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| <b>REPORT TO:</b>        | Council  |
| <b>DATE:</b>             | Monday 15th January 2024   |
| <b>SUBJECT:</b>          | Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2023  |
| <b>PURPOSE:</b>          | To consider recommendations following the review of Polling Districts and Polling Places within the Boston Borough Council area. |
| <b>KEY DECISION:</b>     | <i>N</i>   |
| <b>PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b> | Cllr Anne Dorrian – Leader of the Council  |
| <b>REPORT OF:</b>        | John Leach, (Acting) Returning Officer, and Deputy Chief Executive – Communities   |
| <b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b>    | Rhonda Booth – Democratic Services Manager   |
| <b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b> | (All Wards)  |
| <b>EXEMPT REPORT?</b>    | <i>N</i>   |

#### **SUMMARY**

Under Section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 there is a requirement for local authorities to undertake a review of their Parliamentary polling districts and polling places every five years. The last review of the Boston Borough area was completed in January 2019.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. To adopt the polling districts and polling places as listed in Appendix A to this report which include the following changes:
  - a. To split the current polling district HC in the Witham Ward to create a new polling district.
  - b. As a result of the creation of a new polling district in the Witham Ward, that Boston Town Football Club be used as a Polling Place for the newly created polling district.
  - c. To relocate the Polling Place for Polling District IC in the Coastal Ward from Freiston Parish Hall to the Danny Flear Community Centre.
2. To amend the polling district reference codes as listed in Appendix A.

3. That the (Acting) Returning Officer be granted delegated authority for keeping polling districts and polling places under review and amending any such arrangements (following consultation with local Ward Member(s)) where there is an operational need, prior to the next compulsory Borough wide review.

#### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

To comply with the legislative requirements of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 in implementing the findings of the statutory review and consultation process.

#### **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

Not to carry out a review at this time

### **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council has a duty to divide the Borough area into polling districts and designate a polling place for each of those districts and to keep the arrangements under review.
- 1.2 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 also requires the Council to undertake compulsory reviews every five years. The Council is required to complete this next compulsory review between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.
- 1.3 Polling districts are, in effect, sub-divisions of electoral wards. Each parish or parish ward is automatically a polling district in its own right, but then that area can be broken down into further polling districts dependant on the size of the parish and the number and location of the electors. Responsibility for determining polling district boundaries lies with the Council.
- 1.4 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is the body responsible for determining the ward boundaries and these can only be changed following a review by the Commission.
- 1.5 The Council must designate a polling place for every polling district. In determining where polling places should be located the Council must seek to ensure that all the electors have such reasonable facilities for voting that are practical in the circumstances and that, so far as is reasonable and practical, polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled.
- 1.6 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires a review of polling districts and polling places to be undertaken every five years. The last review for the Borough area was completed in December 2019. It is considered timely to complete the review in advance of the scheduled Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May 2024. In addition, the General election can be held at any time before 28 January 2025, and it is considered appropriate for the polling places review to be completed as early as possible to ensure certainty of polling places for this election if it is called at short notice.
- 1.7 At the last review in 2019 the (Acting) Returning Officer was given delegated authority for keeping polling districts and polling places under review and amending any such arrangements (following consultation with local Ward member(s)) where there was an operational need. This delegated authority was in place until the next review and therefore Council are asked to renew this delegation until the next compulsory Borough wide review.

## 2. Consultation

2.1 Public notice of the review was given on 3 October 2023 and full details of the review were published on the Council's website. The period for representations to be made on existing and draft proposals was from 17 October 2023 to 29 November 2023.

2.2 In carrying out this review, the Council has sought to ensure that:

- All the electors in the area have reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- So far as is reasonable and practicable, every polling place is accessible to electors who have a disability and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of those with a disability.
- The polling place is within the area of the polling district, unless circumstances make it necessary to designate somewhere else.

2.3 Interested parties consulted as part of this review were:

- Local (Acting) Returning Officers
- Members of Parliament
- Lincolnshire County Councillors covering the Boston Borough Council area
- Boston Borough Council Councillors
- Parish Councils via Parish Clerks
- Disability Access Groups
- Local electors via social media and Council website

2.4 During the consultation three submissions were received within the consultation period and these are summarised below together with the (Acting) Returning Officer's comments.

