



Report to:	Council	27 February 2024
Lead Member:	Chair of Civic Affairs Committee	
Lead Officer:	Liz Watts, Electoral Registration Officer, Returning Officer and Chief Executive	

Review of Polling Districts and Places

Recommendations

1. Civic Affairs Committee recommends that Council approves the adoption of a revised schedule of Polling Districts and Places as laid out at Appendix A.

Details

2. All Councils are statutorily required to complete a polling district review within 16 months of October 2023. With a general election due within the next year, it was appropriate to start and complete our review as early as possible.
3. Polling districts act as the building blocks of our electoral areas (parishes, wards, divisions, constituencies). While the Returning Officer is independently responsible for running elections, Council (upon recommendations from Civic Affairs Committee) has responsibility for keeping polling districts and places under review.
4. In September 2023, Civic Affairs Committee agreed a format and timetable for our review and its consultation, which started at the beginning of October and ran until the end of November.
5. As part of the consultation, the Returning Officer proposed several changes to our existing polling district arrangements. These proposals focussed on:
 - a. Creating new polling arrangements for Cambourne
 - b. Deleting the obsolete polling district SD2
 - c. Updating arrangements for Marleigh
 - d. Updating arrangements for Impington South
6. Details of the consultation were shared widely – with neighbouring principal area councils, various local disability groups (Cambs Deaf Association, Cam Sight, Disability Cambridgeshire and Age UK), SCDC District Councillors and all South Cambridgeshire parishes. Full details of the review were also hosted on the Council website, with a press release and frequent social media postings throughout the consultation period. The full list of consultation responses can be

viewed alongside the papers for the December 2023 Civic Affairs Committee meeting.

7. There were no comments or concerns raised about the proposals listed in paragraph 5, all of which will improve voting arrangements (or strengthen existing arrangements) for electors.
8. During the consultation Cllr Corinne Garvie raised a query regarding polling district arrangements in Eddington, part of which is in South Cambridgeshire. The Returning Officer agreed with Cllr Garvie and drafted proposals for a new polling district called Eddington and Girton South. Civic Affairs Committee agreed with this proposal and have included the new polling district (map shown at Appendix B) as part of the changes they are recommending for adoption by Council.
9. A handful of other responses were received during the consultation. These were a mixture of comments about the locations of specific polling stations and general approval of existing arrangements, with one comment asking about arrangements for disabled voters.
10. While decisions regarding the location of polling stations remain the responsibility of the Returning Officer, suggestions about how to improve polling arrangements in South Cambridgeshire (including the venues we use) are always welcome. Councillors and residents can email elections@scamb.gov.uk at any time to share their views.
11. As part of the discussion on polling station venues, the Returning Officer has agreed to keep under review the arrangements used in Cambourne, Histon and Impington, Gamlingay and Milton.

Reasons for Recommendations

12. Civic Affairs Committee has responsibility for oversight of the Council's electoral arrangements. The Committee met in December 2024 to review consultation responses, and subsequently recommended to Council the adoption of a revised schedule of polling districts and places (as at Appendix A).
13. These changes will support the Returning Officer in the delivery of elections that are accessible and convenient to voters in the district.

Options

14. Council could decide to retain existing arrangements or make alternative changes to the schedule. However, Council must be aware that varying these proposals will likely compromise the ability of the Returning Officer to run effective elections.

Implications

15. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

Legal

16. There is a legal requirement for this statutory review to be completed within the 16-month period.

Risks/Opportunities

17. The risk of a short notice / snap General Election will increase over the next year. An early review of our polling arrangements will reduce the risk of election failure.

Equality and Diversity

18. As part of our consultation, we welcomed feedback and comments from disabled voters as to their experiences of voting in South Cambridgeshire. We continue to be open and available for voters to ask questions or make suggestions that will improve the experience of voters in the district.

Consultation responses

19. All responses to the consultation were published alongside the report to Civic Affairs Committee in December 2023.

Background Papers

Initial report to Civic Affairs Committee in September 2023:

<https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1029&MId=9746>

Final report to Civic Affairs Committee in December 2023, along with consultation responses:

<https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1029&MId=9747>

Appendices

Appendix A: Proposed revised schedule of Polling Districts and Places, with proposed changes highlighted

Appendix B: Proposed new polling district of Eddington & Girton South

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