

POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS REVIEW

To: Council

Date: 16 October 2014

Author: Chief Executive/Principal Democratic Services Officer

[P100]

1.0 **ISSUE**

1.1 To report the outcome of the review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 Members are requested to:

- (i) Note the outcome of the Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations as detailed in Appendix A.
- (ii) Agree the proposed changes detailed below to the location of Polling Places/Stations:

No	Ward	Polling District Affected	Proposal
1	Burwell	KB1	That a new polling station inside the polling district be found.
2	Cheveley	MD1	That a new polling station inside the polling district be found.
3	Dullingham Villages	MK1	That the larger of the rooms at Parsonage Farm Barns is used for all future elections.
4	Ely East	HG1	St Peters Church Hall in Broad Street be used as an alternative to The Maltings.
5	Ely West	HI1	Use of the larger meeting room of the Methodist Church
6	Ely North	HJ6	Use of St Michael and All Angels Church in Chettisham to retain a polling place in Chettisham village.
7	Fordham Villages	LI6	Use of conservatory room at George & Dragon public house instead of using a portacabin in their car park.

8	Haddenham	JJ1 and JA1	That a new polling station inside the polling district at Witchford be found and that we seek to use the large hall at the Arkenstall Centre for future elections.
9	Littleport	IE1	If we cannot use the Methodist Church Hall, a new polling station inside the polling district be found.
10	Soham North	LF1	That a new polling station inside the polling district be found.
11	Soham South	LG2	That a new polling station inside the polling district be found.
12	Sutton	JE1	Use of the Royal British Legion Hall at the Brooklands Centre, larger room with better disabled access and easier route to polling station from car park.

3.0 BACKGROUND/OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a duty on all authorities to review their Parliamentary polling districts and polling places every 4 years to ensure that people have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and to ensure reasonable and practicable accessibility for people with disabilities. The first review was conducted in 2007. The last such review was conducted in 2011. The Returning Officer has also made several changes with regard to premises that can be designated as polling stations since the last review. The Council must conduct a full review of its polling districts, polling places and polling stations by 31 January 2015, and thereafter every five years from 1 October 2013. However, this does not prevent changes being made at any time before the next full review in October 2018. The Electoral Commission has produced guidance on the conduct of reviews. Whilst Polling Districts and Polling Places for Local Government Elections are covered by separate legislation (Representation of the People Act [RPA] 1983), reviews of Local Government polling arrangements should be conducted simultaneously with the Parliamentary review.
- 3.2 As part of the current review, all District and County Councillors for East Cambridgeshire; Parish Councils; local MPs; Political Parties; the local Access Group; the County Council and Electoral Services at South Cambridgeshire and Fenland District Councils; relevant consultees on the Consultation Register; have been consulted. In addition, the public were notified via public notices, together with information on the Council's website and the Shape Your Place website. The Returning Officer also took into consideration responses received from Presiding Officers, Poll Clerks and Polling Station Inspectors arising from the European Elections held in May 2014.

- 3.3 As a result, 9 responses have been received arising from consultation on the polling places review: 1 from the local Access Group; 4 from Parishes; 3 from District Councillors; 1 from the public/Consultation Register. Arising from the post-election evaluation process, responses were received from the majority of the Polling Station Inspectors, Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks, most of which were positive or related to issues identified on the day which have already been resolved or will be resolved for the next election.
- 3.4 In the responses, we received E-mails from the City of Ely Council and Councillor Hobbs asking us to consider changing the Vernon Cross Room venue for the Ely East Ward to Bell Holt to accommodate the elderly residents. The Returning Officer has considered the issues and recommended that we retain the existing polling station, as relocation would create the same issue regarding the elderly residents of Woolpack Yard and Archery Crescent, and he has to strike a balance to ensure that the electorate use facilities that are of a reasonable and convenient nature in both location and distribution throughout the Polling District. We have also received letters from Littleport Parish Council and Councillor Morrison regarding alternative venues for a polling station in Littleport to replace the Methodist Church Hall, if it is no longer available, in view of the fact that the use of the Village Hall in Victoria Street as a combined polling station for both Littleport Wards proved unsuitable at the European Elections. The Returning Officer has recommended that investigations be undertaken to find an alternative polling station in Littleport, if the Methodist Church Hall is no longer available, and as part of this the Parish Council's suggestion of the Scout Hut on Camel Road will be considered. Woodditton Parish Council have suggested that we try and return Newmarket Town Football Club electors back to Ditton Lodge School, as this is a more central venue to the area. However, the polling station was moved from Ditton Lodge School to the Football Club as the school was undertaking refurbishment work and was reluctant to host the polling station in the future due to concerns for the security of the pupils and disruption to the school. No adverse comments have been received regarding the Football Club polling station since it was relocated in 2010. Two positive responses were received from Burwell Parish Council and Councillor Dupre regarding the polling stations in Burwell and Sutton. A member of the public commented on the limited parking and limitations of the car park surface for people with mobility problems at the polling station at Fassage Hall, Lode.
- 3.5 The Access Group has not raised any specific issues relating to individual Polling Stations. Whilst acknowledging that the Council has worked hard over recent years to assist those with disabilities to be able to vote at Polling Stations, the Access Group have made a number of general comments relating to accessibility for people with disabilities to ensure dignified and reasonable access for all. These include the need for:
- Good Signage to the Polling Station, the Blue Badge parking (which may have to have temporary signage indicating it is only for badge holders whilst using the Polling Station) and the entrance.

