

REVIEW OF POLLING PLACE IN THE DISTRICT OF WYRE FOREST

Executive Summary

1. This consultation paper sets out proposals for a change to the pattern of polling places in the district of Wyre Forest. There is one building currently being used as a polling place which is unavailable in the short to medium-term as a result of the poor physical condition of its roof. A planning application has recently been submitted to convert the building into apartments and create a new community space. The timing of building works that would permit use of the building as a polling place is unknown. The proposed changes are summarised in the chart below. The full proposals are set out in Appendix A. The proposed change would be implemented from January 2018.
2. Your responses are sought by 5pm on Tuesday 31 October 2017 – the details of where to send your comments are in paragraph 18.

Table 1 – Polling Place Review

Name of Ward	Polling District	Current Polling Place	Proposed Polling Place
Mitton	MI-SSW	St Wulstan's Community Centre, Vale Road, Stourport-on-Severn DY13 9AF	St Michael's Scout HQ, Mitton Close, Stourport-on-Severn DY13 9AD

Background

3. 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. A further review was undertaken in September 2015 for the Kidderminster Foreign Parish area of the Wribbenhall & Arley ward only and in August 2016 for the Offmore & Comberton and Mitton wards. Copies of the reports and the decisions taken at Council can be found at www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/meetings/main.htm
4. A review of polling places offers an opportunity to take account of known future changes, for example, where buildings have ceased or will cease to be capable of being used as polling stations and more suitable buildings that are, or are due to, become available.
5. The proposals made in this review involve changes to one Polling Place which is located in the Mitton ward. 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

6. A 'polling district' is a geographical subdivision of an electoral area such as a District Ward within which a polling place is designated. **No changes to polling districts are proposed in this review.**
7. A 'polling place' is defined as the building or area in which a polling station will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer.
8. A 'polling station' is the room or area within a 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

9. It is a requirement of the review to ensure that all electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practical in the circumstances.
10. 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.
11. Polling places should be within the polling district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area outside the polling district.
12. 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 he thinks most convenient (Rule 25 Schedule 1 RPA 1983).
13. In conducting the review the Council must:
 - Publish a notice 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 representations 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.
14. 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 Wyre Forest area as a result of the review.

Comments received and issues emerging since May 2017.

15. Following the local elections in May 2017 and the UK Parliamentary election in June 2017 a 'wash up' de-briefing meeting was held with agents and candidates on 29 June. No issues were raised in relation to any specific Polling Places or Polling Stations used at these elections.
16. **Safety Concerns and building works.** There are concerns for health and safety inside St Wulstan's Community Centre relating to its roof, which meant that it was not available for the elections in May and June 2017. A planning application has recently been submitted (17/0516/FULL) to convert the building into apartments but also to provide a new community space. The timetable for building works is unknown. The review proposes the designation of an alternative venue for replacing the current polling place for future elections.

The review and where to send your comments

17. **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.
18. Comments should be emailed to electoral@wyreforestdc.gov.uk or made in writing to the below address to arrive no later than 5pm on Tuesday 31 October 2017.

By post to:

Mr Ian Miller

Electoral Registration Officer

Wyre Forest District Council

Wyre Forest House

Finepoint Way

Kidderminster

DY11 7WF

19. 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 13 December 2017. Council will be asked to consider and approve the recommendations.

1 September 2017

POLLING PLACE REVIEW

Name of Ward	Polling Districts	Current Polling Place	Proposed Polling Place	Reasons
Mitton	MI-SSW	St Wulstan's Community Centre, Vale Road, Stourport-on-Severn, DY13 9AF	St Michael's Scout HQ, Mitton Close, Stourport-on-Severn, DY13 9AD	<p>The short to medium term availability of the current Polling Place (St Wulstan's Community Centre) is uncertain due to required building repairs and also the recently submitted planning application. Therefore the proposal is to designate a new building within the polling district. For the local elections in May 2017 and the UK Parliamentary election in June 2017, St Wulstan's Community Centre was not available as it was awaiting repairs to the roof and there is no current timetable for these works. St Michael's Scout HQ, Mitton Close was used instead and no problems were reported, including at the busy General Election.</p> <p>The Scout HQ is situated a short distance (280m) from the current polling place. There is on site parking for a number of cars which seemed to be sufficient at most times in May and June 2017. For those able to walk slightly further, the Council's Vale Road car park is nearby at the entrance to Mitton Gardens and provides up to one hour's free parking.</p>

