



REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

To assist any interested party who may wish to make representations, the Council has put together the following information.

Definitions

a) Parliamentary Constituency

The area designated by the Boundary Commission which is represented by a Member of Parliament (MP) in the House of Commons. This cannot be changed by the review – it is only the division of the constituency into polling districts and places that is covered by this review.

b) Wards

The District is divided into areas known as “Wards” which are represented by District Ward Councillors. Ward boundaries cannot be changed by this review – it is the division of wards into polling districts and polling places that is covered by this review.

c) Polling Districts

A polling district is the area created by the separation of a ward into smaller parts, within which a polling place can be determined which is most suitable for the electors.

d) Polling Places

A polling place is the area or building in which the number of polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer.

e) Polling Station

A polling station is the room or area in which voting takes place. This must be located within the polling place that has been designated for the particular polling district. The number of polling stations to be accommodated within a polling place is the decision of the (Acting) Returning Officer for the election.

Timetable for the Review

The Council is required to publish a notice of the holding of a review. This Notice has been published at Follaton House, Plymouth Road, Totnes and on the Council's website www.southhams.gov.uk. Copies of the notice have also been sent to Town and Parish Clerks for display. The timetable for the review is set out below:

Publication of notice and consultation document	12 August 2019
Closing date for representations	20 September 2019
Consideration of all representations	23 – 27 September 2019
Publication of draft Polling District Places Order	30 September 2019
Publication of draft schedule of polling stations	30 September 2019

Additional period for comment	01 October – 18 October 2019
Report to Full Council	November 2019
Completion of review and Publication of final Polling District Places Order	By 29 November 2019

Criteria for Polling Places and Polling Districts

The Electoral Commission has set out guidance to assist in assessing the current arrangements and any proposals for change. As part of the assessment of the suitability of polling district boundaries, the following should be considered:

- Are the boundaries well defined? For example. Do they follow the natural boundaries of the areas? If not, is it clear which properties belong in the polling district?
- Are there suitable transport links within the polling district, and how do they relate to the areas of the district that are most highly populated? Are there any obstacles to voters crossing the current polling district and reaching the polling place e.g. steep hills, impassable major roads, railway lines, rivers? There are also a number of factors that must be considered when reviewing existing polling places or assessing new polling places, including:
 - The location: is it reasonably accessible within the polling district? Does it avoid barriers for the voter such as steep hills, major roads, rivers, etc.? Are there any convenient transport links?
 - Size: if required, can the polling place accommodate more than one polling station? If multiple polling stations are required, is the polling place ample enough to accommodate all voters going into and out of the polling stations, even where there is a high turnout?
 - Suitability: is the building readily available in the event of any unscheduled elections? Is there any possibility that the building may be demolished as part of a new development? Is the building accessible to all those entitled to attend the polling place?

The Electoral Commission recognises that the choice of polling station will often be a balance between the quality of the building, in terms of access and facilities, and the proximity of the building to the electors it is intended to serve; and that there may be circumstances where the polling place might fall wholly or partly outside the polling district because suitable alternatives are not available in the relevant area.

Although it is Council policy to avoid the use of schools where possible, there may be locations where there are no other suitable premises in the area. For the purposes of elections, the (Acting) Returning Officer is entitled to use free of charge, subject to covering the cost of heating, lighting and caretaking charges, schools maintained or assisted by a local authority as well as those schools that receive

grants made up of monies provided by Parliament. In conducting this review, it is proposed that, in order to minimise the risk of long queues at a polling station, as far as possible, that no more than 2500 voters should be assigned to a polling station for local elections. It should be noted that the number of postal voters in each polling district is a relevant consideration in this regard. In all circumstances, consideration is given to whether a polling place is capable of accommodating more than one polling station, if necessary.

Presiding Officers are encouraged to make comments and observations regarding the suitability of polling stations to which they are allocated and Polling Station Inspectors visited all polling stations during the recent elections in May 2019. Any comments will be taken into account when conducting the review.

The Role of the (Acting) Returning Officer

Whilst it is for the Council to decide on the creation of polling districts and the location of polling places, it is for the (Acting) Returning Officer to decide how many polling stations are required for each polling place. The (Acting) Returning Officer must allocate electors to the polling stations in such manner as he or she thinks most conducive to the smooth running of polling day. The Council must consult the (Acting) Returning Officer as part of the review and the (Acting) Returning Officer must comment during any review on both the existing polling places and polling stations; and on any proposed changes.

