

Marchwood

From: Tina Harwood <Tina.Harwood@NFDC.gov.uk>
Sent: 03 October 2013 14:24
To: Parish Councils on Email
Subject: Review of Polling Districts & Polling Places

To the Clerk to each Parish/Town Council in New Forest District

Dear Parish/Town Clerk

Councils have been required by law to review the polling districts and polling places within their areas at least once every four years. The last review in New Forest District took place in 2010, with a few changes in polling district boundaries and polling stations coming into effect for the 2011 quadrennial district and parish elections, which were combined with the referendum on the parliamentary voting system.

The next review would have been due to take place in 2015 for implementation in 2016, but the legislation has been amended to provide that a review must be carried out and completed during the period of 16 months beginning with 1 October 2013, and then every five years after that. The Government has apparently made the change in order to ensure that any anomalies with polling districts and stations are addressed before the 2015 Parliamentary and local elections, which will be the first run on registers prepared under the new system of Individual Electoral Registration (IER). Any changes to polling districts and polling places will not take effect until the December 2014 register is published.

The General Purposes & Licencing Committee have set up a 5 member Working Party to undertake the detailed work on the review and to submit recommendations back to the Committee. Details of the review have been published on the District Council's website – please follow this link <http://www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=14706>

There you will find:

- (a) The formal notice of the review;
- (b) Background information about the review;
- (c) A schedule of all the polling stations in the district, together with the Returning Officer's comments on each; and
- (d) A schedule showing those polling stations that are very little used and on which comments are sought as to their retention in the future;
- (e) On-line and a downloadable response forms.

Although the following information is contained in the documents referred to above, the following is a brief resume of what is being reviewed and the principles underlying the review:

1. A **“polling district”** is a geographical subdivision of an electoral area, such as a parliamentary constituency or district ward. You will know their polling districts by the distinctive letters that apply to the registers in their wards, for example:
LA & LB – Parts of Lymington and Pennington Town Council area that comprise the Buckland District Ward
2. A **“polling place”** is a geographical area in which a polling station is located. This could be defined as widely as the entire polling district or as tightly as a particular building;

3. A “polling station” is the actual area where the process of voting takes place, and must be located within the polling place designated for the particular polling district.

The principal factors that must be addressed in undertaking the review are:

- (a) To ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
- (b) To ensure that, as far as is reasonable and practicable, every polling place is accessible to electors who are disabled; and
- (c) the polling place for a polling district must be within the polling district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area outside of the polling district.

Dave Yates, in his roles of both Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer, does not propose any changes to the polling districts. He also recommends continuing the longstanding practice in this authority of designating the whole of the polling district as a polling place. It is then the responsibility of the Returning Officer to designate individual polling stations for each election. Designating the whole of the polling district as the polling place gives flexibility in the event of a particular polling station not being available, especially when by-elections or other elections are held at short notice. It should be noted, however, that every endeavour is made to use the same polling stations in order to provide continuity for voters, but sometimes a change is unavoidable.

Town and Parish Councils’ comments on the current arrangements, and the Returning Officer’s proposals, are invited. If you would like to view maps of the polling districts, or if you are unable to view the consultation documents on-line, please contact me. When commenting, you are asked preferably to use the on-line comments form available on the NFDC website, but you may also e-mail or write to me.

In addition to all parish and town councils, disability groups are being consulted. Comments are requested by Monday, 9 December 2013.

If you have any questions or would like any further information, please contact me.

Yours sincerely

Tina Harwood

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