- The route from the parking to the entrance should be step free and unobstructed, including by political party members and their paraphernalia seeking voters' polling details.
- It is easier if the entrance doors are left open for those with restricted mobility – if weather does not permit, the entrance needs to be monitored, either by being in view of the staff, a call system or by someone at the entrance.
- If a temporary ramp is used that covers the stepped access, ensure that it is placed so that any handrails can be reached when the ambulant voters are using the entrance.
- Chairs should be available for those queuing to collect their ballot papers.
- Voting stations with shelves at different heights are needed.
- I think you already provide aids for those with visual impairments to vote independently.

All of these points by the Access Group will be responded to and confirmation given that we already provide polling booths with different height shelves and voting aids for those with visual impairments to vote independently.

3.6 The proposals by the Returning Officer are detailed in the revised Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations document attached at Appendix A, which include a summary of the responses from the consultation. The recommended changes are detailed in paragraph 2.1 (ii) (1 - 12) above.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 Any increase in costs arising from variations in venue hire rates, etc.

4.2 Equality Impact Assessment (INRA) completed and attached at Appendix B.

5.0 APPENDICES

5.1 Appendix A Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations document
Appendix B INRA

Background Documents

Relevant Electoral Services files,
Responses from consultees,
Electoral Commission guidance
on Review of Polling Districts,
Polling Places and Polling
Stations

Location

Room 214
The Grange
Ely

Contact Officer

Joan Cox
Electoral Services Officer
(01353) 616460
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joan.cox@eastcambs.gov.uk

**East Cambridgeshire
District Council**

Representation of the People Act 1983
Electoral Administration Act 2006
The Review of Polling District & Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006

Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

Background information and the Returning Officer's proposals

John Hill, Returning Officer

Consultation Period:

If you have any comments or questions please contact:

Joan Cox
Electoral Services Officer
The Grange
Nutholt Lane
Ely
Cambs
CB7 4EE

joan.cox@eastcambs.gov.uk or
elections@eastcambs.gov.uk

1. Review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations in the district of East Cambridgeshire.

1.1 The reason for the review

The Representation of the People Act places a duty on the Council to divide the District into polling districts and to designate polling places for each district. The Council also has a duty to keep those arrangements under review.

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 (EAA 2006) introduced a duty on all local authorities in Great Britain to review their UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places at least once every four years. The first such review had to be completed by the end of 2007.

The Council must conduct a review of the polling districts, polling places and polling stations for the South East Cambridgeshire parliamentary constituency that fall within the boundaries of the District of East Cambridgeshire.

The Returning Officer for East Cambridgeshire District Council will also make representations to South Cambridgeshire District Council for the polling district, polling places and polling stations that fall under his control during the parliamentary elections, as part of the South East Cambs parliamentary constituency falls within South Cambridgeshire district boundaries.

The Returning Officer for Fenland District Council will make representations to this review for the polling districts, polling places and polling stations that fall under their control during parliamentary election, as part of the North East Cambridgeshire Parliamentary constituency falls within East Cambridgeshire district boundaries.

The last such review was conducted in 2011. The Returning Officer has also made several changes with regard to premises that can be designated as polling stations since the last review.

The Council must conduct a full review of its polling districts, polling places and polling stations by 31 January 2015, and thereafter every five years from 1 October 2013. However, this does not prevent changes being made at any time before the next full review in October 2018.

