



# COTSWOLD

District Council

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| Council name               | <b>COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Name and date of Committee | <b>COUNCIL – 23 SEPTEMBER 2026</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Subject                    | <b>POLLING STATION REVIEW</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Wards affected             | All                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Accountable member         | Mike Every, Leader of Council<br>Email: <a href="mailto:mike.every@cotswold.gov.uk">mike.every@cotswold.gov.uk</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Accountable officer        | Angela Claridge, Director of Governance<br>Email: <a href="mailto:angela.claridge@cotswold.gov.uk">angela.claridge@cotswold.gov.uk</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Report author              | Sarah Dalby, Electoral Services Manager<br>Email: <a href="mailto:sarah.dalby@cotswold.gov.uk">sarah.dalby@cotswold.gov.uk</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Summary/Purpose            | <p>The purpose of the report is to ask Council to approve consultation on suggested changes to polling stations. These changes have been proposed by the Electoral Matters Working Group following consultation with Ward members in areas affected.</p> <p>With Council's approval the next step would be to ask parish and town councils, county councillors and other stakeholders for their views on the proposed changes.</p>                                                                                                                  |
| Annexes                    | Annex A – current polling stations by polling district<br>Annex B – proposed changes for consultation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Recommendation(s)          | <p>That Full Council resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Approve consultation on the proposed changes to polling stations as set out in Annex B;</li><li>2. Authorise the Electoral Services Manager, in consultation with the Electoral Matters Working Group, to undertake consultation with parish and town councils, county councillors, Members of Parliament and other stakeholders; and</li><li>3. Note that the outcome of the consultation will be reported back to Council for consideration and decision</li></ol> |



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| Corporate priorities        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Supporting Communities</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Key Decision                | NO                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Exempt                      | NO                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Consultees/<br>Consultation | <p>Following the Electoral Matters Working Group discussion on the proposals, details have been provided to Ward members for consideration.</p> <p>The report is to request approval to consult with parish and town councils, county councillors and other stakeholders on the proposed changes.</p> |



## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1.** Council is required to undertake a polling district review every five years which considers polling districts and places. Council may agree changes to polling stations outside of this statutory review.
- 1.2.** This review has been discussed with the Electoral Matters Working Group and its recommendation is to consider changing some polling stations to reduce the number of stations with low electorate and/or high costs per elector.
- 1.3.** The document at annex A sets out the current polling stations by district ward with the cost per elector alongside. It also shows where stations have either a low number of electors allocated or where the cost is above average. This is the starting point for the review.
- 1.4.** This report is requesting approval to consult with local stakeholders on the proposed changes given in annex B. In addition to this consultation, officers will make visits to the stations to evaluate their suitability should there be an increase in the number of electors allocated to them.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1.** The cost of elections has increased significantly over the past few years due to several factors, including increases in polling station hire charges, postage and printing costs. The last district and parish elections cost in the region of £250k.
- 2.2.** Officers were asked to consider ways to reduce these costs and one option is to reduce the number of polling stations within the area.
- 2.3.** However, any polling place/station review needs to consider the requirements of Section 18 of Representation of the People Act. This sets out considerations to be taken into account when identifying polling places and stations.
- 2.4.** These considerations include accessibility, convenience for electors and that stations have reasonable facilities for electors.
- 2.5.** Annex A sets out the current list of polling stations with number of electors and costs. This was used as a starting point for discussion in the Working Group.



- 2.6. The Working Group has considered a number of options for changing polling stations based on the cost per elector and convenience. Ward members were consulted and their responses considered.
- 2.7. The Group agreed that polling stations with fewer than 150 electors should be reviewed.
- 2.8. Annex B sets out the stations which are to be included in the consultation with suggestions for alternative arrangements.

