

**To:** Council  
**Date:** 27 January 2025  
**Report of:** Returning Officer  
**Title of Report:** Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To ask Council to approve the schedule of polling districts and polling places (shown at Appendix 1) for the administrative area of the City Council as required by the Electoral Administration Act 2006
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Executive Board Member:</b>	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	None
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	None
<b>Recommendation(s):that the Council:</b>	
<b>Approves</b> the schedule of polling districts and polling places (shown at Appendix 1) for the administrative area of the City Council.	

<b>Appendices</b>
Appendix 1 – Schedule of polling districts and polling places
Appendix 2 – Risk Register

## Introduction

1. The Council is required under the Electoral Administration Act 2006 to carry out periodic reviews of the polling places in Oxford used at parliamentary elections. The Act lays out the scope and timetable of the review and suggests who might be consulted and how.
2. The last such review was carried out in 2019. Reviews are required every five years.

## **What the Council needs to do**

3. The timing of the parliamentary election in July 2024 meant that the register was not re-published on 1st December, as normal, but postponed to 1st February 2025. The new polling district structure will come into force at that time.
4. This review is necessarily more in depth due to the need to ensure the polling district structure reflects the new divisions for County Council elections due for implementation in May 2025.
5. In drawing up a scheme officers have tried to use the same buildings where possible so that fewest number of people have to move to a different location. However, this is inevitable for some.
6. Interested parties were invited to give comments. These included local disability groups, councillors, local MPs, the County Council, etc. The general public was also invited to comment. The Acting Returning Officer for Oxford West and Abingdon constituency (currently Steven Corrigan at South and Vale Councils) was also consulted on those stations in Oxford that form part of the Oxford West and Abingdon constituency.
7. The Act requires that the Council look at all aspects of the polling places, location, access and general appropriateness.
8. Some smaller polling districts that we had in place to enable any parliamentary by-election to take place (prior to the new constituency boundaries coming into force at the General Election in July 2024) can now be deleted.

## **County Council division changes**

9. The County Council recently underwent a divisional boundary review by the Local Government Boundary Commission. These new boundaries come into effect at the County Council's elections on 1st May 2025.

The review largely used our existing polling districts as building blocks for the new divisional boundaries but there are several examples where we will need to split polling districts to enable the new divisions to be created.

## **Replies to the consultation**

10. Four replies were received to the consultation:

- from a resident in east Oxford saying that the eastern side of polling district JB is ill served by the polling station being at Cowley Road Methodist Church, nearly a mile away from its most eastern streets (for example, Southfield Park);

- from the Returning Officer for Oxford West and Abingdon constituency who had no specific changes to suggest but was concerned at the lack of disabled parking at some of the polling station covered by him;
- from a City councillor with some concerns about the split of streets between the two stations at Florence Park Community Centre and the effect of LTNs on access for those that may need to drive to their polling station;
- from a city councillor saying that Summertown URC might not be available in the long term and suggesting some alternatives;

### **Member Working Group Recommendations**

11. A cross-party working group was convened. It was made up of Councillors Mark Lygo and Naomi Waite (Labour group), Christopher Snowton (Liberal Democrat group), Chris Jarvis (Green group) and Ajaz Rehman (representing the Oxford Independent Group and other independent groups).

The Group considered the current scheme and the consultation responses. The Asian Cultural Centre on Manzil Way was suggested as a new station for the eastern end of JB.

No other changes were suggested.

12. Subsequent to that meeting I made contact with the Asian Cultural Centre and they are happy to host a polling station. I have made the changes suggested by the Working Group and the revised scheme is shown in Appendix 1 to this report.

Once agreed by Council the schedule cannot be altered without a subsequent resolution of Council. This can cause problems in the lead up to elections when polling stations can become unavailable for various reasons (e.g. refurbishment work) and an alternative is needed. This would necessitate an extraordinary meeting of Council to approve any change. Since the first review under this legislation in 2007 I suggested that Council give a delegated power to the Returning Officer to change polling places in emergency situations. This was agreed and I propose this continues.

### **Financial Issues**

- 13 There are no financial issues relating to this report.

### **Legal Issues**

14 There are no legal issues relating to this report.

## Recommendations

Council is recommended to:

- (i) approve the schedule of polling places as detailed in Appendix 1 to this report;
- (ii) give the Returning Officer the delegated power to make changes to polling stations in emergencies;

<b>Report author</b>	Martin John
Job title	Electoral Services Manager
Service area or department	Law and Governance
Telephone	01865 252518
e-mail	<a href="mailto:mjohn@oxford.gov.uk">mjohn@oxford.gov.uk</a>

**Background Papers:** Local Government Boundary Commission for England – Oxfordshire final recommendations - <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/oxfordshire>