Most of the arrangements made for parliamentary elections are also used at other elections.

1.2 How the review is conducted

The Members of Full Council are delegated to deal with this matter, and the legislation lays down how the review is to be conducted. On Commencement of the review the Returning Officer will be asked to make his representations on existing and proposed polling arrangements. The Council will publish the Returning Officer's proposals and will invite comments. The members will consider these before final recommendations are made to the Council on 16 October 2014 (Provisional Date).

The consultation must seek comments from people who have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have disabilities.

Any elector may make representations. It is proposed that the consultation will also include local political parties, district ward councillors, county councillors for East Cambridgeshire divisions, access group, local MP's, returning officers for

parliamentary constituencies that fall within East Cambridgeshire boundaries and parish councils.

1.3 The role of the Electoral Commission

The Commission, while not having a direct responsibility for the review, can intervene where it considers that the reasonable requirements of electors or the needs of disabled electors have not been taken into account.

The following can 'appeal' to the Commission:

- Any parish council which falls within the constituency;
- Not less than thirty registered electors in the constituency;
- any person who has made representations during the review;
- any person who is not an elector in the constituency but who has sufficient interest or expertise in access to premises or facilities for disabled persons.

The Commission could direct the Council to alter any polling arrangements that arise from the review, and the Commission could make these alterations itself if the Council failed to respond within two months.

1.4 Our timetable for this review

Notice of start of review – Monday 16 June 2014

Council publishes the Returning Officer's proposals – Monday 16 June 2014

Consultation on this proposal ends on – Friday 12 September 2014

Report to Full Council – Thursday 16 October 2014

Adoption by Council – Friday 24 October 2014

Arrangements come into force at the publication
of the next revised Register of Electors – 1 December 2014

1.5 Making Comments

Anyone intending to make comments is strongly urged to read the introductory comments to the Returning Officer's proposals. The Returning Officer has found that, by and large, the boundaries of our polling districts are co-terminous with the existing District and parish ward boundaries. Therefore, the Returning Officer, who considers that change for change's sake should be avoided in the review because it proves disruptive to the electors and their convenience, has recommended few changes.

That said, comments are still welcomed, and an early notification where major alterations are proposed will be appreciated, because it will enable the Electoral Services Officer to enter into further and more detailed consultation where required.

Comments that support the Returning Officer's proposals are also welcomed because they will provide a balance of opinions.

Comments should be made in writing to:

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Throughout the review, all working papers, minutes of meetings and correspondence will be available for public inspection at the Elections Office. All items will be published when the review has been completed.

2. The Returning Officer's Proposals

2.1 Introduction

The pattern of polling districts and polling places in the District of East Cambridgeshire has evolved to meet successive boundary changes to district and parish wards and to meet the convenience of electors across the district. By and large, it ensures that electors have reasonable facilities for voting. Furthermore, in line with the Council's policies, every attempt has been made to ensure that polling stations are accessible to electors with disabilities. Therefore, the proposals for change have been kept to a minimum.

2.2 Guidelines

The Returning Officer has taken the following considerations into account when drawing up the proposals. Comments made during the consultation should keep these in mind. The first four are requirements laid down in the Representation of the People Act; the remainder are guidelines only.

- The council must seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
- The council must seek to ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, every polling place is accessible to electors with disabilities;
- Every parish shall be in a separate polling district;
- Ideally the polling place should be in the polling district;
- No polling station should be shared by two wards because of the risks associated with holding different elections in the same polling station;
- Ideally there should be no more than 2,500 electors per polling district, although the number of postal voters in the district (presently about 6,500, in an electorate of 65,500) is a further consideration.
- Polling district boundaries should be co-terminous with existing parish ward or district ward boundaries.
- Where existing polling districts serve no necessary function because the electors for each polling district already vote at the same polling station, the polling districts should be merged;
- A polling station costs about £3,000 to hire, equip and staff for polling day;
- The proposals have been mindful of further development in the district as identified in the Local Development Framework.

2.3 The Tables

Following a summary of the proposed changes, each district ward is dealt with separately. The tables show the existing polling arrangements in each district ward;

- The polling district identity letters
- The polling place for the district
- The polling station at that place
- The number of electors on 22 May 2014 (the date of the last elections)
- Disabled access, including where this is achieved by the use of a temporary ramp.