### **3. PROPOSED CHANGES**

- 3.1. At the last full county council election in May 2025, there were 110 polling stations in the Cotswold district area, serving the 8 county divisions.
- 3.2. A number of stations had fewer than 150 electors allocated to them. With the number of postal voters increasing, in some cases, the number of electors eligible to vote at the station reduced to below 100.
- 3.3. Costs for some of these stations is high, and although officers have sought reductions, the costs do remain significant.
- 3.4. In addition to hire charges, staff costs have also increased. A scale of fees for election staff which has been adopted by all councils in the county includes a requirement to pay at least the minimum living wage (currently £13.45 per hour).
- 3.5. To ensure a differentiation between poll clerk and presiding officer pay, an increase has been implemented. This change plus training, mileage, expenses and holiday pay means that the cost of two people for the day is around £650.
- 3.6. In addition to rent and staff costs, ballot papers, other printing and equipment is needed for each station and this can be up to £150.
- 3.7. In total the average cost of a polling station is in the region of £880. It is with this in mind that the proposals have been put forward.

### **4. ASSUMPTIONS**

- 4.1. On the spreadsheet at annex A, electorate figures and costs for the 2023 District Council, 2024 Parliamentary and 2025 County Council elections have been averaged.
- 4.2. Stations with fewer than 150 electors allocated to them have been highlighted and these are the ones being included in the review.



- 4.3.** The electorate figures do not take the number of postal voters into account as this can change at each election, although it is usually around 15 - 20% of the electorate.
- 4.4.** Staff costs are based on the current 2026 agreed scale of fees and printing costs are based on the current county electoral print contract prices.

## **5. CONSULTATION**

- 5.1.** Discussions on the proposals have taken place with the Electoral Matters Working Group.
- 5.2.** In wards where there are proposed changes, ward members have been asked for initial feedback, and this has informed the final proposal.
- 5.3.** If approved, consultation with the parish and town councils, Members of Parliament, County Councillors and other stakeholders will take place.
- 5.4.** Details of comments received will be provided to the Electoral Matters Working Group for consideration before a final proposal is made to Council in December for consideration and decision.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1.** The report seeks approval to undertake consultation on the proposed changes to polling stations.
- 6.2.** If approval is given, a consultation will take place and a final report made to Council in December.
- 6.3.** Any changes approved by Council will be implemented at the May 2027 elections.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1.** The consultation will incur additional postage costs and require staff time; however, it is expected that these can be accommodated within existing resources and will not result in any meaningful financial impact.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1.** Section 18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983 requires the Council to review of its polling stations during specific compulsory periods of five years (the last one beginning in October 2023) and provides for sporadic reviews when required.



- 8.2.** The Electoral Commission has updated its guidance on the process to carry out any review and criteria for the selection of polling stations, both of which should be followed to avoid any court challenges.

## **9. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1** The principal risks associated with the proposed changes relate to accessibility, voter participation, public perception and the ability of alternative polling stations to accommodate additional electors.
- 9.2** These risks will be mitigated through a comprehensive consultation exercise, completion of an Equality Impact Assessment, site visits to affected polling stations, legal oversight of the review process and detailed evaluation of feedback received from stakeholders before any final recommendations are submitted to Council.

## **10. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 10.1** The proposed changes could, in some instances mean that electors have to travel further to their allocated polling station. Council need to balance elector convenience and accessibility with the overall cost of elections and the need to seek value for money.
- 10.2** As part of the consultation process, stakeholders will be asked for their views on the impact of the proposed changes on the potential number of electors attending the polling station.
- 10.3** An equalities impact assessment will be undertaken as part of the final recommendations to Council and accompany the final decision.

## **11. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1.** The proposals will reduce the number of polling stations in the district and this will, by definition reduce the amount of equipment and stationery used along with a reduction in the number of staff.
- 11.2.** A reduction in staffing will reduce the overall travel impact on the election.



**COTSWOLD**  
District Council

**11.3.** However, there is likely to be an increase in the number of journeys made by electors to the polling stations. This may result in an overall increase in the number of journeys on election day. This is difficult to quantify as people may choose to combine their journey to the polling station with other journeys.

**11.4.** As part of the consultation process, stakeholders will be able to give feedback on the journeys required to attend a particular station.

## **12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**12.1.** none

(END)