



FULL COUNCIL

Wednesday, 24 January 2024

Subject	Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations 2023/24
Cabinet Member	Councillor Caroline Topping Leader of the Council
Report Author(s)	Karen Last Electoral Services Manager Karen.Last@eastsoffolk.gov.uk 01394 444324
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Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
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Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not Applicable
Wards Affected:	All Wards

Purpose and high-level overview

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to ask Council to approve the recommendations contained in the Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations for 2023/24.

The formal review notice was published on 3 October 2023.

The consultation period commenced on 3 October 2023 and ended on 30 November 2023.

As part of the review, visits were made to some current and prospective polling stations.

The final recommendations can be found in Appendix A.

Options:

1. To approve the recommendations of the Polling District, Polling Place and Polling Station review for 2023/24 as per Appendix A. This will enable any changes to be included in the revised register on 1 February 2024 and to be used for any elections from February 2024.
2. To reject the recommendations of the Polling District, Polling Place and Polling Station review for 2023/24 as per Appendix A. The revised register would be published under existing arrangements and a further review would need to be carried out within the statutory timescales. It is unlikely that any changes could come into force for the next scheduled elections on 2 May 2024.

Recommendation/s:

That the recommendations, as set out in Appendix A to this report, be approved.

Corporate Impact Assessment

Governance:

Legislation requires that electoral registers must be split by Polling District.

ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:

Not applicable.

Environmental:

Not applicable.

Equalities and Diversity:

The Elections Act 2022 introduced changes to assist voters with disabilities at polling stations. All polling stations within East Suffolk have been assessed on this basis and meet accessibility criteria.

Financial:

The recommendations include employing one new building as a polling station in Melton and retiring two buildings in Lowestoft where the electors will be redistributed to other

stations already in use. It is therefore likely that the recommended changes will reduce the total cost of polling stations and temporary elections staff in East Suffolk.

It should be noted that for all external elections (Parliamentary, Police & Crime Commissioner, County and Parish) election costs are funded or recharged as appropriate.

Human Resources:

A net reduction of a single polling station will have a negligible impact on the temporary staffing requirements for an election. Temporary elections staff are employed directly by the (Acting) Returning Officer and not by East Suffolk Council.

ICT:

Not applicable.

Legal:

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced the requirement for all local authorities to conduct a review of Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. This current review must have been started and completed between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.

Risk:

It is possible that a change of polling station could result in voter confusion. A communication will be sent to those electors whose polling stations will change. A clear message will also be included on the poll card sent to those electors prior to the election.

External Consultees:

- Members of Parliament for the Central Suffolk & North Ipswich, the Suffolk Coastal and the Waveney constituencies.
- District Councillors
- County Councillors representing divisions within East Suffolk
- Town and Parish Councils (via Clerks)
- The Returning Officer for Central Suffolk & North Ipswich constituency
- The Chief Executive of Suffolk County Council
- Political Parties (via local Party agents/contacts)
- Accessibility groups (via Communities team)
- East Suffolk residents

Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the priorities of the Strategic Plan which are supported by this proposal: <i>(Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate)</i>		Primary priority	Secondary priorities
T01	Growing our Economy		
P01	Build the right environment for East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P02	Attract and stimulate inward investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P03	Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P04	Business partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P05	Support and deliver infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T02	Enabling our Communities		
P06	Community Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P07	Taking positive action on what matters most	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P08	Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P09	Community Pride	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T03	Maintaining Financial Sustainability		
P10	Organisational design and streamlining services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P11	Making best use of and investing in our assets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P12	Being commercially astute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P13	Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P14	Review service delivery with partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T04	Delivering Digital Transformation		
P15	Digital by default	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P16	Lean and efficient streamlined services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P17	Effective use of data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P18	Skills and training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P19	District-wide digital infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T05	Caring for our Environment		
P20	Lead by example	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P21	Minimise waste, reuse materials, increase recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P22	Renewable energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P23	Protection, education and influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
XXX	Governance		
XXX	How ESC governs itself as an authority	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How does this proposal support the priorities selected?			
The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced the requirement for all local authorities to conduct a review of Parliamentary polling districts and polling places.			

Background and Justification for Recommendation

1 Background facts	
1.1	<p>The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced the requirement for all local authorities to conduct a review of Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. This current review must have been started and completed between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.</p>
2 Current position	
2.1	<p>A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency. A polling place is the area or building in which a polling station will be situated and a polling station is the room or building where the poll takes place.</p> <p>The review requires the council to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek to ensure that all electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.• Seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility of people with disabilities. <p>The following cannot be considered as part of the review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes to district ward boundaries.• Changes to polling districts that are aligned with parish boundaries. Parish boundaries can only be amended during a Community Governance Review – a district-wide Community Governance Review was completed by East Suffolk Council in 2022.
2.2	<p>All polling stations are reviewed as a matter of course during the elections cycle. Review forms are completed by Presiding Officers and Polling Station Inspectors for each election and the stations are evaluated using the criteria laid down by the Electoral Commission.</p>
2.3	<p>The Boundary Commission for England has recently concluded the 2023 Review of Parliamentary constituencies in England. The report and recommendations have been submitted and approved by the Privy Council and Members of Parliament will be elected to the revised constituencies in the next General election.</p> <p>This review is based on the current constituencies that cover East Suffolk, namely; Central Suffolk & North Ipswich, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney.</p> <p>The recommended arrangements in Appendix A will remain relevant when the revised constituencies are in place.</p>

3 How to address current situation

3.1 Approving the final recommendations will enable East Suffolk Council to meet the requirements of The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 in respect of a compulsory review.

