



REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

The Council is required to complete a full review of all polling districts and polling places every five years. The next compulsory review must take place between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025. A review of some or all of the polling districts or polling places can also be carried out at other times. Following the outcome of a Community Governance Review, an interim polling district review is required in the following areas:

- Awsworth, Cossall and Trowell
- Beeston West
- Chilwell East
- Bramcote
- Greasley
- Kimberley
- Nuthall, East and Strelley
- Stapleford North
- Stapleford South East
- Toton

The opportunity is also being taken to review polling places where changes will be required, or are recommended, in advance of the elections in May 2023.

The public consultation period for the interim review will begin on 1 August 2022 and conclude on 30 September 2022.

What does the review involve?

The review must be carried out to make sure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.

Any elector in the Broxtowe constituency may make a representation in relation to the size and boundaries of polling districts and the location and suitability of polling places. The Council also welcomes comments or representations from past or potential candidates, local political parties and any person or body with expertise in access for disabled people. Comments are also invited on polling stations currently used and/or any suggested alternatives.

On completion of the review the Council will publish all correspondence sent and received, details of the results of the review including any issues raised and any changes which have been approved, giving the reasons for its decisions.

What is the difference between a polling district, a polling place and a polling station?

A polling district is a geographical sub-division of an electoral area, i.e. a UK parliamentary constituency, a ward or an electoral division.

A polling place is a geographical area in which a polling station is located.

A polling station is the actual area where the process of voting takes place, and must be located within the polling place designated for the particular polling district.

Polling districts

Every relevant authority in the UK is responsible for dividing its area into polling districts for UK parliamentary elections for any constituency within its area, and for keeping the polling districts under review. Broxtowe Borough Council is the “relevant authority” for the purpose of designating polling districts.

For local government elections, a local authority may divide its designated electoral areas (i.e. wards or electoral divisions) into polling districts. Although there is no requirement to sub-divide local government electoral areas into polling districts, it is recognised good practice to do so. In addition, and unless there are special circumstances, each parish in England and each community in Wales must be in a separate polling district.

The Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) must amend the register of electors accordingly if there are any changes to polling district boundaries. The changes to the register take effect on the date on which the ERO publishes a notice stating that the adaptations have been made.

The following will be considered as part of the assessment of the suitability of polling district boundaries:

- Are the boundaries well-defined? For example, do they follow the natural boundaries of the area? If not, is it clear which properties belong in the polling district?
- Are there suitable transport links within the polling district, and how do they relate to the areas of the polling district which are most highly populated? Are there any obstacles to voters crossing the current polling district and reaching the polling place e.g. steep hills, major roads, railway lines, rivers?

It is intended that any changes to polling districts identified through the current review will be approved by Council in December 2022 and brought into effect when the electoral register is republished in February 2023.

Polling places

The Council must designate a polling place for every polling district in the parliamentary constituency unless the size or other circumstances of the polling district are such that the situation of the polling station does not materially affect the convenience of the electorate. The relevant authority must also keep the polling places under review.

In designating polling places the Council must seek to ensure that:

a) all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;

b) so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled people.

In addition, the polling place for a polling district must be within the area of the district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area either wholly or partly outside of the polling district. The polling place must also be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the polling district how they will be able to reach their designated polling station. In Broxtowe, the polling district is currently defined as the polling place.

Polling stations

The Returning Officer for the particular election must provide a sufficient number of polling stations, and allocate the electors to those polling stations as they think the most convenient. Polling stations must be located within the polling places designated by the relevant authority. The election rules permit the Returning Officer to provide one or more polling stations within the same room, and must supply each with a sufficient number of voting compartments.

The review process

Schedule A1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983 sets out the steps the Council must follow in undertaking any review of polling districts and/or polling places which includes:

- publishing a notice of the holding of a review;
- consulting the (Acting) Returning Officer for every parliamentary constituency which is wholly or partly in its area
- publishing all representations made by an (Acting) Returning Officer;
- seeking representations from anyone who has a particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for disabled people
- on completion of a review, giving reasons for its decisions and publishing:
 - all correspondence sent to an (Acting) Returning Officer in connection with the review
 - all correspondence sent to any person who has particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for disabled people
 - all representations made by any person in connection with the review
 - the minutes of any meeting held by the council to consider any revision to the designation of polling districts or polling places within its area as a result of the review
 - details of the designation of polling districts and polling places within the local authority area as a result of the review
 - details of the places where the results of the review have been published

Information which will be available to inform the review will include:

- electorate figures, broken down to street level;
- details of existing polling places, and an indication as to their overall suitability for the purpose;

- detailed and up to date maps of a scale to assist in the designation of polling district boundaries;
- details of projected housing development which may lead to an increase in electorate in an area.
- evaluation of current/proposed polling places and polling stations.

The role of the Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission has no role in the review process itself, although it has an extremely important role in respect of considering representations and observations made that a relevant authority has not conducted a review so as to:

- meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency, or a body of them; or
- take sufficient account of the accessibility of polling stations for disabled people within a designated polling place.

Representations may be made to the Electoral Commission by any of the following:

- in England, any parish council which is wholly or partly situated within the constituency (or parish meeting where there is no such council);
- not less than thirty registered electors in the constituency (although electors registered anonymously cannot make such a representation
- any person (except the Returning Officer) who made representations to the authority when the review was being undertaken; and
- any person who is not an elector in a constituency in the authority's area who the Commission feels has sufficient interest in the accessibility of polling places in the area or has particular expertise relating to the access to premises or facilities by disabled people.

In addition, the Returning Officer may make observations on any representations made to the Commission.

The Commission is required to consider any such representations and observations, and after doing so, may direct the Council to make any alterations it sees necessary to the polling places designated by the review. If those alterations are not made within two months of the direction being given, the Commission may make the alterations itself.

Further information

Further information on the review process is available on the Electoral Commission's web site or from Electoral Services – e-mail elections@broxtowe.gov.uk.