



**Full Council
(Extraordinary)**

**Tuesday, 28
November 2023**

**Matter for
Information and
Decision**

Report Title: Statutory Review of Polling Districts, Places and Stations (2023)

Report Author(s): Samuel Ball (Legal & Democratic Services Manager / Deputy Monitoring Officer) (Deputy Acting Returning Officer)

Purpose of Report:	To advise the Council on the final arrangements being proposed by the (Acting) Returning Officer (the "ARO") for the Harborough, Oadby and Wigston Constituency in respect of the polling districts, polling places and polling stations ("Polling Arrangements") to be used at future elections and referendums that take place within the Borough of Oadby and Wigston. The final comments and proposals take into account the views of all relevant stakeholders that responded to the Review's consultation carried out between 18 October to 15 November 2023.
Report Summary:	<p>The (Acting) Returning Officer is proposing changes to the existing polling arrangements in the following polling districts and wards only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Polling District E (Oadby Uplands)• Polling District F (Oadby Woodlands)• Polling District G (Oadby Brocks Hill)• Polling District N1 (Wigston All Saints)• Polling District N2 (Wigston All Saints) <p>These proposed changes are summarised at section 6.4 of the report.</p>
Recommendation(s):	<p>A. The content of the report and appendices be noted;</p> <p>B. The Council approves the revised Polling District, Polling Places and Polling Station arrangements ("the Polling Arrangements") as proposed by the (Acting) Returning Officer (as set out at Appendix 1 to this report); and</p> <p>C. Delegated authority be given to the (Acting) Returning Officer to make alternative Polling Arrangements should any of the approved Polling Places and Polling Stations be untenable at short-notice prior to/on polling day itself.</p>
Senior Leadership, Head of Service, Manager, Officer and Other Contact(s):	<p>Anne Court (Chief Executive / Head of Paid Service) (Acting Returning Officer) (0116) 257 2602 anne.court1@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>David Gill (Head of Law & Democracy / Monitoring Officer) (Deputy Acting Returning Officer) (0116) 257 2626 david.gill@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>Samuel Ball (Legal & Democratic Services Manager / Deputy Monitoring Officer) (Deputy Acting Returning Officer) (0116) 257 2643</p>

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Strategic Objectives:	Our Council (SO1) Our Communities (SO2) Our Partners (SO5)
Vision and Values:	"Our Borough - The Place To Be" (Vision) Customer & Community Focused (V1)
Report Implications:-	
Legal:	The implications are as set out at section 9 of this report.
Financial:	The implications are as set out at section 8 of this report.
Corporate Risk Management:	Regulatory Governance (CR6)
Equalities and Equalities Assessment (EA):	The legislation governing this Review required feedback and representations to be sought from persons or organisations who are considered to have an expertise in access for persons with different forms of disability. To fulfil this requirement, representations were sought from local organisations including Age UK, Scope and Vista. EA not applicable.
Human Rights:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Health and Safety:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Statutory Officers' Comments:-	
Head of Paid Service:	The report is satisfactory.
Chief Finance Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Monitoring Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Consultees:	The consultees are as set out at section 5 of this report.
Background Papers:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Guidance on the Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations' – The Electoral Commission
Appendices:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The (Acting) Returning Officer's Final Comments and Proposals 2. Polling Districts Overview (Map) 3. Polling District A (Map) 4. Polling District B (Map) 5. Polling District C (Map) 6. Polling District D (Map) 7. Polling District E1 (Map) 8. Polling District E2 (Map) 9. Polling District F1 (Map) 10. Polling District F2 (Map) 11. Polling District G1 (Map) 12. Polling District G2 (Map) 13. Polling District H (Map) 14. Polling District I (Map)

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Polling District J (Map) 16. Polling District K1 (Map) 17. Polling District K2 (Map) 18. Polling District L (Map) 19. Polling District M (Map) 20. Polling District N1 (Map) 21. Polling District N2 (Map) 22. Polling District O (Map) 23. Polling District P1 (Map) 24. Polling District P2 (Map) 25. Polling District Q (Map) 26. Polling District R (Map) 27. Polling District S (Map) 28. Consultation Responses Received |
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Review considers the current polling district, polling place and polling station arrangements ("Polling Arrangements") for electors within the Borough of Oadby and Wigston. Specifically, it considers whether the existing Polling Arrangements provide reasonable facilities for voting. This Review cannot consider or make any changes to any Parliamentary constituency, Borough ward and/or County division boundaries.
- 1.2 The (Acting) Returning Officer ("ARO") has taken into account feedback from previous elections, all consultation responses received in relation to, and any other known issues when conducting, this Review. Where appropriate, visits to polling places and polling stations have been made to assess, consider and make comment on their suitability for electors.

