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1. Overview

In May 2015 the Local Government Boundary Commission for England completed their review of ward boundaries in Bristol. Following the changes to the ward boundaries, Bristol City Council Electoral Services are conducting a full review of the polling districts and polling places in Bristol, and we are now consulting on our recommendations to gather the views of the electorate. The review must be carried out to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.

A six week consultation period begins today (1 September 2015) and all proposals and comments must be received by midnight on 13 October 2015. The results of the consultation will be considered and final proposals will be presented to Bristol City Council Full Council for a decision on 10 November 2015. The Electoral Registration Officer will then apply the changes to the electoral roll.

Bristol City Council and the Returning Officer welcome submissions from all sectors of the community, including individuals, organisations, groups, and political parties. We would like to hear if you agree with the proposals or if not, how they can be improved.

Submissions can be made online at www.bristol.gov.uk/polling

Alternatively paper copies of the consultation form are available from the Central Library or on request by calling Electoral Services on 0117 92 23400. Completed forms can be sent to:
Email: boundary.review@bristol.gov.uk
Post: Electoral Services, B Bond, Bristol City Council, PO Box 3176, Bristol, BS3 9FS. Please allow one additional day to normal posting times.
In person: Electoral Services, CYPS Reception, B Bond, Smeaton Road, Bristol, BS1 6XN

Information on the new ward boundaries from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England is available at https://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/south-west/bristol/bristol. Ward boundaries cannot be changed by this review.
Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2015
Public Consultation Document

2. Background
In accordance with the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 the Council must undertake a review of the polling districts and polling places within its area every four years. Polling stations are chosen by the election Returning Officer. Bristol City Council last undertook a review in 2014.

Neither the boundaries of Parliamentary constituencies nor the local ward boundaries will be part of the review. It should be noted that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England review of ward boundaries is a separate review, and has now completed.

3. Definition of a Parliamentary Constituency, Ward, Polling District, Polling Place and Polling Station

i. Parliamentary Constituency
This is an area designated by the Boundary Commission which is represented by a Member of Parliament (MP) in the House of Commons. This cannot be changed by the review.

ii. Ward
The city is divided into areas known as Wards which are represented by Bristol City Councillors.

iii. Polling Districts
A polling district is the area created by the division of a Ward into smaller parts.

On polling day all electors in a polling district will attend the same polling place to vote (unless they have opted to vote by post). One copy of the electoral register will be produced for each polling district, listing the electors in that polling district.
Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2015
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iv. Polling Places
A polling place is the area in which a polling station is located. It must be designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district.

v. Polling Station
A polling station is the actual building where the process of voting takes place at elections, for example a room in a community centre or school. This must be located within the polling place that has been designated for the particular polling district. Polling stations are chosen by the election Returning Officer.

4. Polling District Review Timetable

Notice of Review (commencement of consultation period) 1 September
Consultation period ends: 13 October
Report to Full Council 10 November

Revised arrangements will come into force for the Bristol elections in May 2016.

5. Criteria for Polling Districts and Polling Places

The review must be carried out to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. The objective of this consultation is to gather and collate the views of the electorate.

Guidance from the Electoral Commission is available to assist in assessing the current arrangements for voting and this has been incorporated into the criteria against which the review is assessed.

As part of the review, the following should be considered regarding the suitability of the polling district boundaries:
Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2015
Public Consultation Document

- Are the boundaries reasonably defined?
  - For example, do they follow the natural boundaries of the areas? (e.g. rivers, train lines, major roads)
  - Are there obstacles to voters crossing the polling district or reaching the polling place?
- Is there suitable transport links/accessibility within the polling district?
- It is proposed that in order to minimise the risk of queues at a polling place, as far as practicable a polling district should consist of around 1,500 polling station voters.

A number of criteria have also been considered when reviewing existing and new polling places and stations. These include:

- A venue accessible for all
- Within 1 mile safe walking distance for all electors and easy to find
- Polling stations should be ‘logical’ i.e. wherever possible electors should not have to travel past another polling station to get to their own
- Polling stations should not be shared with electors from a different ward
- The size of the polling station is appropriate, particularly in the event of a high turnout
- A venue suitable for use as a polling station and politically neutral
- Wherever possible, for every polling station to be accessible to electors who are disabled

It should be noted that the Electoral Commission recognises that the choice of a polling station will often be a balance between the merits of the building, in terms of access and facilities, and the proximity of the polling station to the electors it will serve. This balance could for example result in electors from two polling districts sharing a polling station.

6. Consultation and Representations

Bristol City Council invites views from all interested parties in relation to the designation of polling districts, polling places and polling stations. We wish to hear if there are ways in which the proposals can be improved, and representations in support of the changes are also welcome.
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Any elector within the constituencies may make a representation to the consultation.

Individuals or groups/organisations who have specific local knowledge in relation to polling stations, or individuals who may have knowledge of building or road access, are welcome to put forward representations to the review. We welcome representations from individuals or groups/organisations with expertise in access for persons with disabilities.

When making representations please provide any relevant information you can about your current polling place or station, including how convenient - or not - its location is in relation to where you live, whether there is adequate parking, what access is available for disabled and/or wheelchair users and how suitable overall it is for voting. Please also indicate whether there are any other suitable premises that could be used.

Submissions can be made online at www.bristol.gov.uk/polling

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Email: boundary.review@bristol.gov.uk

Post: Electoral Services, B Bond, Bristol City Council, PO Box 3176 Bristol, BS3 9FS. Please allow one additional day to normal posting times.

In person: Electoral Services, CYPS Reception, B Bond, Smeaton Road, Bristol, BS1 6XN

Representations must be received by Electoral Services by midnight on Tuesday 13 October 2015.

7. Summary of Consultees

Listed below are persons and groups specifically notified about the review:

- All Bristol City Council councillors
- All MEPs for the authority area
- All MPs for the authority area
- Bristol City Council Party Group offices
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- The Mayor of the City and County of Bristol City Council
- The Police and Crime Commissioner
- Political parties active in the authority area:
  - Bristol First
  - British National Party (BNP)
  - Conservative Party
  - English Democrats
  - Green Party
  - Independents for Bristol
  - Labour Party
  - Left Unity
  - Liberal Democrats
  - Pirate Party UK
  - Respect
  - The Common People
  - Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC)
  - UK Independence Party (UKIP)

- Acting Returning Officer (ARO) for all 4 constituencies
- Equality Organisations
- Bristol City Council - Neighbourhood Partnerships
- Bristol City Council – Equalities and Social Inclusion Team

8. Completion of the Review

After considering all representations the revised proposals will be presented to Full Council for a final decision on 10 November 2015.

The Council will provide the reasons for its decisions and these will be published on the Council’s website. Paper documents will also be available on request.
9. Contact

If you have any questions or queries in relation to the review please phone 0117 92 23400 or email boundary.review@bristol.gov.uk