

REPORT OF Returning Officer
To: Full Council
Subject: Polling District and Polling Places Review 2023
Date: 22 January 2024 **Reference:**

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To confirm proposals of the Returning Officer following a review of Polling Districts and Polling Places within the Torridge District.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Electoral Registration Act 2006 introduced a duty for all polling districts and polling places to be reviewed every 4 years. The Electoral Administration Act 2013 provided that a review must be carried out within 16 months of October 2023 and must be concluded by 31 January 2025.

Under the legislation the responsibility for the review of polling districts and polling places rests with the Local Authority while the provision of polling stations lies with the Returning Officer personally.

Definition of terms

Polling District – the area created by the division of a constituency, ward or division into smaller parts, within which a polling place can be determined which is convenient to electors.

Polling Place – a geographical area in which a polling station is located. The geographical area can be defined as a tightly as a particular building or as widely as the entire polling district. Where a polling place is not named, by default it is the whole polling district.

Polling Station – the actual location, chosen by the Returning Officer, where the process of voting takes place and must be within the polling place for the particular polling district.

2. REPORT

The Council carried out a consultation exercise between Tuesday 21st November 2023 and Tuesday 2nd January 2024.

The first stage of the review process was to give notice and invite comments on the proposals notice from all relevant stakeholders including:

- ✓ Torridge District Ward Members
- ✓ Devon County Councillors covering the Torridge District
- ✓ Parish/Town Councils (via Parish Clerks)
- ✓ Member of Parliament for Torridge & West Devon
- ✓ Members of the Public

The second part of the review was to accept and review representations received. Representations have been received from the following (see Appendix A for details):

- Great Torrington Resident – Comments on Polling Stations.
- Councillor Leather – Feedback on Northdene area of Northam.

In light of the responses my proposals are:

- a. To keep Great Torrington's polling stations as they currently are.
- b. Councillor Leathers comments are correct. Northdene properties listed under Polling District HZ1 have been corrected to IA during the annual canvass and the register was updated on the 1 December 2023 when the annual canvass was completed.

3. **IMPLICATIONS**

Legal Implications

The Council has complied with its legal duty to conduct a compulsory review of all polling districts and polling places.

The decision to approve the outcome of the review can only be made by Full Council.

Financial Implications

None

Human Resources Implications

None

Sustainability/Biodiversity Implications

None

Equality/Diversity

An assessment as to the suitability of each polling station has been made to ensure that they are accessible to all. Staff will be trained to ensure they can provide adequate support to any groups that require assistance.

Risk Management

There are no risks as a result of this Review.

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

Carrying out the Review complies with the legal duty

Climate Change

None

4. **CONCLUSIONS**

As required by law a Polling District review has been carried out with the assistance of local representatives within the District. Detailed below are my recommendations.

5. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members approve the following proposals:

- a. The Returning Officer keeps the location of polling stations under review and will ask the Polling Station Inspectors, who visit each polling station on each polling day, for their comments on their continued suitability.
- b. To approve the polling districts and places for all wards as listed in the schedule of polling districts and polling place (Appendix B).

- c. To note the proposed polling stations for all Wards in Torridge District with effect from 1 February 2024 (Appendix C).

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations:	Date of Consultation – 21 st November 2023 to 2 nd January 2024
Contact Officer:	Tom Vanstone Senior Electoral & Democratic Services Officer
Background Papers:	Results of the review