2. Background

- 2.1 In accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Electoral Administration Act 2006 and the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, Oadby and Wigston Borough Council ("the Council") is required to undertake a full compulsory review of its Polling Arrangements every five years. A Review must begin from 1 October 2023 and must conclude by 31 January 2025. The last full compulsory Review was undertaken 2018.
- 2.2 The Review also acknowledges the wider recommended changes to Parliamentary constituency boundaries as proposed by the Boundary Commission for England ("BCE") setting out a new scheme of Parliamentary constituencies for England. The BCE published their final recommendations in June 2023 and, subject to approval anticipated later next year, will take effect from the next UK Parliamentary (General) Election ("UKPGE").
- 2.3 Whilst the BCE's recommendations do not affect the Parliamentary constituency comprising Oadby and Wigston – in that the Borough's administrative area remains coterminous within the newly proposed Harborough, Oadby and Wigston constituency boundary - a Review during the compulsory review period is prudent and necessary to ensure that the Borough's Polling Arrangements continue to remain fit for purpose in time for the next UKPGE.
- 2.4 The next scheduled election is due to take place on 2 May 2024 for the election of a Police and Crime Commissioner ("PCC") for the Leicestershire Police Area. Any changes to the Polling Arrangements as may be approved will be implemented in time for the PCC election.

3. Terminology

- 3.1 **'Polling District'** - the area created by the partition of a constituency, ward, division or region into smaller parts, within which a polling place can be determined. In Oadby and Wigston, each Borough ward is divided into a number of polling districts which each have an alphabetical code running from 'A' to 'S', based on the ward in which they are located.
- 3.2 **'Polling Place'** - The building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the ARO. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that polling stations are as far as reasonably practicable, within the constraints of available alternative venues, within easy reach of all electors from across the given polling district.
- 3.3 **'Polling Station'** - The room or area within the polling place where voting takes place.
- 3.4 Note that the terms 'polling place' and 'polling station' are often used interchangeably, with most considering the polling place (e.g. a school) to be the polling station. However, it is possible to have more than one polling station per polling place (i.e. double polling station).

4. Review Guidelines

- 4.1 In accordance with Electoral Commission ("EC") guidance, the following requirements were considered by the ARO when undertaking the Review of the Polling Arrangements:
 - All electors should have access to suitable facilities for voting, such facilities as are reasonable and practicable in the circumstances.
 - Every polling place should be physically accessible to electors who are disabled, so far as is reasonable and practicable to do so.
 - Each polling place should be situated within the boundary of the polling district, unless special circumstances do not allow this.
 - Each polling place should be specific enough that it is clear to voters in the polling district how they will be able to reach it.
- 4.2 The most recent EC guidance also recommended that there should be no more than 2,250 electors voting in person at a polling station, unless other suitable mitigations measures are put in place. This is lower than previous EC guidance revised since the introduction of voter ID under the Elections Act 2022, recommending a maximum of 2,500 electors.
- 4.3 The ARO has also considered the following features of a polling station when reviewing their suitability and in relation to existing electoral boundaries:
 - **Location** - Is it reasonably accessible within/from the polling district and are there any physical street-scene barriers for voters?
 - **Size** - Can it comfortably accommodate the required number of electors and the commensurate number of polling station staff?
 - **Availability** - Is the building readily available in the event of both scheduled elections and any other unscheduled elections?
 - **Accessibility** - Is the building accessible to those entitled to attend the polling place and can reasonable adjustments be made?

5. Consultation and Engagement

- 5.1 Notice of the Review, which invited written feedback and representations to be made regarding the Polling Arrangements within the Borough, was published on 2 October 2023. The public consultation ran between 18 October and 15 November 2023 (mid-day).
- 5.2 The ARO's Draft Comments and Proposals were received on 13 October 2023 and had to be published within 30 days of receipt. These were published on 18 October 2023.

5.3 Wishing to consult as widely as possible on the Review, targeted communications were sent out and feedback sought from the following interested persons or organisations:

- 26 Oadby and Wigston Borough Councillors representing the 10 Borough Wards;
- 5 Leicestershire County Councillors representing the Borough's 4 County Divisions;
- Member of Parliament representing the Harborough, Oadby & Wigston Constituency;
- Local political parties with known contact details within the Constituency; and
- Local organisations having knowledge of, or special expertise in, access for persons with disabilities known to be operating within Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston.

5.4 Electors across Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston were also given the same opportunity to provide their feedback on the Review which was promoted across the Council's various communication channels (including social media, direct e-mailing lists, resident forums).

5.5 All feedback and representations received (3) in response to the published Notice of Review and the ARO's Draft Comments and Proposals are set out in full at **Appendix 28**.

6. Final Proposed Changes

6.1 The ARO's Final Comments and Proposals, including comments on and revisions in view of the feedback and representations received, are set out in **Appendix 1**. An overview map and individual maps showing the spatial extents of all the proposed Polling Districts (25) are provided at **Appendices 2 to 27**. * These were published on 20 November 2023.

