

**Meeting:** Cabinet/Council **Date:** 26 November 2024/5 December 2024

**Wards affected:** All wards in Torbay

**Report Title:** Review of Parliamentary Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations 2024

**When does the decision need to be implemented?** 1 February 2025

**Cabinet Member Contact Details:** Councillor Jacqueline Thomas, Cabinet Member for Tourism, Culture & Events and Corporate Services

**Director Contact Details:** Anne-Marie Bond, Chief Executive and Returning Officer, anne-marie.bond@torbay.gov.uk

## 1. Purpose of Report

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- 1.1 Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, Torbay Council (“the Council”) has a duty to divide its area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each district. The Electoral Administration Act 2006, as amended, introduced a duty on all local authorities in Great Britain to review their polling districts and polling places at least once every five years. The Council’s compulsory review must be undertaken within a 16-month window between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025. This report sets out the results of a consultation exercise and sets out proposals for a revised polling district and polling station scheme.
- 1.2 The proposals contained in this report will result in some minor changes to resourcing of polling stations, but these are not significant.

## 2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

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- 2.1 Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council has a duty to conduct a review of its Parliamentary polling districts, polling places and polling stations at least once every five years.
- 2.2 The proposals in this report help us to deliver our vision of a healthy, happy and prosperous Torbay through the provision of good polling arrangements.

2.2 The reasons for the proposal and need for the decision are to meet statutory requirements.

### 3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

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3.1. That the revised polling district and polling station scheme, as set out at Appendix 1 be approved.

3.2. That delegation be given to the Returning Officer to make any amendments to the scheme which may be required to facilitate the running of elections.

### Appendices

Appendix 1: Revised Polling District and Polling Station Scheme

Appendix 2: Consultation feedback and response

### Background Documents

Electoral Commission: [Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations | Electoral Commission](#)

Legislation:

[Electoral Administration Act 2006 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

[Representation of the People Act 1983 \(legislation.gov.uk\) \(parliamentary\)](#)

[Representation of the People Act 1983 \(legislation.gov.uk\) \(local elections\)](#)

# Supporting Information

## 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council has a duty to divide its area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each district.
- “Polling districts” are geographical electoral areas into which wards and constituencies may be sub-divided.
  - “Polling places” are the buildings or areas designated by the Council where electors in a polling district go to vote in person. In Torbay and South Devon constituencies, the polling places are the same areas as the polling districts.
  - “Polling stations” are the number of issuing desks in the building or area that is the designated polling place.
- 1.2 The Electoral Administration Act 2006, as amended, introduced a duty on all local authorities in Great Britain to review their polling districts and polling places at least once every five years. The next compulsory review must be undertaken within a 16-month window between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.
- 1.3 The review can only address polling issues within the current ward structure of the Borough. It cannot make changes to the ward (or Borough) boundaries.
- 1.4 Whilst there are minimal changes to the existing scheme, changes have been made to existing polling stations as a result of consultation feedback, where they are no longer available, or a more suitable location has been identified.

## 2. Options under consideration

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- 2.1 Consider the Returning Officers recommendations for polling districts, polling places and polling stations.
- 2.2 Identify alternative polling places and polling stations – this option is not recommended as alternative venues need to be fully assessed for accessibility and suitability.

## 3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

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- 3.1 There are no financial implications. The cost of polling stations is covered by the Elections Reserve (for local elections) or funded by the Electoral Claims Unit (for national elections).

## 4. Legal Implications

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- 4.1 The Polling District and Polling Station Scheme is a legal requirement which will come into force in January 2025.

## 5. Engagement and Consultation

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5.1 As part of the review, statutory consultation is required, and the consultation ran from 19 August to 25 September 2024. The documents consulted upon comprised the Officer proposals, which were published on the Council's website. The following people and stakeholders were included in the consultation:

- Electors
- All Councillors
- Brixham Town Councillors
- Steve Darling MP
- Caroline Voaden MP
- Candidates and agents
- Political parties
- Local and national disability groups including Age UK Torbay, Action on Hearing Loss, RNIB South West, Scope, South West Multiple Sclerosis Centre, Torbay Disability Information Centre, Speaking out in Torbay, Shopmobility, Disability Support Torbay/.
- Community Partnerships in all wards
- The Acting Returning Officer for South Hams District Council

5.2 The comments and feedback received from the consultation are included under Appendix 2.

5.3 The feedback received informed the review and the response is also set out at Appendix 2.

## 6. Procurement Implications

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6.1 There are no procurement implications.

