

Cheltenham Borough Council

Council – 16 October 2023

Interim Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

Accountable member:

Councillor Peter Jeffries

Accountable officer:

Paul Jones, Executive Director, Finance, Assets and Regeneration

Ward(s) affected:

All

Significant decision: Yes

Executive summary:

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has completed its review of the electoral arrangements for Cheltenham Borough Council and The Cheltenham (Electoral Changes) Order 2023 was made on 18 July 2023. The changes will be effective on 2 May 2024, but for the purpose of proceedings relating to the election, changes to the register can be made from 15 October 2023. As a result of the new warding patterns new polling districts will be required.

The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) has concluded the 2023 Review of Parliamentary constituencies. The Order making the changes is expected to be made by 31 October 2023, after which the new constituencies will be effective at the next UK Parliamentary General election. The recommendations relating to the Parliamentary constituencies are subject to the order being made.

The Council has a statutory duty to review its polling districts, polling places and polling stations, to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable and to ensure that the polling stations are accessible to all electors including those with special needs.

A consultation exercise has been completed and consideration has been given to the views put forward.

Recommendations:

Council approves:-

- **All Saints Ward - creation of new polling district AC and for electors to vote at Holy Trinity Primary School for all elections except for a County Council by election when the electors will vote at Robert Harvey House**
- **Battledown Ward – to change the polling place / station for electors in polling districts BA and BC to vote at (Portakabin) Cheltenham Cricket Club, Princes Street**
- **Benhall, The Reddings & Fiddlers Green Ward – creation of new polling district CD and for electors to vote at Oasis Centre, Cassin Drive**
- **Charlton Kings Ward – to change the polling place / station from Kings Hall, Church Piece to Charlton Kings Baptist Hall, 38 Church Street**
- **Charlton Park Ward – creation of new polling district ED and for electors to vote at Cheltenham East Community Fire & Rescue Station, Keynsham Road for all elections except for County Council by election when the electors will vote at Holy Apostles Church Hall, London Road**
- **Charlton Park Ward – creation of new polling district EE and for electors to vote at Old Patesians Sports and Social Club, Everest Road for all elections except for County Council by election when the electors will vote at Leckhampton Primary School, Hall Road**
- **College Ward – creation of new polling district FD and for electors to vote at Portakabin, Town Hall, Imperial Square for all elections except for County Council by election when electors will vote at St Gregorys Old Priory, 70 Clarence Street**
- **College Ward – creation of new polling district FE and for electors to vote at Emmanuel Church, Fairfield Parade for all elections except for County Council by election when electors will vote at Leckhampton Baptist Hall, Pilley Lane**
- **Hesters Way Ward – creation of polling district GC and for electors to vote at The Training Room, Access via the Car Park, Hesters Way Childrens Centre, Dill Avenue**
- **Lansdown Ward – creation of new polling district HD and for electors to vote at St Gregorys Old Priory, 70 Clarence Street for all elections except for County Council by election when electors will vote at Salem Baptist Hall, St Georges Road**
- **Park Ward – creation of new polling district KC and for electors to vote at Bethesda Methodist Church Hall, Great Norwood Street for all elections except for County Council by election when electors will vote at Portakabin, Town Hall, Imperial Square**
- **Pittville Ward – creation of new polling district LC and for electors to vote at Pittville Pump Room, East/West Approach Drive for all elections except County Council by election when electors will vote at St Pauls Church Centre, Access via Brunswick Street**
- **Pittville Ward – creation of new polling district LD and for electors to vote at Pittville Pump Room, East/West Approach Drive for all elections except for Parliamentary election when electors will vote at Prestbury Hall, Bouncers Lane**
- **Prestbury Ward – polling district MB to change the polling station from the Portakabin and for electors to vote at the Committee Room, St. Nicolas Church Hall, Swindon Lane**
- **Prestbury Ward - creation of new polling district MC and for electors to vote at Prestbury Hall, Bouncers Lane for all elections except for Parliamentary election when electors will vote at Pittville Pump Room East/West Approach Drive**
- **Springbank Ward – creation of new polling district NC and for electors to vote at Hesters Way Childrens Centre, Dill Avenue for all elections except for County Council by election when electors will vote at Swindon Village Hall, Church Road**
- **Up Hatherley Ward – change current polling district SA – Transfer the following streets/properties from SA to SC:-**
 - **7 to 75 and 2 to 28 Caernarvon Road**
 - **Caernarvon Court, Caernarvon Road**
 - **1 to 11 and 2 to 6 Carmarthen Road**
 - **Flint Road**

