

# Item 6

ITEM NO

REPORT TO COUNCIL

23<sup>rd</sup> NOVEMBER 2007

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

## Portfolio: Strategic Leadership

### Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

#### 1. Summary

- 1.1 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 requires the Council to complete a review of polling districts and polling places by the end of 2007 and at least every four years thereafter. This report concludes the review and recommends the approval of the Borough of Sedgefield Parliamentary Polling District Order 2007.

#### 2. Recommendations

- i) That the Council approves the Borough of Sedgefield Parliamentary Polling District Order 2007.
- ii) That the 2007 Order be applied to local government polling districts and places.
- iii) That the final proposals be given publicity in accordance with the legislation.

#### 3. Background

- 3.1 Local authorities are required to divide their administrative area into polling districts for the purposes of parliamentary elections and to designate polling places for these polling districts, and to keep these under review.
- 3.2 By conducting this statutory review of polling districts and places, local authorities must demonstrate that they have, as far as is practicable, met the criteria set out in the legislation.
- 3.3 Relevant authorities 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.
- 3.4 In an ideal world electoral administrators would have the choice of a range of fully accessible buildings, conveniently located for the electors in the area. In practice, however, this is not always the case and there may be little choice available. If it is necessary to use a place where the access is not ideal then every reasonable adjustment is undertaken to provide access for all electors.

#### **4. The Review Process**

- 4.1 The first stage of the review process was reported to Council on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2007. Council approved proposals for new polling district and polling place arrangements. These were advertised in accordance with the legislation and the Acting Returning Officers of Sedgefield and Bishop Auckland Constituencies were consulted.
- 4.2 Apart from two suggested alternatives (Borough Council Offices instead of Grouped Accommodation, Mount Pleasant Court and Silverdale House, Newton Aycliffe instead of Southerne Club, Newton Aycliffe), which have been incorporated into the polling district order, no adverse comments on the Council's proposals have been received. It is suggested that the revised proposals be approved and incorporated into the 2007 polling district order as they provide electors with reasonable facilities for voting and so far as is reasonable and practicable are accessible to all electors including the disabled. The polling places are indicated on the schedule in Appendix A.
- 4.3 Polling districts and places for local government elections are not automatically part of this review under the 2006 Act. However polling districts and places for UK parliamentary and local government elections should always be the same so it is recommended that the results of this review be applied to local government polling districts and places also.

#### **5. Resource Implications**

- 5.1 There are no financial issues arising directly from this report.

**6. Consultations**

- 6.1 Consultations have been carried out with the A.R.Os. for the two parliamentary constituencies, and appropriate notices published in accordance with the legislation.

**7. Links to Corporate Aims and Objectives.**

- 7.1 The review of polling districts and polling places supports the corporate aim of increasing democracy and inclusion and the corporate objective of encouraging greater participation in local democracy.

**8. Equality and Diversity**

- 8.1 Publication of the Notice of the review gave all disabled groups the opportunity to submit representations regarding polling districts and places and the Council's Access Officer visited polling places and made comment on accessibility for disabled persons.

**9. Risk Management**

- 9.1 If the Council did not carry out the review of polling districts and polling places then it would not be complying with the legislation and could be the subject of a complaint to the Electoral Commission by an individual or organization regarding that non-compliance.
- 9.2 The Electoral Commission could then carry out the review itself and impose its proposals on the Council.

**10. Health and Safety**

- 10.1 No additional implications have been identified.

**11. Legal and Constitutional**

- 11.1 No legal or constitutional implications have been identified other than those dealt with in the report.

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**Ward(s)**

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**Background Papers**

Electoral Administration Act 2006  
Representation of the People Act 1983  
Electoral Commission Circular EC28/2007

**Examination by Statutory Officers**

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>