

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Council	REPORT NUMBER: MC/23/33
FROM: Electoral Registration Officer	DATE OF MEETING: 25 January 2024
OFFICER: Arthur Charvonja – Returning Officer	KEY DECISION REF NO. N/A

POLLING DISTRICT REVIEW

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report seeks approval from full Council to adopt the Polling Districts and Polling Places. These are listed in Appendix A of the report. They follow a review of the Central Suffolk and North Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket, and Waveney Valley Parliamentary constituencies that fall within the boundaries of Mid Suffolk District Council. The appendix also contains details of the proposed polling stations; however, this is just for the Council to note as it is the responsibility of the Returning Officer at each election to allocate polling stations.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 It is a statutory requirement with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 that every council in England and Wales must undertake and complete a review of all the polling districts and polling places in the area.
- 2.2 Furthermore, changes to the Polling Districts and Polling Places are required to take into account the changes to parliamentary constituency boundaries, made by The Parliamentary Constituencies Order 2023 following the review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

3. RECOMMENDATION
3.1 That the Polling Districts and Polling Places as listed in Appendix A to this report be agreed.
REASON FOR DECISION
3.3 To enable the Council to meet its obligations under the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 The Council's statutory review of polling districts and polling places commenced on the 6th October 2023 and ran until the 30th November 2023. The review has been conducted in accordance with the guidance published by the Electoral Commission.
- 4.2 Polling Districts, Places and Stations can be defined as follows:

Polling District – This is the administrative subdivision of a UK Parliamentary constituency into smaller geographical areas. Where an area is parished a polling district will usually be the whole parish. In larger parishes, or where there are parish warding arrangements there may be several polling districts designated within the parish boundary. It is for the Council to approve the designation of polling districts.

Polling Place – This is a definable place within the polling district where the polling station will be located. The polling place can be the whole polling district or a specified area within the polling district, however the Electoral Commission advises that it must be recognisable to electors throughout the polling district. It is for the Council to approve the designation of polling places.

Polling Station – This is the specific room or building within the polling place where polling will be conducted. It is for the Returning Officer at each election to determine the location of a polling station, however it must be located within the designated polling place for that polling district.

- 4.3 Interested parties including stakeholders, political groups, MP's and electors were invited to make any comments on the proposed changes to the Council's polling places, districts and polling stations. The full details of the consultation, including the consultation responses, and proposed changes can be viewed on the Council's web site.
- 4.4 Following the consultation process the Council has published at Appendix A, the details of the proposed designation of polling districts and polling places within the local authority area as a result of the review.
- 4.5 The result of the review provides a framework for operations within the Electoral Management System (EMS).

5. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

- 5.1 This is a core electoral service and legislative requirement undertaken to fulfil Council obligations and in-keeping with good democratic governance.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 In the event of a UK Parliamentary election all election costs are recoverable in full. For the Local Government elections in May 2027, election costs, where applicable, will be shared with the relevant town/parish councils.
- 6.2 The designation of an additional polling place is likely to cost between £1000 to £1500, these being costs incurred (inclusive of venue costs and staff fees) of providing a polling station at the polling place. Any additional polling place would therefore, have a budgetary impact and would need to be reflected in the budget.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 To comply with Section 17 of the Electoral Administration Act 2013, Mid Suffolk District Council is required to conduct a review of all parliamentary polling districts and polling places within the Central Suffolk and North Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket, and Waveney Valley Parliamentary Constituencies between 1st October 2023 and 30th January 2025.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 The key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Failure to meet statutory requirements.	Unlikely - 2	Bad - 3	The Returning Officer has personal responsibility to ensure that the Council keeps its Polling Districts, Places and Polling stations under regular review and amend to reflect any changing circumstances. Project plans are in place to ensure that the review is conducted in line with statutory requirements.

9. CONSULTATION

9.1 Consultation has taken place with stakeholders, town and parish councils, district councillors, County Councillors, Members of Parliament and party- political groups.

9.2 The Electoral Registration Officer has a statutory responsibility to consult with the Acting Returning Officer for any constituency which falls within the local authority area. The Electoral Registration Officer is the Acting Returning Officer for the Central Suffolk and North Ipswich Constituency and has consulted with the Acting Returning Officer for the Bury St Edmunds Constituency.

9.3 The Electoral Registration Officer has a statutory obligation to consult any individual or group that may have particular expertise in accessibility considerations for polling places. The Mid Suffolk Disability Forum has been consulted in that regard.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

10.1 The Council must seek to ensure that all the electors in the district/constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those with a disability, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons. An equality impact assessment has been carried out and is attached at Appendix B.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report. However, when selecting polling stations, the Returning Officer considers the accessibility of the venue by public transport and on foot to avoid additional unnecessary travel by car.

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(A) List of proposed Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations, including responses from Stakeholders and the comments of the Acting Returning Officer.	Attached
(B) Equality Impact Assessment.	Attached
(C) Breakdown of the polling places which are undertaking significant changes, with maps provided.	Attached

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Boundary Commission for England

<https://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/2023-review/>

[Boundary review 2023: Which seats will change in the UK? \(parliament.uk\)](#)

[The Parliamentary Constituencies Order 2023 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)