3.2 The timeline and key stages of the review are:

Publication of Formal Notice of Review	3 October 2023
Publication of current arrangements with ERO comments for future arrangements	3 October 2023
Consultation opens	3 October 2023
Consultation closes	30 November 2023
Consider responses	By 5 January 2024
Proposals for new arrangements presented to Council	24 January 2024
Publish the conclusions of the review	25 January 2024
Revised electoral register published under new arrangements	1 February 2024

3.3 The consultation period commenced on 3 October 2023 and ended on 30 November 2023.

As part of the consultation, the following organisations/people were made aware of the review and invited to make comments:

- Members of Parliament for the Central Suffolk & North Ipswich, the Suffolk Coastal and the Waveney constituencies.
- District Councillors
- County Councillors representing divisions within East Suffolk
- Town and Parish Councils (via Clerks)
- The Returning Officer for Central Suffolk & North Ipswich constituency
- The Chief Executive of Suffolk County Council
- Political Parties (via local Party agents/contacts)
- Accessibility groups (via Communities team)
- East Suffolk residents

The consultation was promoted on the East Suffolk website and social media channels and featured in various press publications.

Consultees were encouraged to provide clear reasoning for changes to polling stations and alternative venues where changes were suggested.

3.4 The recommendations of the review can be found in Appendix A. Many of the changes are as a result of the County Council electoral review and will not take effect until the Suffolk County Council elections in 2025 (and subsequent Parish elections in 2027).

3.5 The changes identified in Appendix A are as follows:

Waveney Constituency:
2024

- NCCGN (Gisleham North) – Polling Station change from Bloodmoor Community Centre to Parish Room, Gisleham with NCCGS (Gisleham South).

Electoral areas align for all levels. Low turnout enables NCCGN voters to combine with NCCGS in single station.

- NCWWE (Whitton East) – Polling Station change from Whitton Community Hall to St Lukes Church Centre with NCWWC (Whitton Centre).

Electoral areas align for all levels. Low turnout enables NCWWE voters to combine with NCWWC in a single station.

2025/2027

- NHNHC (Harbour Centre) – This polling district will need to be split to accommodate the revised County Council divisions. Existing electors will be split across NHNHC (renamed to Harbour North) and NHNNS (renamed NHNHT – Harbour South) and will attend the assigned polling stations for those polling districts.

- NOBEA (Oulton Broad North East) – This polling district will need to be split into two new polling districts (NOBNE and NOBNO) to accommodate the revised County Council divisions. Electors within NOBNE (Oulton Broad North East) will remain at Oulton Broad Community Centre. Electors in NOBNO (Oulton Broad North) will move to Commodore Mission Hall to combine with NOBSO (Oulton Broad South).

Electoral areas align for all levels.

- A number of Polling District code and name changes as a result of the County Council electoral review.

- Once Worlingham Community Centre has been completed, the aim would be to move away from Worlingham School and utilise the Community Centre.

Suffolk Coastal Constituency:

2024

No Changes recommended.

2025/2027

- NKYSI (Sibton) – Polling Station change from Peasenhall Assembly Hall to Yoxford Village Hall with NKYYO (Yoxford).

Electoral areas will align for all levels. The current arrangement would result in a split County Division once the new arrangements take effect in 2025.

- SEFCE (Felixstowe Central) – Electors within this polling district to be transferred to SEFCD (Felixstowe Central). SEFCE was created to enable a County Council by-election to be run when the Felixstowe boundary changes were made in 2021. Once the changes to County Council boundaries take effect, this will no longer be required.

	<p>Electors will remain at the current polling station.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMEME (Melton) - This polling district will need to be split into two new polling districts (SMEMN and SMEMS) to accommodate the revised County Council divisions. Electors within SMEMN (Melton North) will remain at Burness Parish Rooms. Electors in SMEMS (Melton South) will move to The Pavilion, Melton. <p>Central Suffolk & North Ipswich Constituency</p> <p>2024</p> <p>No changes recommended.</p> <p>2025/2027</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SKGWA (Kesgrave West) – This polling district will need to be split into two polling districts (SKGCE and SKGWE) to accommodate the revised County Council divisions. Electors within SKGCE (Kesgrave Central) will remain at the Kesgrave Community and Conference Centre. Electors within SKGWE (Kesgrave West) to merge with current SKGWB – Kesgrave West (to be renamed SKGWE) and vote with the current electors at Kesgrave Baptist Church Hall.
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4 Reason/s for recommendation	
4.1	The recommendations in Appendix A meet the requirements of the review as set out in legislation.
4.2	Publishing the revised register with new arrangements on 1 February 2024 means that any elections following this date will use these new arrangements. This includes the Parliamentary General election which needs to take place before 28 January 2025. The recommendations provide for more effective and convenient polling arrangements.

Appendices

Appendices:	
Appendix A	Schedule of Current & Proposed Polling Districts & Polling Places – Review 2023.
Appendix B	Responses to Consultation