



NORWICH City Council

Committee name: Council

Committee date: 22/11/2022

Report title: Interim polling district and polling places review 2022

Portfolio: Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources

Report from: Democratic and elections manager

Wards: Mancroft, Mile Cross, Thorpe Hamlet, Town Close and Wensum

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Purpose

To approve proposals for the interim polling places and polling district review 2022.

Recommendation:

To approve the amended polling scheme as recommended by the polling district and places working group at appendix A.

Policy framework

The council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- People live independently and well in a diverse and safe city.
- Norwich is a sustainable and healthy city.
- Norwich has the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.
- The city has an inclusive economy in which residents have equal opportunity to flourish.
- Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city.

This report meets the Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city corporate priority.

Report details

1. This interim polling district and polling places review focussed on changes to the polling scheme where venues were no longer available or suitable. This review did not look at the whole local authority area or boundaries.
2. A polling district and polling places review working group made up of elected members met at the end of the consultation period to help formulate a polling district and polling places scheme. The working party was politically balanced and consists of four Labour councillors, two Green Party councillors and one Liberal Democrat councillor.
3. The review concentrated on venues in the following polling districts - MA4/MA4A, MA5, MX3, TH3, TO5 and WE2/WE2A.
4. The Acting Returning Officer (ARO) set out his proposals at appendix A to this report.
5. The timetable for the review was initially published as:
 - a) Notice of Review – 25 July 2022 (publication of suggested changes by ARO).
 - b) Review consultation period – 25 July 2022 – 5 September 2022
 - c) A meeting of a members polling district and polling places review group on 9 September 2022 to view suggested ARO changes/consultation responses and then make recommendations to September council.
 - d) Working Group Report for approval by full council on 27 September 2022
6. The timetable was amended due to the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II. Revised dates were as follows:
 - a) A meeting of a members polling district and polling places review group on 4 November 2022 to view suggested ARO changes/consultation responses and then make recommendations to November council.
 - b) Working Group Report for approval by full council on 22 November 2022
7. The members polling district and polling places working party met by MS Teams on 4 November 2022 to propose recommendations to council.
8. Members were asked to propose 6 recommendations (one for each polling district) based on the proposed polling scheme, and those recommendations are listed in appendix A.
9. The working group were also tasked with considering any other proposals

or consultation responses. This could include responses from residents, organisations, political parties, elected representatives and other key stakeholders. There was one response from the Norwich, Norfolk and City Council Labour Party which was considered by the working group. When making decisions, members have to make sure they take into account any consultation feedback.

10. As Acting Returning Officer, the Chief Executive has a statutory duty to ensure free and fair elections. In discharging these duties, the Acting Returning Officer will take account of the recommendations made by the polling district and polling places review working party as set out in a report to council but will retain the right to make changes if deemed appropriate for reasons of practicality and/or other circumstances which may influence the location and use of polling stations within Norwich. As far as possible, the Acting Returning Officer will seek to consult with the working party on any such changes.
11. This will allow and polling station changes to be in place in time for the election on 4 May 2023. As there are no boundary changes there is no requirement to re-publish the electoral register.

Consultation

12. A public consultation has taken place and the responses to that consultation were submitted to the members working group and are available on the council's website.
13. Responses were received from the Norwich City Council Labour group, the Norfolk County Council Labour group, the Norwich Labour group and the MP for Norwich South.

Implications

Financial and resources

Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan 2022-26 and budget.

14. Any decisions to increase expenditure will be met through existing budgets or recharged to the appropriate body.

Legal

15. There are no legal implications to this report.

Statutory considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and diversity	The Electoral Commission are currently consulting on the accessibility guidance that will come into effect for elections for May 2023 and onwards. As such, all polling stations will have to be formally assessed to determine their compliance with the revised guidance. This will be conducted following publication of the guidance and should any specific equality or diversity considerations emerge, further consideration will be given to either improving compliance at the polling station or if a different polling station is required.
Health, social and economic impact	No direct implications.
Crime and disorder	No direct implications.
Children and adults safeguarding	No direct implications.
Environmental impact	No direct implications.

Risk management

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
Not securing suitable venues	Voter turnout could be affected.	Suitable venues will be sought.

Other options considered

16. All options considered are outlined within this report. Members of the working group are invited to comment and make recommendations to council.

Reasons for the decision/recommendation

17. Some venues are no longer available or have been deemed unsuitable. The ARO has proposed alternative or new venues where required.

Background papers: None

Appendices:

ARO proposals and working group recommendations – Appendix A

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Polling District	Ward	Existing Polling Station	Proposed Polling Station	Comments
MA4/MA4A	Mancroft	Castle Quarter, Timberhill	Julian Centre, Rouen Road	New polling station – change due to location
MA5	Mancroft	Alive Church. Colegate	St Augustines Church Hall, St Augustines Street	New polling station – change due to old station being unavailable
MX3	Mile Cross	Temporary Polling Station, Sloughbottom Park	The Community Room, Larners Way	New polling station – change due to permanent location within district
TH3	Thorpe Hamlet	Norwich Hotel, Thorpe Road	Canary Social Club, Thorpe Road	New polling station – change due to old station being unavailable
TO5	Town Close	St Albans Church Hall	St Albans Church Hall	Continued use of existing polling station while officers continue to investigate suitable alternatives
WE2/WE2A	Wensum	Harry's Soul Station, Adelaide Street	The Alive House, Nelson Street	New polling station – change due to old station being unavailable