- **Glamorgan Road**
- **Hatherley Lane**
- **Hatherley Mews, Hatherley Lane**
- **267 to 313 and 282 to 320 Hatherley Road**
- **Kingscote Avenue**
- **Kingscote Close**
- **Kingscote Grove**
- **Kingscote Road East**
- **Kingscote Road West**
- **Pembroke Road**
- **Wards Road**

Transfer 77 to 151 Caernarvon Road from polling district SA to polling district SB. The electors remaining in polling district SA to vote at St Margarets Hall, Coniston Road

- **Up Hatherley Ward – change current polling district SB to include 77 to 151 Caernarvon Road from polling district SA and for electors to vote at Hillview Community Centre, Hulbert Crescent**
- **Up Hatherley Ward – change current polling district SC and to include all of the streets and properties listed in changes to polling district SA above and for electors to vote at Up Hatherley Village Hall, Cold Pool Lane**
- **Up Hatherley Ward – creation of new polling district SD and for electors to vote at St Margarets Hall, Coniston Road for all elections except for County Council by election when electors will vote at St Stephens Parish Church, St Stephens Road**
- **Up Hatherley Ward – creation of new polling district SE and for electors to vote at St Margarets Hall, Coniston Road for all elections except for County Council by election when electors will vote at The Annexe, St Margarets Hall, Coniston Road**
- **Warden Hill Ward – Polling district TA for electors to vote at The Annexe, St Margarets Hall, Coniston Road**
- **Warden Hill Ward – creation of new polling district TD and for electors to vote at The Annexe, St Margarets Hall, Coniston Road for all elections except for County by election when electors will vote at St Stephens Parish Church, St Stephens Road**

1. Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

We expect there will be some minor increases in costs as a result of the changes included within this report.

We anticipate that any increases can be met within existing budgets, if this isn't possible budget requirements will be quantified and considered as part of the 24/25 budget setting process.

Signed off by: Jon Whitlock, Chief Accountant, jon.whitlock@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.2 Legal implications

This interim review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations has been prompted by the Electoral Review conducted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).

Any changes to the polling districts, polling places and polling stations must be made in accordance with the provisions of the Representation of People Act 1983 (as amended), Electoral Registration and

Administration Act 2013 and Equalities Act 2010.

The council must seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. The council must seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

Signed off by: One Legal – legal.services@onelegal.org.uk

1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

The proposed changes to polling venues are not expected to have environmental or climate change implications. Polling stations are located to be accessible to electors within polling districts. This includes minimising the need for travel which encourages electors to walk or cycle to the polling station.

Signed off by: Maizy McCann, Climate Emergency Support Officer, maizy.mccann@cheltenham.gov.uk

Corporate Plan Priorities

This report contributes to the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Being a more modern, efficient and financially sustainable council

1.4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

All of the polling stations have been reviewed and assessed to ensure that that they are as accessible as possible to all electors.

1.5 Performance management – monitoring and review

n/a

2 Background

2.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has completed its review of the electoral arrangements for Cheltenham Borough Council. New polling districts will need to be created and implemented in the new wards. An interim review was undertaken to ensure that all electors have reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable and to ensure that the polling stations are accessible to all electors including those with special needs. The Acting Returning Officers for the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury constituencies (for the area within the Borough of Cheltenham) have made formal comment as part of this review, both to existing polling stations and the polling stations that would probably be used based on the newly recommended polling places.

2.2 What is not being reviewed – The Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Parliamentary constituencies, Gloucestershire County Council electoral divisions, Cheltenham Borough Council wards, Parish and Parish ward boundaries

3 Reasons for recommendations

3.1 To ensure that all electors have reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable and that the polling stations are accessible to all electors in the new borough wards.

