

West Suffolk Council Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places/Stations 2018

Information sheet

General information

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The next compulsory review must be started and completed between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020.

A review of electoral arrangements has also been undertaken by the local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) and their [final recommendations](#) were published on 23 October 2018.

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, that is a UK Parliamentary constituency, a ward or an electoral division. Many of the polling districts in the rural areas of Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury are pre-defined as a result of parish arrangements and the only question to consider is whether it would make for more effective arrangements if the parish were divided into parish wards.

In urban areas there is potentially more scope to alter the boundaries of polling districts. Here the prime consideration is to achieve reasonable facilities for voting for all the electors, so far as practicable.

A **polling place** is a geographical area in which a polling station is located. However, as there is no legal definition of what a polling place is the geographical area could be defined as tightly as a particular building or as widely as the entire polling district. The only circumstance in which we must designate a polling place is where polling cannot take place within the polling district as there are no suitable premises or locations for a temporary polling station.

A **polling station** is the actual room used for polling and must be located within the polling place designated for the particular polling district.

How will the new ward boundaries for West Suffolk Council affect polling districts?

In rural areas, a polling district usually has the same boundary as a parish, unless that parish is warded. It is anticipated that the polling districts in rural areas will remain the same.

However in urban areas, the polling districts will need to be revised to reflect the new ward boundaries published by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

Who is responsible for designating polling districts?

Every relevant authority in the UK is responsible for dividing its area into polling districts for UK Parliamentary elections for as much of any constituency that is situated in its area and for keeping the polling districts under review.

When designating polling districts, relevant authorities must seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstance. In addition, and unless there are special circumstances that lead the authority to determine otherwise, each parish in England must be in a separate polling district.

Who is responsible for designating polling stations?

The Returning Officer for the particular election must provide a sufficient number of polling stations, and allot the electors to those polling stations in such manner as he or she thinks the most convenient.

Polling stations must be located within the polling places designated by the relevant authority.

How do I suggest a change to an existing polling district or polling place designation?

When making a suggestion for a change please outline the reasons for making the change, such as improved convenience for all electors in the ward. When considering any proposals for change the council will be aiming, so far as practicable, to make equitable arrangements for polling right across the area. Proposals will be considered in this wider context, as well as with regard to the convenience of the local arrangements.

Who is being consulted?

All borough/district and county councillors for Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury, parish councils, the Returning Officer of each parliamentary constituency within the borough/district, the County Returning Officer, voluntary groups and local political parties.

What is the timetable for the review?

Date	Event
23 October 2018	LGBCE publish Final Recommendations for ward boundaries. Work can now begin on drawing new polling district boundaries in urban areas.
5 November 2018	Publish notice of Polling District Review
6 November – 11 December 2018	Consultation with Acting Returning Officer for any constituencies within West Suffolk Council area, parish councils, district and county councillors, disability groups and electors.
1 December 2018	Publish revised register of electors following annual canvass (using current polling districts)
15 January 2019	Shadow Authority to approve Schedule of Polling Places and Polling Districts
1 February 2019	Revised Register is re-published on new ward boundaries and polling districts
2 May 2019	Elections held on new ward boundaries and polling districts

If you have any queries about the polling district review process, or require further information, please contact:

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