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| <b>Witham Ward Councillor A Izard</b>        | While campaigning on the doorstep in Witham Ward. This issue was mentioned more than once. Both polling stations are located near to town. Either a 3 <sup>rd</sup> one or moving one to capture voters in Red Cap Lane, Cromwell Close area and Brackenbury Way and roads local to it, is much needed. Boston Town FC was identified as large car parking area and disable access, with side room or main bar area. Many without cars or elderly, due to lack of a bus service, could not attend polling stations |
| <b>(Acting) Returning Officer's comments</b> | These comments were taken on board and a site visit to Boston Town FC took place. The Returning Officer noted that there were good parking facilities and disabled access and was content that it was suitable to be used as a new polling station. A new polling district to be created.  |

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| <p><b>Local Resident Swineshead</b></p>             | <p>I live in Swineshead and the Polling Station is at the furthest point you can get in Swineshead at the village hall. This makes it very difficult for people to reach unless you have a car. The polling station should be closer to the centre of the village to allow more accessibility.</p> <p>Perhaps the church hall in the market square</p>             |
|   |  |
| <p><b>(Acting) Returning Officer's comments</b></p> | <p>A site visit was undertaken to view the church hall in the market square; however, it was felt there was a lack of adequate parking at this venue and were it to be used as a polling station this could cause parking issues and congestion within the village centre. No further comments or responses had been received in relation to a suggested move.</p> |

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| <p><b>Councillor A Austin St Thomas</b></p>       | <p>The "BB" polling district is very small and would be better served by having the Spirit of Endeavour as their polling station rather than having to disrupt St Thomas' School. Use of the Spirit of Endeavour for the election in 2021 (I think that's the right election) worked extremely well. For one reason, there is plenty of parking at that location and parents are encouraged by the school to use "The Spirit" rather than street parking near the school to collect their children on a normal school day.</p> <p>The "BA" polling station at St Thomas' Church Hall works well. It has plenty of Parking with its own car park and is readily accessible for residents coming in from Wyberton West Road as well as London Road.</p> |
|   |   |
| <p><b>Acting Returning Officer's comments</b></p> | <p>The Spirit of Endeavour was used for the 2021 'Covid' election following the directive from the Government to not use schools as Polling Stations to avoid further disruption.</p> <p>This option was considered for the May 2023 elections but when approached the venue advised that they were not available to be used for election purposes.</p>   |

2.5 A change in polling place for Polling District IC from Freiston Parish Hall in the Coastal Ward to the Danny Flear Community Centre is required due to the Parish Hall being sold and therefore no longer available.

2.6 Changes to the polling district references have been made to aid with the identification of polling districts and is an administrative alteration.

- 2.7 It is proposed that the revised polling places and polling district references as detailed at Appendix A will take effect from the date of the re-publication of the electoral register on 1 February 2024.

## **OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

### **3.0 CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 The Council is recommended to approve the proposals in Appendix A

### **4.0 EXPECTED BENEFITS TO THE PARTNERSHIP**

- 4.1 None

## **5. IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS' PARTNERSHIP**

- 5.1.1 None

### **5.2 CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

- 5.2.1 None

### **5.3 STAFFING**

- 5.3.1 The Electoral Services team will need to update the Electoral Register and republish to take into account the changes in Polling Districts.

### **5.4 WORKFORCE CAPACITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.4.1 None

### **5.5 CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.5.1 The Council has a legal duty under Section 18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by Section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013) to undertake a compulsory review of polling districts and polling places every five years. The last review was undertaken in 2019 and therefore a full review is required to be completed before 31 January 2025.

- 5.5.2 The review has been conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the guidance issued by the Electoral Commission.

### **5.6 DATA PROTECTION**

- 5.6.1 None

### **5.7 FINANCIAL**

- 5.7.1 None

### **5.8 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 5.8.1 None

### **5.9 STAKEHOLDER / CONSULTATION / TIMESCALES**

- 5.9.1 Responses were invited from the (Acting) Returning Officer and other interested parties as per 2.4.

### **5.10 REPUTATION**

- 5.10.1 None

## 5.11 CONTRACTS

5.11.1 None

## 5.12 CRIME AND DISORDER

5.12.1 None

## 5.13 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY/ HUMAN RIGHTS/ SAFEGUARDING

5.13.1 None

## 5.14 HEALTH AND WELL BEING

5.14.1 None

## 5.15 CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

5.15.1 None

## 5.16 ACRONYMS

5.16.1 None

| <b>APPENDICES</b> |   |
|-------------------|---|
| APPENDIX A        | (Acting) Returning Officer Proposals of polling districts and polling stations for Boston |

| <b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>  |   |
|---|---|
| Background papers used in the production of this report are listed below: - |   |
| <b>Document title</b>   | <b>Where the document can be viewed</b> |
| Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations           | Electoral Commission.org.uk             |
|   |   |

| <b>CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT</b>                                |
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| A report on this item has not been previously considered by a Council body |

| <b>REPORT APPROVAL</b>    |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Report author:            | Rhonda Booth<br>rbooth@sholland.gov.uk                    |
| Signed off by:            | Returning Officer/Deputy Chief Executive -<br>Communities |
| Approved for publication: |   |