A map showing the present polling districts follows the tables.

2.4 Glossary of terms

District wards – The division of the district into areas for the purpose of electing councillors to represent its different parts. The district of East Cambridgeshire is divided into 19 district wards, but the wards are **not** the subject of this review.

Boundary reviews – the reviews of the boundaries of parishes, district or parliamentary constituencies. Boundary reviews are **not** part of this review.

Electoral arrangements – the allocation of councillors to a council and the division of a parish or district into wards with the allocation of councillors to wards. The electoral arrangements of the parishes and of the district are **not** the subject of this review.

Parish wards – the division of a parish into areas for the purpose of electing councillors to represent the different parts of the same parish, eg the parish of Ely is divided into four wards; the parish of Coveney is an unwarded parish. The parish wards are **not** the subject of this review.

Polling arrangements – the provision of reasonable and convenient facilities for the electors to cast their votes by the division of a constituency into polling districts with polling places and polling stations

Polling district – an area in the constituency for which the electors vote together at the same polling place.

Polling district letters – three letters that distinguish the polling district and that, together with the elector's number from the register of electors for that district, make up the elector's distinctive and unique electoral registration number. The polling district letters in the part of South East Cambridgeshire parliamentary constituency that falls within East Cambridgeshire boundaries have district letters ranging from HA through to MK.

Polling place – a readily identifiable place within the polling district to which the electors will go to vote.

Polling station – the building or part of a building at the polling place, which will serve as the venue for the poll; the extent of the polling station will depend upon local circumstances.

Summary of proposed changes:

No	Ward	Polling District Affected	Proposal
1	Burwell	KB1	That a new polling station inside the polling district be found.
2	Cheveley	MD1	That a new polling station inside the polling district be found.
3	Dullingham Villages	MK1	That the larger of the rooms at Parsonage Farm Barns is used for all future elections.
4	Ely East	HG1	St Peters Church Hall in Broad Street be used as an alternative to The Maltings.
5	Ely West	HI1	Use of the larger meeting room of the Methodist Church
6	Ely North	HJ6	Use of St Michael and All Angels Church in Chettisham to retain a polling place in Chettisham village.
7	Fordham Villages	LI6	Use of conservatory room at George & Dragon public house instead of using a portacabin in their car park.
8	Haddenham	JJ1 and JA1	That a new polling station inside the polling district at Witchford be found and that we seek to use the large hall at the Arkenstall Centre for future elections.
9	Littleport	IE1	If we cannot use the Methodist Church Hall, a new polling station inside the polling district be found.
10	Soham North	LF1	That a new polling station inside the polling district be found.
11	Soham South	LG2	That a new polling station inside the polling district be found.
12	Sutton	JE1	Use of the Royal British Legion Hall at the Brooklands Centre, larger room with better disabled access and easier route to polling station from car park.

The Tables: Existing polling district, polling places and polling stations and the returning officers proposals

Bottisham

Existing Arrangements				
Polling District	Polling Place	Polling Station	Electors	Disabled Access
KA1	Bottisham	Royal British Legion Downing Close	1810	Yes
KC1	Lode	Fassage Hall Station Road	736	Yes
MB1	Brinkley	Brinkley Memorial Hall High Street	295	Yes

MC1	Burrough Green	Burrough Green Village Hall Bradley Road	307	Yes
MI6	Westley Waterless	Westley Waterless Village Hall Main Street	121	Yes
Returning Officer's Proposals				
To make better disabled access provisions at Bottisham and Brinkley. Access to polling station at Lode is poor, minimal parking for disabled electors, car park surface not good for anyone with mobility problems.				

Burwell

Existing Arrangements				
Polling District	Polling Place	Polling Station	Electors	Disabled Access
KB1	Burwell	Phoenix Rooms, The Causeway x2 stations, one station deals with addresses from streets A-K and the second deals with addresses from streets L-Z.	2488	Yes
KB2	Burwell	The Gardiner Memorial Hall High Street x2 stations, one station deals with addresses from streets A-K and the second deals with addresses from streets L-Z.	2471	Yes
The Returning Officer's Proposal				
To retain the split polling stations used at the PCC and County elections. Although we did use The Apple Store at Burwell House in May 2013 for KB1, this proved inadequate due to size. For 2014 we used the Baptist Church and providing they are willing to allow us to continue to use it this may become our new polling station venue.				