## 7. Protecting our naturally inspiring Bay and tackling Climate Change

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7.1 There are no climate change implications.

## 8. Associated Risks

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8.1 The Council must comply with the legislative requirements regarding the designation of polling districts, polling places and polling stations.

8.2 Failure to implement the proposals will be a breach of the legislation.

8.3 Some electors will vote at a different polling station to where they are used to. However, all affected electors will receive poll cards with additional messaging highlighting the change prior to an election. Redirection signage will also be provided at the previous location.

## 9. Equality Impact Assessment

| Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability | Data and insight   | Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)   | Mitigation activities | Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities |
|--|--|---|-----------------------|---|
| Age  | <p>18 per cent of Torbay residents are under 18 years old.</p> <p>55 per cent of Torbay residents are aged between 18 to 64 years old.</p> <p>27 per cent of Torbay residents are aged 65 and older.</p> | There is no differential impact.  | N/A                   | N/A   |
| Carers   | At the time of the 2021 census there were 14,900 unpaid carers in Torbay. 5,185 of these provided 50 hours or more of care.  | There is no differential impact.  | N/A                   | N/A   |
| Disability   | In the 2021 Census, 23.8% of Torbay residents answered that their day-to-day activities were limited a little or a lot by a physical or mental health condition or illness.                              | An accessibility assessment is made on all polling stations and reasonable adjustments made where required. | N/A                   | N/A   |
| Gender reassignment  | In the 2021 Census, 0.4% of Torbay's community   | There is no differential impact.  | N/A                   | N/A   |

|                                |  |   |            |            |
|--------------------------------|--|---|------------|------------|
|                                | <p>answered that their gender identity was not the same as their sex registered at birth. This proportion is similar to the Southwest and is lower than England.</p>   |   |            |            |
| Marriage and civil partnership | <p>Of those Torbay residents aged 16 and over at the time of 2021 Census, 44.2% of people were married or in a registered civil partnership.</p>   | <p>There is no differential impact.</p> | <p>N/A</p> | <p>N/A</p> |
| Pregnancy and maternity        | <p>Over the period 2010 to 2021, the rate of live births (as a proportion of females aged 15 to 44) has been slightly but significantly higher in Torbay (average of 63.7 per 1,000) than England (60.2) and the South West (58.4). There has been a notable fall in the numbers of live births since the middle of the last decade across all geographical areas.</p> | <p>There is no differential impact.</p> | <p>N/A</p> | <p>N/A</p> |
| Race                           | <p>In the 2021 Census, 96.1% of Torbay residents described their ethnicity as white. This is a higher proportion than the South West and England. Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals are more likely to live in areas of Torbay classified as being amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England.</p>  | <p>There is no differential impact.</p> | <p>N/A</p> | <p>N/A</p> |

|                                  |   |  |  |     |
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| Religion and belief              | 64.8% of Torbay residents who stated that they have a religion in the 2021 census.  | There are a number of existing polling stations which are located in Christian churches or church halls. This may have an impact on residents of other faiths/those without a faith who may not feel welcome or may not want to enter such places. | As much as practicable ensure that polling stations are located in secular venues.<br><br>Ensure that churches are used only when strictly necessary, and with awareness of the potential impact on the local community. | N/A |
| Sex                              | 51.3% of Torbay's population are female and 48.7% are male  | There is no differential impact.   | N/A  | N/A |
| Sexual orientation               | In the 2021 Census, 3.4% of those in Torbay aged over 16 identified their sexuality as either Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or, used another term to describe their sexual orientation.                | There is no differential impact.   | N/A  | N/A |
| Armed Forces Community           | In 2021, 3.8% of residents in England reported that they had previously served in the UK armed forces. In Torbay, 5.9 per cent of the population have previously served in the UK armed forces. | There is no differential impact.   | N/A  | N/A |
| <b>Additional considerations</b> |   |  |  |     |

|   |   |                                  |     |     |
|---|---|----------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Socio-economic impacts (Including impacts on child poverty and deprivation)                 |   | There is no differential impact. | N/A | N/A |
| Public Health impacts (Including impacts on the general health of the population of Torbay) |   | There is no differential impact. | N/A | N/A |
| Human Rights impacts  |   | There is no differential impact. | N/A | N/A |
| Child Friendly  | Torbay Council is a Child Friendly Council, and all staff and Councillors are Corporate Parents and have a responsibility towards cared for and care experienced children and young people. | There is no differential impact. | N/A | N/A |

## 10. Cumulative Council Impact

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10.1 None

## 11. Cumulative Community Impacts

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11.1 None