

Terms of Reference
for the
Polling District Review 2023
to be undertaken by
Test Valley Borough Council

Introduction

Test Valley Borough Council is carrying out a Polling District Review (PDR) pursuant to the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended).

The Review will have regard to the guidance issued by the Electoral Commission on “Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations”. The aim of the Review is to ensure that the arrangements of polling districts, polling places and polling stations allow electors to cast their votes as easily and conveniently as is reasonably practicable, taking account of the boundaries of parishes, borough wards and electoral divisions, and current/proposed Parliamentary Constituencies.

The Review will be conducted in accordance with the terms of reference contained in this document.

Documents referred to, and other useful information, is available on the Council’s website:-

www.testvalley.gov.uk/pdr

What will the Review consider?

The Review will look at:-

- The boundary, name and reference of existing polling districts;
- The scope for merging polling districts, and the need to retain/create new polling districts;
- The polling places for each polling district;
- The suitability of the existing polling station used for each polling district (including in particular its access and suitability for use by disabled electors);
- Possible alternative polling stations which may be more suitable or more convenient than existing polling stations;

What issues will not be considered as part of the Review?

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England carried out a review of the division boundaries and electoral arrangements for Hampshire County Council in 2016, and conducted a similar exercise in respect of the Borough Council ward boundaries and electoral arrangements in 2017.

The Borough Council carried out a full Community Governance Review of all parish arrangements in Test Valley in 2019. This was followed by a further review of arrangements for Romsey Town Council, as well as other smaller changes in other areas made in 2022.

It is therefore not possible for this Polling District Review to consider any issues that were, or could have been, considered under any of these other reviews. Accordingly, representations on matters such as changes to parish council boundaries, Borough Ward boundaries, etc., cannot be dealt with under this Review.

Who is carrying out the review?

Test Valley Borough Council is statutorily responsible for carrying out the review. A report will be prepared by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and presented to the full Council meeting on Wednesday 17 January 2024, when a formal decision as to the outcome of the Review will be taken.

What is the area under review?

The whole of the borough of Test Valley is included in the scope of the Review.

Why is the Council carrying out a polling district review?

Pursuant to changes brought in by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, the Council is required to carry out a review of polling districts and polling places between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.

The last full review of Test Valley's polling districts was carried out in 2019. Changes were made in 2022, taking into account those amendments referenced above, following a community governance review which amended Parish arrangements for Romsey Town Council and Valley Park Parish Council.

What is the present structure of polling districts?

Test Valley has 108 polling districts of varying sizes. Maps showing the geographical extent of each district are available on the Council's PDR webpage. Details of the name, reference, and elector numbers for each district are contained in the (Acting) Returning Officer's Submission to the review, also available on the website.

How will the review work?

A consultation period will run from 13 October to 24 November 2023. A notice of the Review has been published and is available on the website. Responses received before the end of the consultation period will be considered and taken into account as part of the report to full Council on 17 January 2024.

Any changes agreed by the Council as a result of the Review will be implemented by a formal legal Order.

Who will we consult?

The Council is consulting with Borough and County Council Members, political parties, parish councils and disabled groups.

The (Acting) Returning Officer has been consulted and his recommendations have been published on the PDR webpage.

Where possible, the managers of premises proposed as alternative polling stations have been consulted. They will also be sent a copy of the Notice of the Review so they can respond to the consultation.

A press release has been issued, and the Council will post details of the Review on its website and social media platforms, in order to bring the Review to the attention of electors so they can also comment if they wish.

Timetable for the review

The Polling District Review formally begins when the Notice of Review is published. The timetable below outlines the main stages of the review (please note that these dates may be subject to slight alteration).

Action	Timescale
Publication of notice and terms of reference (official start of Review)	13 October 2023
Publication of recommendations of (Acting) Returning Officer	13 October 2023
Consultation Period	13 October to 24 November 2023
Report on Review to full Council	17 January 2024
Preparation of Polling Districts and Polling Places orders	January 2024
Publication of electoral register based on revised polling districts	February 2024

How to submit your views

You can respond to the consultation in the following ways:

By email to pdr@testvalley.gov.uk

By post to:-
Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Beech Hurst,
Weyhill Road,
Andover,
SP10 3AJ

If you have any questions about the polling district review, please contact the review team as pdr@testvalley.gov.uk or 01264 368072.