Cheveley

Existing Arrangements				
Polling District	Polling Place	Polling Station	Electors	Disabled Access
MA1	Ashley	Ashley Village Hall High Street	485	Yes
MD1	Cheveley North	Portacabin sited at Inspired Services Publishing Limited Centre Drive Newmarket	731	Yes – with ramp
ME1	Cheveley South	Cheveley Primary School Community Room High Street	862	Yes
MG1	Kirtling	Kirtling Village Hall	279	Yes
MJ1	Woodditton Urban	Newmarket Town Football Club Cricket Field Road	882	Yes
The Returning Officer's Proposal				
Suggestions are sought for an alternative venue for the Cheveley North polling station. Although we have used the Jarman Centre for the last 2 elections, it is still felt to be inappropriate. In 2014 we piloted a split station at Newmarket Town Football Club and seek stakeholders views as to whether this should become a permanent move. Woodditton Parish Council have suggested we try and return Newmarket Town Football Club electors back to Ditton Lodge School as this is a more central venue to the area. Need to improve signage from High Street for Cheveley South.				

Downham

Existing Arrangements				
Polling District	Polling Places	Polling Stations	Electors	Disabled Access
IA1	Coveney	Coveney Village Hall School Lane	339	Yes
IB1	Downham South	Little Downham Village Centre Main Street	1752	Yes
ID1	Downham North	Pymoor Methodist Church Main Street	336	Yes
JC1	Mepal	Mepal Village Hall School Lane	797	Yes
JI1	Witcham	Witcham Village Hall Martins Lane	354	Yes
The Returning Officer's Proposal				
Gravel driveway/car park at Coveney is not ideal for people with mobility problems. Mepal Village Hall car park needs some improvements to surface, i.e. potholes.				

Dullingham Villages

Existing Arrangements				
Polling Districts	Polling Places	Polling Stations	Electors	Disabled Access
MF1	Dullingham	The Taylor Hall Church Close	584	Yes
MH1	Stetchworth	Ellesmere Centre Ley Road	517	Yes
MK1	Woodditton Rural	Parsonage Farm Barns Parsonage Farm Lane	258	Yes
MK2	Woodditton Rural	Methodist Church Saxon Street	240	Yes
The Returning Officer's Proposal				
That the larger room of Parsonage Barns is used for all elections in future.				

Ely East

Existing Arrangements				
Polling Districts	Polling Places	Polling Stations	Electors	Disabled Access
HA6	Stuntney	Stuntney Social Club Soham Road	206	Yes
HC1	Prickwillow	Prickwillow Village Hall Main Street	408	Yes
HD6	Queen Adelaide	Queen Adelaide Village Hall Prickwillow Road	195	Yes
HG1	Ely East	The Maltings Ship Lane	674	Yes
HH1	Ely East	The Forum Barton Road	762	Yes
HK1	Ely East	Vernon Cross Room The Old Gaol House Lynn Road	953	Yes

The Returning Officer's Proposal

That St Peter's Hall in Broad Street replaces the polling station at The Maltings, there is disabled access and limited parking on site. Need to look to improve disabled access at Queen Adelaide. A suggestion has been made to change the Vernon Cross Room venue to Bell Holt to accommodate the elderly, but then would create the same issue regarding the elderly residents of Woolpack Yard and Archery Crescent. Clearer signage needed at Vernon Cross Room regarding entrance way.

Ely North**Existing Arrangements**

Polling Districts	Polling Places	Polling Stations	Electors	Disabled Access
HF1	Ely North	Larkfield Resource Centre High Barns x2 stations, one station deals with addresses from streets A-K and the second deals with addresses from streets L-Z.	3717	Yes
HF2	Ely North	Portacabin on Davison Road	1570	Yes – with ramp
HJ6	Chettisham	St Michael and All Angels Church Chettisham	132	Yes

The Returning Officer's Proposals

To use St Michael and All Angels Church in Chettisham with the use of portable toilet facilities to retain a polling place in Chettisham village.

Ely South**Existing Arrangements**

Polling District	Polling Places	Polling Station	Electors	Disabled Access
HI2	Ely South	Guide Hall St Johns Road x2 stations, one station deals with addresses from streets A-K and the second deals with addresses from streets L-Z.	3237	Yes

The Returning Officer's Proposals

No Change

Ely West**Existing Arrangements**

Polling Districts	Polling Places	Polling Station	Electors	Disabled Access
HI1	Ely West	Ely Methodist Church Chapel Street x2 stations, one station deals with addresses from streets A-K and the second deals with addresses from streets L-Z.	3582	Yes

The Returning Officer's Proposal

To use the larger of the two rooms within the Methodist Church as a polling place.