Other representations

The Council is also required to seek representations from those with expertise in relation to access to premises and facilities for disabled people. Such persons must be given the opportunity to comment on the representations made by the (Acting) Returning Officer. Election candidates and agents, political parties and members of the Council will also be notified of the review.

Summary of Consultees

Any elector in the Constituency may make representations on the designation of polling districts or places. In addition, the Council has notified the following groups/individuals about the review:

The (Acting) Returning Officer for South West Devon
The Member of Parliament for Totnes
The Member of Parliament for South West Devon
South Hams District Councillors
Devon County Councillors representing divisions within the South Hams area
South Hams Town and Parish Councils
Scope
Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)
Registered Political Parties who regularly field candidates at elections in South Hams
Living Options Devon
Mencap
Action for Blind People

Completion of the review

After considering all of the representations, a draft Polling District Places Order will be produced and published for public comment. Once comments have been considered a report will be presented to the Council in November 2019. The revised Polling District Places Order must be approved and published by 31 January 2020 however it is the Council's aim to complete all processes before publishing the revised electoral register on 1 December 2019.

The following information will be published on the Council's website and made available, on request, at Follaton House, Plymouth Road, Totnes:

- all correspondence sent to the Chief Executive and Returning Officer in connection with the review
- all representations made by any group or person in connection with the review
- proposals for the designations of polling districts and polling places
- details of the actual designations of polling districts and polling places agreed as a result of the review

Challenging the Review

Although the Electoral Commission has no initial role in the review process itself, it does have an important role in respect of considering representations and observations that a Council has failed to conduct a proper review on one of two grounds:

1. that the Council has failed to meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency, or a body of them (i.e. the reasonable requirements of a particular area of the authority have not been satisfactorily met); or
2. that the Council has failed to take sufficient account of the accessibility to disabled persons of polling stations within a designated polling place. Representations based on any other grounds will not be considered by the Commission.

All representations made to the Commission must be made in writing either by post or email and should include the location and any other relevant information, stating specifically why it is inaccessible or does not meet the reasonable requirements of the electors.

Who may make a representation to the Electoral Commission?

Section 18D (1) of the Representation of the People Act 1983, sets out who may make representations to the Electoral Commission namely;

- not less than thirty registered electors in the constituency (although electors registered anonymously cannot make a representation)

- a person (except the (Acting) Returning Officer) who made representations to the council when the review was being undertaken
- any person who is not an elector within the constituency but who the Electoral Commission feels has sufficient interest in the accessibility of disabled persons in the areas or has particular expertise in relation to the access to premises or facilities of disabled persons

The (Acting) Returning Officer is entitled to make observations on any representations made to the Commission.

What will the Electoral Commission do?

The Electoral Commission is required to consider any representations and observations and may direct the relevant council to make any alterations it sees necessary to the polling places designated by the review. Should a Council fail to make the alterations within two months of the direction being given, the Commission may make the alterations itself.

Proposals

Set out in Appendix A are details of current polling districts and polling places for the Totnes and South West Devon Parliamentary Constituencies.

Each polling district is given a three letter code, i.e. LAA. Polling district codes beginning with an 'L' form the South West Devon Parliamentary Constituency and polling districts beginning with an 'S' form part of the Totnes Parliamentary Constituency.

Set out in Appendix B are details of the polling stations used at the May 2019 elections with details of the total electorate allocated to each polling station for the European Election.

A full review of South Hams polling places was last conducted in 2014.

Representations

Any persons wishing to make comments or representations regarding the proposals may do so. Any representations you wish to make should be **received by close of business (5pm) on 20 September 2019**

All representations must be made in writing either by post or by email. Representations by post should be sent to:

Electoral Services
South Hams District Council
Follaton House
Plymouth Road
Totnes
TQ9 5NE

Representations by e-mail should be sent to:

elections@southams.gov.uk

For any queries, please telephone the Electoral Services helpline on 01803 861434.
All representations will be published on the Council's website.

The final decision will be taken by members of the Council in November 2019.

Any changes will become effective at all elections held after 1 December.