

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES IN THE DISTRICT OF WYRE FOREST – PARISH OF KIDDERMINSTER FOREIGN

Executive Summary

1. This consultation paper sets out proposals for some changes to the pattern of polling districts and polling places in the parish of Kidderminster Foreign in the district of Wyre Forest for use at the elections in May 2016 onwards. The proposed changes are detailed in the chart below, and the full proposals are set out in **Appendix A**. Your responses are sought by **5pm on Friday 30 October 2015** – the details of where to send your comments are in paragraph 21.

Name of Ward	Current Polling District	Proposed New Polling Districts	Proposed Polling Place
Wribbenhall & Arley (Kidderminster Foreign Parish area of the ward only)	WA-KF	WA-KF1 (former WR-B polling district covering Northwood Lane area of Kidderminster Foreign)	Wribbenhall Parish Rooms, Kidderminster Road, Bewdley
		WA-KF2 (former WR-C and WR-D polling districts)	Shatterford Village Hall, Arley Lane, Shatterford

Background

2. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The last such review in Wyre Forest was undertaken in October 2014 and the results were agreed by Council on 10 December 2014. Copies of the report and the decision can be found at http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc49668_20141210_council_agenda.pdf
3. The proposals made in this review involve changes to the current polling district and polling place for the Kidderminster Foreign Parish, as set out in **Appendix A**. This review is undertaken under section 18C(5) of the Representation of People Act 1983 which allows the Council to carry out at any time a review of a particular polling place or polling district. **While the pattern of provision will never be ideal to suit all electors, the proposals try to maximise convenience by using the best locations.**

Definition of terms

4. A 'polling district' is a geographical subdivision of an electoral area such as a District Ward within which a polling place is designated.

5. A 'polling place' is defined as the building or area in which a polling station will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer.
6. A 'polling station' is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the local authority, polling stations are chosen by the (Acting) Returning Officer for the election.

Requirements of the review

7. It is a requirement of the review to ensure that all electors in the area reviewed have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practical in the circumstances.
8. It is necessary to ensure that, as far as reasonable and practicable, the polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a polling place to have regards to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.
9. Polling places should be within the polling district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area outside the polling district.
10. The (Acting) Returning Officer is required to decide how many polling stations are needed for each polling place and to allocate electors to the polling stations in such a manner as he thinks most convenient (Rule 25 Schedule 1 RPA 1983).
11. In conducting the review the Council must:
 - Publish a notice that the review is being held.
 - Consult the (Acting) Returning Officer.
 - The (Acting) Returning Officer must make representation to the authority and must include information as to the location of polling stations (existing or proposed) within the polling places.
 - The Council must publish the (Acting) Returning Officer's representations within 30 calendar days of receipt.
 - The Council must seek representation from such persons as it thinks have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability. Ensure that any elector in the area may make representations.
 - Representations may be made by any person in connection with the review including proposals for specified alternative polling places.
 - Publish the findings of the review including reasons.
12. On completion of the review, the Council must give reasons for its decisions and publish:
 - All correspondence sent to the (Acting) Returning Officer in connection with the review.
 - All representations made by electors and other persons and bodies, including those with expertise in relation to premises and facilities for disabled persons.
 - Details of the designation of polling districts and polling places within the parish of Kidderminster Foreign as a result of the review.

Arrangements made for 2015

13. A breakdown of the overall turnout figures for the Parliamentary and District elections held in May 2015 against the previous comparable elections is set out in Table 1. The changes in the electoral ward boundaries as set at http://www.lgbce.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/23508/Wyre-Forest-alternative-FINAL-report-POST-EDITOR-2014-10-14.pdf resulted in new polling districts and polling places for the elections in May 2015 which means that a direct comparison of turnout on a ward basis is not possible.

Table 1

Turnout %	2010	2015	% Difference in Turnout
General Parliamentary Wyre Forest Constituency	66%	64%	↓ 2%
Wyre Forest District Council	65.6%	63.9%	↓ 1.7%

14. Steps will continue to be taken by the Electoral Registration Officer to conduct campaigns to increase the number of people who register to vote and to remind people of different methods available for voting.
15. An analysis of the cost per elector at each polling station used for the Parliamentary, District and Parish elections held in May 2015 was published in a report to Wyre Forest District Council on 29 July 2015 which can be seen at this link: http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc50194_20150729_council_agenda.pdf
16. There is also clear evidence that the convenience of being able to complete a vote at home, on a day and time that suits the voter, results in higher participation rates. For the District elections in May 2015, 10,934 postal votes were issued and 9,355 were returned, a participation rate of 85.5%. This contrasts with turnout among other voters in polling stations, which ranged from 43.59% to 76.16% and with an average of 63.9%.