Fordham Villages

Existing Arrangements				
Polling Districts	Polling Places	Polling Stations	Electors	Disabled Access
LA1	Chippenham	Chippenham Village Hall High Street	370	Yes
LB1	Fordham	Victoria Hall Carter Street	2125	Yes
LE1	Kennett	Kennett Pavilion Station Road	291	Yes
LI6	Snailwell	The Conservatory Room of The George & Dragon Public House	139	Yes
The Returning Officer's Proposal				
To use the conservatory room within the George and Dragon Public House instead of siting a portacabin in the Car Park. Better signage required at Kennett.				

Haddenham

Existing Arrangements				
Polling Districts	Polling Places	Polling Stations	Electors	Disabled Access
JA1	Haddenham	Arkenstall Centre Station Road x2 stations, one station deals with addresses from streets A-K and the second deals with addresses from streets L-Z.	2462	Yes
JB1	Aldreth	Aldreth Village Centre High Street	194	Yes
JG1	Wentworth	Wentworth Hall Church Road	142	Yes
JJ1	Witchford	St Andrews Hall Main Street x2 stations, one station deals with addresses from streets A-K and the second deals with addresses from streets L-Z.	1879	Yes
The Returning Officer's Proposal				
<p>Polling District JJ1 at Witchford currently uses St Andrews Hall for two polling stations, due to the size of the hall and the continued growth of the electorate suggestions are sought for the use of a new venue in the polling district. One suggestion is we use Witchford Village Hall we will approach them for the 2015 elections.</p> <p>The Arkenstall Centre in Haddenham is used as the polling station and we should ensure that we use the large hall for all future elections.</p>				

Isleham

Existing Arrangements				
Polling District	Polling Places	Polling Station	Electors	Disabled Access
LC1	Isleham	Isleham Village Hall Mill Street	1883	Yes
The Returning Officer's Proposal				
No Change				

Littleport East

Existing Arrangements				
Polling District	Polling Places	Polling Station	Electors	Disabled Access
IF1	Littleport	Littleport Village Hall Victoria Street x2 stations, one station deals with addresses from streets A-K and the second deals with addresses from streets L-Z.	3847	Yes
IG1	Littleport	The Community Centre Black Horse Drove	139	Yes
The Returning Officer's Proposal				
No change				

Littleport West

Existing Arrangements				
Polling District	Polling Place	Polling Station	Electors	Disabled Access
IE1	Littleport	Methodist Church Community Room, High Street x2 stations, one station deals with addresses from streets A-K and the second deals with addresses from streets L-Z.	2671	Yes
The Returning Officer's Proposal				
Confirmation is sought from The Methodist Church as to whether we can continue to use the Hall, if not an alternative venue is sought. We have had suggestions for two other venues and we will go and visit all three before making a decision.				

Soham North

Existing Arrangements				
Polling District	Polling Place	Polling Station	Electors	Disabled Access
LF1	Soham North	Town Rangers Football Club Julius Martin Lane x2 stations, one station deals with addresses from streets A-K and the second deals with addresses from streets L-Z.	4290	Yes – with ramp
The Returning Officer's Proposal				
The venue we currently use is cramped for the size of the electorate. We will approach the existing venue to see if they have a larger room, alternatively views are sought to a change in venue, if not possible. Disabled access for the smaller room is compliant but too far to walk.				

Soham South

Existing Arrangements				
Polling District	Polling Place	Polling Station	Electors	Disabled Access
LG1	Soham Central	The Walter Gidney Pavilion Recreation Ground x2 stations, one station deals with addresses from streets A-K and the second deals with addresses from streets L-Z	3017	Yes
LG2	Soham South	The Cherry Tree Public House, Fordham Road	1507	Yes
LJ1	Wicken	The Mission Hall High Street	668	Yes
The Returning Officer's Proposals				
To seek confirmation that we can continue to use the dining/meeting room within the Cherry Tree Public House instead of siting a portacabin in the car park; if we cannot use the facilities an alternative venue will need to be found. Better disabled access required at Wicken. Disabled Access needs improving at Walter Gidney.				