*Note that on the maps, where a polling station(s) is located in a different polling district by reason of special circumstance, reference to that polling station(s) is made on the polling district map in which it is physically located, and not to its corresponding polling district.

6.2 The Review has concluded that the existing Polling Arrangements within the Borough are predominantly satisfactory and have been shown at elections administered in recent years to be practicable in the circumstances that prevail within the electoral areas they serve.

6.3 The approach throughout this Review has therefore been to only propose necessary changes where a clear conclusion has been reached that the new arrangements will:

- Provide greater administrative expediency by geographically sub-dividing existing polling district boundaries currently coterminous with their ward's boundary;
- Better serve the affected electors by offering superior polling facilities, accessibility and/or location in comparison with existing arrangements; and/or
- Reduce inconvenience caused by polling day arrangements for residents without any substantive detrimental effect upon the voting arrangements for affected electors.

6.4 A summary of the final proposed changes by the ARO following the Review is as follows:

Polling District (Ward)	Final Proposed Change(s)
Polling District E (Oadby Uplands)	Geographically splitting Polling District E into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polling District E1 - Comprising those streets sharing a junction off and including Uplands Road (as shown at Appendix 7) • Polling District E2 - Comprising those streets sharing a junction off and including Severn Road (as shown at Appendix 8)

	Designating St. Paul's Church, Hamble Road, Oadby, Leicester, LE2 4NX as the polling place for electors in Polling Districts E1 and E2 retaining the double polling station.
Polling District F (Oadby Woodlands)	Geographically splitting Polling District F into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polling District F1 - Comprising those streets sharing a junction off and including Hunters Way, Beaufort Way, Wright Lane and Hawker Road (as shown at Appendix 9) • Polling District F2 - Comprising those streets sharing a junction off and including Florence Wragg Way (as shown at Appendix 10)
Polling District G (Oadby Brocks Hill)	Geographically splitting Polling District G into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polling District G1 - Comprising of those streets located west of and including Briar Walk and Briar Meads and sharing a junction off and including Ash Tree Road up to and including numbers 33 and 54 (as shown at Appendix 11) • Polling District G2 - Comprising all those remaining streets located south-west of Glen Road (A6) (as shown at Appendix 12) Designating Brocks Hill Primary School, Howdon Road, Oadby, Leicester, LE2 5WP as the polling place and polling station for electors residing in Polling District G1, replacing the polling place and polling station at Parklands Leisure Centre (Function Suite), Washbrook Lane, Oadby, Leicester, LE2 5QG.
Polling District N1 (Wigston All Saints) Polling District N2 (Wigston All Saints)	Designating All Saints Church of England Primary School, Long Street, Wigston, Leicestershire, LE18 2AH as the new polling place and polling station for electors residing in Polling Districts N1 and N2, replacing the polling place and polling station at The Elms Social and Service Club, Bushloe End, Wigston, Leicestershire, LE18 2BA.

7. Implementation

- 7.1 The Polling Arrangements that may be approved by Council must be implemented upon the publication of the revised Register of Electors on 1 December 2023, and will apply to all scheduled and non-scheduled elections and referendums occurring on/after this date.
- 7.2 If any of the approved Polling Arrangements become untenable immediately prior to/on polling day itself, alternative arrangements must be made by the Council in accordance with its decision-making arrangements. As it is a function of the Council to make decisions concerning polling arrangements under the Council's Constitution, it is prudent for Council to delegate authority to the ARO to be able to act decisively in such exceptional circumstances.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The Council is only responsible for the costs of administering and delivering Borough Council elections, including local by-elections that elect the Borough's own Councillors (when held). At all other elections, all 'actual and necessary' costs are claimed and recovered by the ARO from the relevant governing body of that particular election (e.g. the UK government for a UK parliamentary general elections, Leicestershire County Council for a County Council election).

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 In carrying out any review of the Polling Arrangements, the Council must comply with the steps set out in Schedule A1 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 ("the 1983 Act").
- 9.2 By approving the outcomes of this Review, the Council will be complying with its statutory duty to keep under review its Polling Arrangements as designated under sections 18A-18E of the 1983 Act (as amended).
- 9.3 Rule 20(1)(a) of the Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 provides that the Returning Officer may use, free of charge, for the purpose of taking the poll, any room in a school maintained or assisted by the local authority, or in a school in respect of which grants are made out of monies provided by parliament to the person or body responsible for the management of the school.
- 9.4 Following the conclusion of this Review, certain persons have a right to make representations to the Electoral Commission.
- 9.5 There are only two grounds on which a representation may be made, namely:
- 9.5.1 The Council has failed to meet the reasonable requirements of electors in the constituency; and/or
 - 9.5.2 The Council has failed to take sufficient account of accessibility to disabled persons of the polling station(s) within a polling place.

Representations based on any other premise will not be considered.

- 9.6 Provision is contained within section 18E of the Act to state that no election is to be questioned by reason of any informality relative to the Polling Arrangements.