

Item no.

Report to: **Extraordinary Meeting of the District Council of Easington**

Date: **23 November 2007**

Report of: **Head of Democratic Services and Administration**

Subject: **Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2007
Proposals for Polling Districts and Polling Places**

Ward: **All**

1. **Purpose of Report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the approval of the Council to the proposals for polling districts and polling places within the District of Easington.

2. **Consultation**

2.1 The Polling Districts and Polling Places review was commenced by publishing a Notice of Review at the beginning of August 2007 inviting initial comments from any elector or interested party in relation to the present location of polling places within the District and any suggestions for possible alternative polling places.

2.2 The following were also consulted and asked for any comments:-

District Councillors, County Councillors, MPs, Acting Returning Officers for Easington and Sedgefield Constituencies, Parish Councils and groups who have a particular interest and/or expertise in access by disabled people.

2.3 This initial consultation period ended on 12 September 2007.

2.4 Once the Authority's proposals for polling districts and places had been prepared, there was a second consultation stage for representations and comments on the proposals. This took place between 12th and 26th October 2007 and those persons and organisations involved in the first stage were again consulted.

2.5 The Electoral Services Team, the Council's Public Buildings Officer and the Equality and Diversity Officer have been consulted and contributed to the review.

2.6 The Acting Returning Officers for the two Parliamentary Constituencies within the District were specifically required to comment on the proposals.

3. **Background**

3.1 Local Authorities are required to divide their area into polling districts for the purposes of parliamentary elections, to designate polling places for these polling districts, and to keep these under review.

3.2 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a duty on Councils to review all polling districts by 31 December 2007 and to keep these under review.

3.3 The aim of the review is to ensure that:

all electors have reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and
as far as is reasonable and practicable, polling places are accessible to all electors, including disabled people.

4. **Working Group**

4.1 A Working Group was established to consider the Authority's proposals for new polling districts and polling places arrangements together with all representations/comments received following the consultation stages.

4.2 The Working Group comprised the Executive Members for:

Resources
Social Inclusion and Culture
Neighbourhood Engagement and Communications
Customer Services

4.3 Attached as Appendix 1 are the Terms of Reference of the Working Group.

5. **Position Statement**

5.1 The Acting Returning Officers for the two parliamentary constituencies within the District were required to comment on the Council's proposals.

5.2 The Working Group have now considered the proposals along with the Acting Returning Officers' comments and all other representations/comments received, and have agreed on the final proposals.

5.3 The Head of Democratic Services and Administration has prepared the final report (attached as Appendix 2) which makes proposals for new polling districts and polling places. The Working Group's comments have been incorporated into this final report.

5.4 For ease of reference, attached as Appendix 3 is a summary of the main changes proposed.

6 **Implications**

6.1 *Financial*

6.1.1 There are none arising directly from this report. Appropriate funding will be made in Election Budgets for the provision of polling stations.

6.2 **Legal**

6.2.1 This review has been undertaken in accordance with the provisions contained within the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

6.3 **Policy**

6.3.1 None.

6.4 **Risk**

6.4.1 A risk assessment has been completed and the necessary actions required to effectively manage the identified risks have been implemented.

6.5 **Communications**

6.5.1 When the proposals have been agreed details of the new polling districts and polling places will be made available to the public. A comprehensive publicity campaign will be undertaken and specific pre-poll information distributed before the next election.

7 **Corporate Implications**

7.1 *Corporate Plan Priorities*

7.1.1 It is considered that the proposals are consistent with the Council's corporate priorities and objectives. In particular, the proposals are consistent with:-

QS1 Council services which meet the needs of all of our communities.

QSS2 Easier access to local services

SFE2 A Council which takes an active and effective community leadership role.

7.2 **Equality and Diversity and Social Inclusion Implications**

7.2.1 The aim of the review was to ensure that all electors have reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and as far as is reasonable and practicable, polling places are accessible to all electors, including disabled people. This has been fully considered in producing these proposals.

7.3 **Service Plan Implications**

7.3.1 The proposals within the report contribute to Objective DSA.1 namely "Improve public participation in the electoral and democratic processes".

8 **Recommendations**

The Council is requested to agree to the proposals for polling districts and polling places.

Background Papers/Documents Referred to

Electoral Administration Act 2006
Electoral Commission Circular EC28/2007