Stretham

Existing Arrangements				
Polling District	Polling Place	Polling Station	Electors	Disabled Access
JD1	Stretham	Stretham Church Hall	1432	Yes
JF1	Thetford	Little Thetford Village Hall The Wyches	556	Yes
JH1	Wilburton	St Peters Hall High Street	1150	Yes
The Returning Officer's Proposal				
No Change				

Sutton

Existing Arrangements				
Polling District	Polling Place	Polling Station	Electors	Disabled Access
JE1	Sutton	The Pavilion The Brooklands Centre, The Brook x2 stations, one station deals with addresses from streets A-K and the second deals with addresses from streets L-Z.	3121	Yes
The Returning Officer's Proposals				
Suggest use of the Royal British Legion Hall at the Brooklands Centre, larger room with better disabled access and easier route to polling station from car park.				

The Swaffhams

Existing Arrangements				
Polling District	Polling Place	Polling Station	Electors	Disabled Access
KD1	Reach	Reach Village Hall Fair Green	289	Yes
KE1	Swaffham Bulbeck	Downing Court Communal Room	653	Yes
KF1	Swaffham Prior	Swaffham Prior Village Hall High Street	624	Yes
The Returning Officer's Proposals				
Need to improve the signage at Swaffham Prior from the High Street and at the front of the building.				

General Comments

We have received comments from the Access Group which reiterate their comments made in the last review regarding signage, parking for disabled people, clear entrance ways, including leaving doors open, and chairs for electors queuing to vote. They also requested differing heights for the voting booths – Please note we already have two height levels for the voting booths.

Impact and Needs/Requirements Assessment (INRA)

Name of Policy:	Polling Districts, Polling Stations and Polling Places Review
Lead Officer (responsible for assessment):	John Hill Returning Officer/Joan Cox Electoral Services Officer
Department:	Legal and Democratic Services
Others Involved in the Assessment (i.e. peer review, external challenge):	
Date INRA Completed:	3 October 2014

‘Policy’ needs to be understood broadly to include all Council policies, strategies, services, functions, activities and decisions.

(a) What is the policy trying to achieve? i.e. What is the aim/purpose of the policy? Is it affected by external drivers for change? What outcomes do we want to achieve from the policy? How will the policy be put into practice?

To ensure that people have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and to ensure reasonable and practicable accessibility for people with disabilities.

(b) Who are its main beneficiaries? i.e. who will be affected by the policy?

The electorate of the District.

(c) Is the INRA informed by any information or background data (quantitative or qualitative)? i.e. consultations, complaints, applications received, allocations/take-up, satisfaction rates, performance indicators, access audits, census data, benchmarking, workforce profile etc.

Consultations with all District and County Councillors for East Cambridgeshire; Parish Councils; local MPs; Political Parties; the local Access Group; the County Council and Electoral Services at South Cambs and Fenland District Councils; relevant consultees on the Consultation Register. Public notified via public notices, information on the Council’s website and Shape Your Place website. In addition, feedback on the suitability of Polling Stations was requested as part of the post-European Elections review process.

(d) Does this policy have the potential to cause an impact (positive, negative or neutral) on different groups in the community, on the grounds of (please tick all that apply):

Ethnicity
Gender
Disability

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Age
Religion and Belief
Sexual Orientation

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

Please explain any impact identified (positive, negative or neutral): i.e. What do you already know about equality impact or need? Is there any evidence that there is a higher or lower take-up by particular groups? Have there been any demographic changes or trends locally? Are there any barriers to accessing the policy or service?

Proposed changes to polling stations regarded as positive to improve facilities provided and facilitate better access for particular groups in the community such as mothers with young children, elderly and people with disabilities.

Any changes may impact on a small number of local residents in terms of a longer travelling distance to proposed new polling station and limitations of public transport to achieve this, thereby more likely to affect the elderly or disabled. But balance has to be struck to ensure that the majority of the electorate use facilities that are of a reasonable and convenient nature in both location and distribution throughout the Polling District. Also because largely dependent on hire of community facilities, can be limited choice in particular areas.

However, this can be mitigated by the offer of a postal vote to any person not wishing to travel to a new or existing Polling Station.

(e) Does the policy have a differential impact on different groups?

YES

(f) Is the impact *adverse* (i.e. less favourable) on one or more groups?

Sometimes

(g) Does it have the potential to disadvantage or discriminate unfairly against any of the groups in a way that is unlawful?

