

**REPORT TO: EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL**

**Date of Meeting: Special Executive – 18 January 2016 and Extraordinary Council – 25 January 2016**

**Report of: Corporate Manager, Democratic & Civic Support**

**Title: The Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places within the Exeter City Council area**

**Is this a Key Decision?**

No

**Is this an Executive or Council Function?**

Council

**1. What is the report about?**

1.1 This report sets out for consideration by the Executive, proposals for new polling district and polling places arrangements recommended as a result of the Local Government Boundary Commission's final recommendations regarding new electoral arrangements in the Exeter City Council area.

**2. Recommendations:**

2.1 To adopt the proposals below for implementation from a revised register of electors to be published on 1 February 2016.

2.2 For the Council to formally publish its final report on the Review of Parliamentary Polling Districts and Places within the Exeter Constituency on 29 January 2016, as required by the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

2.3 For the Council to complete a further review by 31 January 2020, as required by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.

**3. Reasons for the recommendation:**

3.1 Following the publication of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's Final Recommendations regarding electoral arrangements for Exeter City Council, the number of City Council Wards has been reduced from 18 to 13. This changes all Ward boundaries and therefore requires a review of polling districts and polling places within the new wards. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 sets out a framework for Councils to follow in conducting a review.

3.2 The new Warding arrangements will be introduced from the full Council elections due to be held on 5 May 2016. In order to facilitate these elections, a re-publication of the electoral register for Exeter, reflecting the new polling district arrangements, will be undertaken on 1 February 2016.

**4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources.**

4.1 There would be some officer time involved in redrawing the appropriate polling district boundaries to match the proposals contained within this report. This can be contained within existing resources.

4.2 There would be no significant change in the costs of running polling stations if the proposals were adopted.

**5. Section 151 Officer Comments:**

5.1 There are no financial implications contained within this report.

**6. What are the legal aspects?**

6.1 The Council is obliged to meet the requirements of the Electoral Administration Act 2006, the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 and the Exeter (Electoral Changes) Order 2016.

**7. Monitoring Officer's comments:**

7.1 This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

**8. Report details:**

8.1 A public consultation phase on the proposed polling places, was carried out between 13 October and 10 November 2015. Additionally, all Exeter City and Devon County Councillors (representing the Exeter electoral divisions), political parties and other stakeholders such as disability charities were contacted. (See list at Appendix A). Reference was also made on the Council's website and social media outlets, raising the public's awareness of the consultation process, and seeking any views thereon. Further opportunity to comment on the proposals put forward by the Acting Returning Officers for the Exeter Parliamentary Constituency and the part of the East Devon Parliamentary Constituency which falls within Exeter City Council, was carried out until 16 November 2016.

8.2 Although the City Council Wards have been changed, the County Division boundaries have not. Members will recall that Devon County Council is also undergoing a review of electoral arrangements and these will not be published until late January 2016, for introduction at the County Council elections due in May 2017. Therefore, it may be necessary to review polling district and polling place arrangements later in 2016 to facilitate this. In the meantime, it will be necessary to create several administrative registers to facilitate a County Council by-election, should it occur.

8.3 Due to its urban nature, to afford the maximum flexibility in selecting polling stations (particularly if required at short notice), Exeter City Council has always defined its polling places as being coterminous with its polling district boundaries. The only exception to this rule being where the polling station may be located just outside of the ward boundary. It is recommended that this practice be continued. The new polling districts and places will be coterminous with arrangements for the Exeter Parliamentary Constituency and the part of the East Devon Parliamentary Constituency contained within the Exeter City Council Boundary.

The (Acting) Returning Officer has, for a number of years, employed the principle of avoiding the use of schools as polling stations, although this is not always possible where there is a lack of suitable alternative accommodation. It is recommended that this practice be continued.

8.4 Alphington Ward (See Map 1)

To consist of 4 polling districts AA, AB AC and AD.

8.5 Duryard and St. James Ward (See Map 2 )

To consist of 4 polling districts BA, BB, BC and BD.

8.6 Exwick Ward (Map 3)

To consist of 4 polling districts CA, CB, CC and CD, with an administrative register CAA. This reflects the part of the new Exwick ward which remains part of the existing Exwick and St. Thomas County division.

8.7 Heavitree Ward (Map 4)

To consist of 5 polling districts DA, DB, DC, DD and DE.

8.8 Mincinglake and Whipton Ward (Map 5)

To consist of 4 polling districts EA, EB, EC and ED.

8.9 Newtown and St. Leonards Ward (Map 6)

To consist of 5 polling districts FA, FB, FC, FD and FE.

8.10 Pennsylvania Ward (Map 7)

To consist of 4 polling districts GA, GB, GC and GD, with an administrative register GBA. This reflects the part of the new Pennsylvania ward which remains part of the existing Newtown and Polsloe County Division.

8.11 Pinhoe Ward (Map 8)

To consist of 3 polling districts HA, HB and HC, with an administrative register HCA. This reflects the part of the new Pinhoe ward which remains part of the existing Heavitree and Whipton Barton County Division.

8.12 Priory Ward (Map 9)

To consist of 4 polling districts JA, JB, JC and JD with an administrative register JDA. This reflects the part of the new Priory ward which remains part of the existing Heavitree and Whipton Barton County Division.

8.13 St David's Ward (Map 10)

To consist of 5 polling districts KA, KB, KC, KD and KE with an administrative register KCA. This reflects the part of the new St. David's ward which remains part of the existing Priory and St. Leonard's County Division.

8.14 St. Love's Ward (Map 11)

To consist of 4 polling districts LA, LB, LC and LD.

8.15 St. Thomas Ward (Map 12)

To consist of 5 polling districts MA, MB, MC, MD and ME.

8.16 Topsham Ward (Map 13)

To consist of 4 polling districts NA, NB, NC and ND.

8.17 The issues raised in the submission received as part of the public consultation process (as attached as Appendix B), have been taken into account as far as practicably possible.

**9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?**

9.1 By making polling districts and places coterminous, allows the (Acting) Returning Officer discretion to locate a Polling Station within that area which best meets the needs of the area and the electors within in.

**10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?**

10.1 There are no risks associated with the proposals.

**11. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?**

11.1 By ensuring that polling stations are, within the constraints of the buildings available and the topography of the City as accessible as possible, impacts on equality issues especially for the disabled elector.

**12. Are there any other options?**

12.1 There are no other options currently available and a further review is likely within 12 months, due to the review of electoral arrangements at Devon County Council which are to be published in early 2016.

12.2 The number of polling stations in the City allows for efficient running of all types of elections, and also for ease of access to them for the City's electors.

**John Street**

**Corporate Manager, Democratic & Civic Support and Returning Officer**

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**

**Background papers used in compiling this report:-**

Correspondence received from consultation exercise

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