

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

Report of the Assistant Director – Legal & Democratic Governance

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the Scrutiny Committee's views on the proposed polling arrangements for Stockport in order to inform the Council meeting's determination of polling districts, polling places and polling stations at forthcoming elections.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, local authorities are required to undertake compulsory reviews of polling districts and polling places at regular intervals. The next review must be completed by 31st January 2025.
- 2.2 Accordingly, a review of polling districts must be undertaken, relating to polling district boundaries within wards and the polling places that will serve these new districts. This review is separate to the previous Polling District and Polling Place review undertaken in 2022.
- 2.3 The responsibility for designating polling districts is for the Council to determine. In drawing up polling district boundaries the Council must ensure that all electors in the area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- 2.4 The Council must also designate a polling place for every polling district. This is usually within the boundary of the polling district unless there are special circumstances e.g. a lack of suitable buildings. There should be no barriers to voting for people with a disability.
- 2.5 In designating polling places, the Council must:
- a) Seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
 - b) Seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for 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 persons. There should be no barriers to voting for people with a disability. Access issues identified by Disability Stockport will be considered as part of the review.
- 2.6 A polling district is an administrative sub-area that an electoral area (such as a ward or a constituency) is divided into for the purposes of delivering an election. A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be located. 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 station is the actual room or area where the voting takes place.

- 2.7 Due to the extensive work undertaken at the 2022 Polling District and Polling Place Review, all polling districts and polling places were designed to comply with the legislative requirements of Section 18A of the Representation of the People Act 1983, and the current polling arrangements, in place since then, have been used to successfully deliver multiple elections. Therefore, this review is anticipated to be less extensive and is an opportunity for minor amendments, rationalisation and confirming any ad-hoc changes since the last review.
- 2.8 As electors naturally become accustomed to voting at a particular polling station, and to avoid any unnecessary confusion, the approach of the Returning Officer has generally been that changes in polling places and stations have been made in response to a previous venue becoming unavailable or unsuitable for continued use as a polling station, i.e. a venue has closed down or a site has been repurposed for other use.
- 2.9 A web map of the current polling districts and polling places can be accessed here: <https://maps.stockport.gov.uk/elections/index.html>
- 2.10 A map overlaying the current arrangements and proposed changes can be accessed on the Council's website here: <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/review-of-polling-districts-and-polling-places-2024>
- 2.11 The attached schedule sets out details of the current polling districts and places for the wards covered by this Area Committee, the total electorate for each district, the details of any proposed changes, the comments of the (Acting) Returning Officer and any submissions currently under consideration.
- 2.12 The draft proposals contained within the report are those published as part of the public consultation for which further comments are being sought from the scrutiny committee. The public consultation is due to close on Thursday, 28 November 2024.
- 2.13 At the closure of the consultation period all submissions, including any comments at the meeting of this Committee, will be considered by the Returning Officer in the creation of the final proposals. It is these proposals, incorporating any appropriate alterations, that will then be considered by the Cabinet and the Council Meeting.
- 2.14 The timetable for the review is set out below.

Activity	Date
Notice of Commencement of Review published	Monday 21 October
Commencement of Consultation Period	Monday 21 October
Closure of Consultation Period	Thursday 28 November
Report to all Area Committees	October - November 2024

Report to CRMG Scrutiny	26 November 2024
Report to Cabinet	10 December 2024
Council Meeting	16 January 2025

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The views of the Scrutiny Committee are sought on the proposed polling arrangements. Any comments or suggestions will then be reported to the Cabinet on 10 December 2024 and taken into consideration in making recommendations to the Council meeting on 16 January 2024.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Vicki Bates on Tel: 0161 474 3219 or by email on vicki.bates@stockport.gov.uk