NO

(h) What additional information is needed to provide a clear picture of how the activity is impacting on different communities and how will you collect this information, i.e. expert groups, further research, consultation* etc? Where there are major gaps in information that cannot be addressed immediately, these should be highlighted in your recommendations and objectives at the end of the INRA.

Additional Information already gathered as part of the consultation process on Polling Places review (see (c) above) and from Election data held by Electoral Services Officer.

* The Consultation Register is available to assist staff in consulting with the Council's stakeholders. If you are consulting on a new or revised policy contact the Principal HR Officer.

(i) Do you envisage any problems with these methods of information collection? i.e. not accessible to all, timescale not long enough to obtain all of the necessary information, translation facilities not available, insufficient resources etc.

No problems

(j) If it has been possible to collect this additional information, summarise the findings of your research and/or consultation (please use a separate sheet if necessary).

Results of Consultation exercise are summarised in report to Council on Polling Places Review.

The Access Group has not raised any specific issues relating to individual Polling Stations. Whilst acknowledging that the Council has worked hard over recent years to assist those with disabilities to be able to vote at Polling Stations, the Access Group have made a number of general comments relating to accessibility for people with disabilities to ensure dignified and reasonable access for all. These include the need for:

- Good Signage to the Polling Station, the Blue Badge parking (which may have to have temporary signage indicating it is only for badge holders whilst using the Polling Station) and the entrance.
- The route from the parking to the entrance should be step free and unobstructed, including by political party members and their paraphernalia seeking voters' polling details.
- It is easier if the entrance doors are left open for those with restricted mobility – if weather does not permit, the entrance needs to be monitored, either by being in view of the staff, a call system or by someone at the entrance.
- If a temporary ramp is used that covers the stepped access, ensure that it is placed so that any handrails can be reached when the ambulant voters are using the entrance.
- Chairs should be available for those queuing to collect their ballot papers.
- Voting stations with shelves at different heights are needed.
- I think you already provide aids for those with visual impairments to vote independently.

All of these points by the Access Group will be responded to and confirmation given that we already provide polling booths with different height shelves and voting aids for those with visual impairments to vote independently.

(k) What are the risks associated with the policy in relation to differential impact and unmet needs/requirements? i.e. reputation, financial, breach of legislation, service exclusion, lack of resources, lack of cooperation, insufficient budget etc.

Could be an impact in terms of people without access to a vehicle or dependent on public transport, e.g. elderly, people with disabilities, but can be mitigated by the offer of a postal vote to any person not wishing to travel to a new or existing Polling Station.

(l) Use the information gathered in the earlier stages of your INRA to make a judgement on whether there is the potential for the policy to result in unlawful discrimination or a less favourable impact on any group in the community, and what changes (if any) need to be made to the policy.

Option 1:	No major changes, the evidence shows no potential for discrimination.	
Option 2:	Adjust the policy to remove barriers or to better promote equality.	√
Option 3:	Continue the policy despite potential for adverse impact or missed opportunity to promote equality.	
Option 4:	Stop and remove the policy – if the policy shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination it must be stopped and removed or changed.	

(m) Where you have identified the potential for adverse impact, what action can be taken to remove or mitigate against the potential for the policy to unlawfully discriminate or impact less favourably on one or more communities in a way that cannot be justified? Include key activities that are likely to have the greatest impact (max. 6). Identified actions should be specified in detail for the first year but there may be further longer term actions which need to be considered. To ensure that your actions are more than just a list of good intentions, include for each: the person responsible for its completion, a timescale for completion, any cost implications and how these will be addressed. It is essential that you incorporate these actions into your service plans.

Could be an impact in terms of people without access to a vehicle or dependent on public transport, e.g. elderly, people with disabilities, but can be mitigated by the offer of a postal vote to any person not wishing to travel to a new or existing Polling Station.

This completed INRA will need to be countersigned by your Head of Service. **Please forward completed and signed forms to Nicole Pema, Principal HR Officer.**

All completed INRAs will need to be scrutinised and verified by the Council’s Equal Opportunities Working Group (EOWG) and published on the Council’s Intranet to demonstrate to local people that the Council is actively engaged in tackling potential discrimination and improving its practices in relation to equalities. Please be aware that you will be asked to attend a half-an-hour session to summarise the findings of the INRA to the EOWG Verification panel.

Signatures:

Completing Officer: _____ **Date:** _____

Head of Service: _____ **Date:** _____