

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – RESOURCES 21 SEPTEMBER 2011

**EXECUTIVE
4 OCTOBER 2011**

**COUNCIL
18 OCTOBER 2011**

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES WITHIN THE EXETER PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report sets out for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee - Resources proposals for new polling districts and polling places arrangements recommended as a result of the Council's responsibilities under the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 requires each Council to carry out a review of polling districts and places for all of the existing Parliamentary Constituencies contained within its boundaries.
- 2.2 The review must be completed by 31 December 2011. Each Council is subsequently required to carry out a further polling district and polling places review before the end of a period of no longer than four years has expired; beginning with the date of the end of the previous review. The last review was approved by the Council on 11 December 2007.
- 2.3 A public consultation phase was carried out between 26 May and 1 July 2011. Additionally, all Exeter City and Devon County Councillors, political parties and other stakeholders such as disability charities were contacted (see list at Appendix A). 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 up until 22 July 2011.
- 2.4 Since the last polling district review carried out in 2007, Exeter has grown slightly in terms of residential housing (up 3%) and registered electors (up 2%). There are though several anticipated housing developments in the pipeline.
- 2.5 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.

3 PROPOSALS

3.1 POLLING DISTRICTS /PLACES

Following the completion of the consultation phase, the following proposals for the designation of polling districts and places are put forward. Comments received as a result of the consultation are available on the internet and a hard copy in the member's room. These have been taken into consideration as far as reasonably practicable.

3.1.1 St. Loye's Ward (Map A)

St. Loye's Ward is currently made up of 4 polling districts, QA, QB, QC and QD. The QD district was created at the last polling district review in 2007 to take account of the general development of housing in the Clyst Heath area. However, this development now appears to have reached its peak in terms of electors. Thus a more accurate assessment of the numbers of electors allocated to polling stations can be made.

The polling station for QA is the South West MS Centre at West Grange, Clyst Heath and the polling station for QD is Clyst Heath Nursery and Primary School in Royal Crescent. They serve 660 and 1300 electors respectively. They are situated only a few hundred yards apart and therefore combining the two polling districts QA and QD into a new larger polling district designated QA, with the polling station at the Nursery School, should not cause too much inconvenience for the electors in the current QA district. It is proposed that the polling place should be defined as the whole of the new QA district.

3.1.2 Topsham Ward (Map B)

The largest residential development currently under way, is the housing being built and steadily occupied on the site of the Old Royal Navy Stores. In particular, the site at the Upper Store already has 200 or more new residential properties, with a further 200 to be commenced at the Lower Stores. Additionally, up to 400 new properties are due to be built near Old Rydon Lane, with 700 due on the 'Dart Land'.

Along with further longer term substantial development, it is estimated that up to 3,500 additional properties will be built over the next few years. At the present time, the area bordered by Rydon Lane, the A379, the M5 and the River Exe, already has approximately 750 electors (some of whom have to make a journey of almost 2 miles), who vote at their current polling station at Matthew's Hall. It is therefore proposed that a new polling district be created in this area and be designated SC.

Topsham AFC has been contacted and is prepared to allow the use of its club house as a polling station. (There are currently no community facilities located within the Old Royal Navy Stores).

Given the expected rate of growth over the next few years, the number of electors in this new polling district area will be monitored. Therefore, this may require a further specific review before the next statutory polling district review is due (2015).

3.1.3 Whipton Barton Ward (Map C)

During the consultation period, in response to a matter raised in the 'Particular Known Concerns' section of the consultation fact sheet (appendix A); the Exeter Labour Party made a suggestion regarding polling district TD (See appendix B PDR009). The suggestion proposed altering the boundaries between polling districts TA and TD, to reduce the number of electors currently allocated to the Rennes House polling station.

Whilst this suggestion has merits it is felt that the number of electors involved (approx. 252), would not be of sufficient benefit when weighed against the potential disruption for the electors concerned. The railway line provides a natural boundary in this respect and the electors have been used to accessing a polling station in the Vaughan Road area for a significant period of time.

3.1.4 All other Wards

No changes proposed.

4. **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Scrutiny Committee – Resources notes and Council approves:

- 4.1 To adopt the proposals above (at 3.1.1 and 3.1.2) for implementation from a revised register of electors to be published on 1 December 2011.
- 4.2 For the Council to formally publish its final report on the Review of Parliamentary Polling Districts and Places within the Exeter Constituency on 11 October 2011, as required by the Electoral Administration Act 2006.
- 4.3 For the Council to complete a further review by 11 October 2015, as required by the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

Electoral Administration Act 2006
& Consultation Responses

Appendices/Attachments

Appendix A - Copy of Original Consultation Document

Appendix B - Copies of correspondence received – *available to view in the member's room and on the internet*

Appendix C - Maps A - C

Appendix D - Acting Returning Officer Comments

Appendix E - List of proposed new polling stations and estimated numbers of electors (including postal voters)