4 Alternative options considered

- 4.1 In Battledown Ward for polling districts BA and BC a number of venues were explored but deemed unsuitable as set out in the paragraphs below.
- 4.2 Charlton Kings Cricket Club was deemed to have inadequate accessibility due to steep hill, no pedestrian path and limited street lighting as well as being a substantial distance from most of the properties in polling districts BA and BC.
- 4.3 Holy Apostles Church Hall although a suitable venue, is situated south west of the ward a substantial distance from many of the properties in polling districts BA and BC. There is no direct bus route for electors who may need to use public transport.

5 Consultation and feedback

- 5.1 Following the closing date for the review, as well as the formal comments from the Parliamentary Returning Officers for Cheltenham and Tewkesbury constituencies (see paragraph 5.6 below) correspondence was received from sixty six other sources.
- 5.2 For Battledown Ward polling districts BA and BC, sixty comments were received from electors stating that they did not want Holy Apostles Primary School to be used as a polling station and that an alternative should be used. Seventeen of these supported the move to Cheltenham Cricket Club. Four of these suggested Holy Apostles Church Hall as an alternative, one also suggested Highbury Church Hall or Cheltenham Football Club and one suggested Queen Elizabeth Park. One elector requested that Holy Apostles School should remain the polling station.
- 5.3 For Leckhampton Ward, Councillor Martin Horwood commented that the three polling stations are well located for the polling districts they serve and should not be changed again, especially as there have already been recent changes.
- 5.4 For Swindon Village Ward, Councillor Flo Clucas commented that no changes have been proposed to the existing polling stations for the ward and confirmed her agreement.
- 5.5 For Up Hatherley Ward, comments were received from Councillor Adrian Bamford in accord with Councillor Julie Sankey, County Councillor Roger Whyborn and Up Hatherley Parish Council. All support the proposed changes to polling district SA and SC but in addition to the proposed changes all recommended transferring more properties into the new polling district SC from SA to include 2-28 Caernarvon Road, 282- 304 Hatherley Road, Flint Road and Glamorgan Road. For the new polling district SA, all supported the move from St Philip and St James Church Centre to St Margarets Hall, Coniston Road. They also recommended transferring 77-151 Caernarvon Road from polling district SA to polling district SB so that these electors will vote at Hillview Community Centre, Hulbert Crescent.
- 5.6 Responses from the Acting Returning Officers (ARO) for Cheltenham and Tewkesbury constituencies – A full list of the proposed Cheltenham constituency polling districts and polling places / stations is set out in appendix 2 and the proposed Tewkesbury constituency polling districts and polling places / stations is set out in appendix 3 along with the AROs comments.

6 Key risks

- 6.1 Electors unsure of which borough ward they live in
- 6.2 Electors unsure of which constituency they live in

6.3 Electors unsure of the location of their polling station

Report author:

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Appendices:

1. Risk Assessment
2. ARO comments Cheltenham
3. ARO comments Tewkesbury
4. Cheltenham list of polling districts, places and stations for publication
5. Tewkesbury list of polling districts, places and stations for publication
6. Maps of the 65 polling districts within the 20 new wards detailing polling districts and polling stations

Background information:

- New Borough Wards for Cheltenham <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/cheltenham>
- The Cheltenham (Electoral Changes) Order 2023
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2023/820/contents/made>
- Boundary Commission for England recommended constituencies
<https://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/2023-review/south-west/>

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
	If electors are unsure of what ward they are in then this may cause confusion on election day.	RO	2	3	6	Reduce	Press and social media releases to inform residents about the boundary changes and new wards Councillors may wish to consider including information in their newsletters where the changes have been made	Electoral Services Manager	2 May 2024
	If electors are unsure of which constituency they are in then this may cause confusion on election day.	RO	2	3	6	Reduce	After the Order has been made and when the next UK Parliamentary General election is called press and social media releases to inform residents	Electoral Services Manager	After the UKPGE is called
	If the polling station changes, then electors may be unsure of	RO	2	3	6	Reduce	Poll card with note highlighting that the polling station has	Electoral Services Manager	April 2024

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
	location of polling station.						<p>changed. Helpline and contact details included on the poll card. Poll cards are delivered at least four weeks before the election</p> <p>Press and social media releases to inform residents to check their poll card and that their polling station may have changed and include link to webpage 'Find my polling station'</p>		