Comments received and issues emerging since May 2015

17. Following the elections in May 2015 comments were received from the public and elected Members on some of the changes to the pattern of polling places and polling districts following the decisions on the last review in December 2014.
18. On 29 July 2015 these comments were considered by Council. It agreed to carry out a polling district and polling place review for the parish of Kidderminster Foreign only. Nearly 300 voters live along Northwood Lane but are within the Kidderminster Foreign Parish. Their allocated polling station as a result of the 2014 polling places and polling districts review is now at Shatterford. For electors living at Hill Farm at the far end of Northwood Lane, this represents a round trip of almost 15 miles as there is no short, direct road route to reach the polling place at Shatterford. They also have to pass their former polling station at Wribbenhall Parish Rooms en route. The consultation paper

during last year's review of polling districts and polling places did not identify the significant impact on this group of electors.

19. The proposal is therefore, in effect, to recreate the old WR-B polling district which covers the Northwood Lane residents and to designate the Wribbenhall Parish Rooms as the polling place for that district. There is no suitable polling place that can be designated in the polling districts. This new polling district would be known as WA-KF1. The remainder of Kidderminster Foreign parish would be designated as polling district WA-KF2 and Shatterford Village Hall would continue to be designated as the polling place for electors from this part of Kidderminster Foreign.

The review and where to send your comments

20. **Appendix A** contains the proposals for changes that are now being proposed in this review. Comments are sought from local electors and interested organisations about these proposals.
21. **Comments should be emailed to electoral@wyreforestdc.gov.uk or made in writing to the below address to arrive no later than 5pm on Friday 30 October 2015.**

By post to:

Mr Ian Miller

Electoral Registration Officer

Wyre Forest District Council

Wyre Forest House

Finepoint Way

Kidderminster

Worcestershire

DY11 7WF

22. Final recommendations, taking into account the (Acting) Returning Officer's comments and representations made during the consultation period, will be made in a report to Full Council on Wednesday 9 December 2015. Council will be asked to consider and approve the recommendations.

7 September 2015

Appendix A

WARD: WRIBBENHALL & ARLEY (only the Kidderminster Foreign Parish area of the Ward)

Current Polling District(s)	Current Polling Place	Name of Ward	Proposed Polling District(s)	Proposed Polling Place	Proposal	Reasons
<p>WA- KF (Kidderminster Foreign Parish)</p> <p>(in 2014 this area was covered by the following individual polling districts WR-B, WR-C, WR-D)</p>	<p>Shatterford Village Hall, Arley Lane, Shatterford</p>	<p>Wribbenhall & Arley</p>	<p>WA-KF1 (former WR-B polling district covering Northwood Lane area of Bewdley)</p>	<p>Wribbenhall Parish Rooms, Kidderminster Road, Bewdley</p>	<p>To split current polling district. Change of Polling Place.</p>	<p>There is a specific impact on the current arrangements for the 300 voters living in Northwood Lane, Bewdley as there is no short, direct road route for them to reach their current polling place of Shatterford Village Hall, which represents a round trip of almost 15 miles for those voters living at the far end of Northwood Lane.</p> <p>The proposal is, in effect, to recreate what was the former polling district of WR-B (before the 2014 Polling Places and Polling Districts review) and to designate Wribbenhall Parish Rooms as the polling place for that polling district, which will be known as WA-KF1.</p> <p>The proposed Polling Place is a suitable venue with good access and parking and was the former Polling Place for WR-B voters. The road distance between the proposed Polling Place and those voters living <u>at the far end</u> of Northwood lane is 2.3 miles. Therefore for the majority of voters the distance will be less than 2 miles.</p>

			<p>WA-KF2 (former WR-C and WR-D Polling Districts)</p>	<p>Shatterford Village Hall, Arley Lane</p>	<p>No change to the remainder of the polling district following the above proposed split.</p> <p>No change in Polling Place.</p>	<p>Following the above split of the Polling District, it is proposed the remainder of the Polling District (covering the former Polling Districts of WR-C and WR-D) will remain unchanged but would be known as WA-KF2. It is not proposed to change the current polling place of Shatterford Village Hall. The venue has good access and parking. The road distance between the midpoint of the polling district and Shatterford Village Hall (via Trimley Lane) is 1.8 miles.</p>
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End of consultation document