, Places and Stations on 15 January 2024. This report covers the recommendations in relation to the responses received during the consultation and seeks agreement to the amendments.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### Recommendation:

That Council

1. approve the recommended proposals for the Polling District, Polling Places and Polling Stations;
2. approve the renaming of polling districts to include the initials of the new Parliamentary Constituencies as recommended by the Association of Electoral Administrators;
3. delegate authority to the Interim Returning Officer to use alternative venues if preferred ones are unavailable.

### Reason for recommendation:

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 district. The Electoral Administration Act 2006 requires the Council to undertake and complete a review of Polling Districts and Places between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025 (inclusive).

The following definitions may be helpful when reading the report and Appendices.

- “Polling districts” are geographical electoral areas into which wards and constituencies may be sub-divided.
- “Polling places” are the buildings or areas designated by the council where electors in a polling district go to vote in person.
- “Polling stations” are the number of issuing desks in the building or area that is the designated polling place.

The intention of the legislation was reviews would be completed by the January before a UK parliamentary general election. However, since the repeal of the Fixed Term Parliaments Act 2011, there is no longer any certainty as to when the next general election will be.

The Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022 means:

- the UK Parliament can be dissolved by the King on request of the Prime Minister, at any time within the 5 years of the life of the Parliament

- the next general election must take place before Tuesday 28 January 2025, but it could happen at any point before then
- there is no longer a link between the timing of the compulsory polling district and places review falling in a 16-month period ending 3 months before a scheduled general election.

In addition, the Boundary Commission for England has recently undertaken a review of parliamentary constituency boundaries. Final recommendations have now been published and Orders for the new parliamentary constituency boundaries have been made.

The new boundaries will be used for the next general election. If a parliamentary by election is called in the meantime, it would be run on existing boundaries.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Communications and Democracy
- Economy
- Finance and Assets
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

**Links to background information** Click here to enter links to background information; appendices online; and previous reports. These must link to an electronic document. Do not include any confidential or exempt information.

- Better homes and communities for all
  - A greener East Devon
  - A resilient economy
- 

## Report in full

### Consultees

Representations have been invited from Ward Members, Parish Councils, disability groups, and MPs. The consultation was also included on the Council's website, sent out as a press release, and made available on social media. A questionnaire was also sent to all venue booking agents to assess accessibility.

Appendix 1 shows the representations received.

### Proposals

- a. The main issue to come to light is for the new developments around Broadclyst (Tithebarn and Westclyst areas). It is proposed that a new polling station at the Science Park be designated to cover this area. See Appendix 2 for the area to be allocated to the new station.
- b. The Cranbrook polling station is close to exceeding the Electoral Commission's recommendation for electorate attending a station (2250 electors). It is therefore proposed that an extra station is added at the Younghayes Centre.

- c. With the introduction of the new parliamentary constituency boundaries, the Association of Electoral Administrators have advised that polling districts be renamed to include the constituency names. It is therefore proposed to rename all polling districts to comply with this advice.

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**Financial implications:**

None

**Legal implications:**

The legal issues are dealt with in the body of the report