



## **Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2014**

### **Reason for Review**

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced changes to the timing of the compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The requirement now provides that a local authority must carry out and complete a review of polling districts and polling places within 16 months of 1 October 2013 and every five years thereafter. The Council is also taking the opportunity to review its polling stations at the same time.

### **How the review is conducted**

In general terms, the Council has to announce that a review is to take place. The Council consults the Returning Officer who makes representations on existing and proposed polling arrangements. The Council publishes the Returning Officer's proposals and invites comments. These are considered before final decisions are made.

The following cannot be considered as part of the review:

- the boundary of the Bracknell parliamentary or neighbouring parliamentary constituency or local authority boundaries; or
- the names of local authorities or electoral areas within or bordering Bracknell Forest.

The Council must actively seek comments from people who have a particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for person with disabilities.

Any elector may make representations. Although not specifically required by law, the Borough Council's consultation will include parish and town councils, local political parties and elected representatives.

In addition, the Council will be considering the impact on the existing arrangements of new developments scheduled over the next four years.

The Returning Officer's comments have been sought and these are included in the schedule of polling districts, polling places and polling stations.

## **“Polling Districts”, “Polling Places” and “Polling Stations”**

A “polling district” is a subdivision of a larger electoral area such as a Parliamentary constituency or ward, into a smaller area within which a polling place convenient to electors can be designated.

A “polling place” is the building or area within which a polling station will be selected by the Returning Officer.

A “polling station” is the room or building where the poll takes place.

In order to provide maximum flexibility in the event of buildings not being available when elections are held, the Council has in the past designated the whole of the polling district as polling places. It is then for the Returning Officer to designate a polling station for each election. The Returning Officer always tries to use the same polling stations but this is not always possible. The Returning Officer therefore considers it advantageous to retain the current practice of designating the whole of a polling district as the polling place and he recommends this course of action. However, the Council is also seeking views on the suitability of the individual polling stations as part of this review.

The last review of the polling districts and polling places/stations took place in 2010 which came into effect at the May 2011 elections. A handful of changes were made following that review. The schedule of polling districts, polling places and polling stations reflects those currently in use. Because of the lack of alternative premises for use as polling stations, if current buildings are not felt to be sufficiently convenient or accessible or suitable, it would be helpful if an alternative venue was suggested for consideration.

### **What has to be taken into account**

The law provides that the Council must take the following considerations into account when drawing up proposals. Anyone wishing to submit representations should bear the following in mind when submitting their comments:

The Council must seek to ensure that:

- all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and
- as far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place is accessible to electors who are disabled.

### **The Returning Officer’s proposals**

The Returning Officer is not proposing significant changes to polling districts, polling places or polling stations but has highlighted where he feels more detailed consideration would be especially welcome. Whilst the Returning Officer is keen to minimise disruption when a building is designated for use at election time, three schools in the Borough are nevertheless designated as polling stations. With scheduled elections, good notice can be given to enable the schools to timetable the election day into their school calendar but with by-elections or other elections called at relatively short notice this can sometimes be problematic. In these three cases, there are no suitable alternative premises of which the Returning Officer is aware.

## **Making representations**

Any representations made will be published on the Council's website and will be available for public inspection.

Views can be expressed using the on-line comments form that may be accessed on the Borough Council's website

[www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

Comments forms are also available from Electoral Services – 01344 352000 or email

[electoral.registration@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:electoral.registration@bracknell-forest.gov.uk).

Alternatively, comments may be made in writing to:

Electoral Services  
Bracknell Forest Council  
Easthampstead House  
Town Square  
Bracknell  
RG12 1AQ

Throughout the review, all working papers, minutes of any meetings and correspondence will be published on the Council's website and will be available for inspection at the Electoral Services Office (office hours by appointment)

All views and representations must be received by Friday 16 May 2014.