1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To inform members about the process and timing of the statutory Parliamentary Polling District and Places Review.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

2.1 That members note the arrangements being proposed for the conduct of the statutory polling districts and polling places review.

2.2 That members note that the review will take place from 15 April 2019 with an aim to re-publish the register (if necessary) on the 1 August 2019 prior to the canvass period.

3.0 RECOMMENDED REASON/S FOR DECISION/S

3.1 In order to comply with the requirements of the Representation of the People Act 1983 sections 18A-18E (as amended by section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013),

4.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTION/S CONSIDERED AND RECOMMENDED FOR REJECTION (*Must be used for reports to Cabinet & Cabinet Members*)

4.1 This is a statutory review and must be completed by 31 January 2020.

5.0 THE REPORT

5.1 As required by the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006) we are undertaking a statutory review
of the local authority’s polling districts and polling places for Parliamentary elections. Every Council in England and Wales must undertake and complete a review of all polling districts and polling places in its area within a 16 month period commencing from 1 October 2018 to 31 January 2020.

5.2 In carrying out any review of polling arrangements, the local authority must comply with the steps set out in Schedule A1 Representation of the People Act 1983. The local authority is required to:

- publish a notice of the holding of a review
- consult the (Acting) Returning Officer for every parliamentary constituency which is wholly or partly in its area
- publish all representations made by the Returning Officer within 30 days of receipt by posting a copy of them at the local authority’s office and in at least one conspicuous place in their area and, if the authority maintains a website, by placing a copy on the authority’s website
- seek representations from such persons as it thinks have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability. Such persons must have an opportunity to make representations and to comment on the representations made by the (Acting) Returning Officer(s).

- on completion of a review, give reasons for its decisions and publish:
  a. all correspondence sent to an (Acting) Returning Officer in connection with the review
  b. all correspondence sent to any person whom the authority thinks has particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability
  c. all representations made by any person in connection with the review
  d. the minutes of any meeting held by the council to consider any revision to the designation of polling districts or polling places within its area as a result of the review

5.3 There are three significant factors to take into account for this review:

a) The timetable for these reviews was set in legislation to coincide with the Fixed Term Parliament Act. The timings of the reviews are such that they are to be completed every five years by the January preceding a May Parliamentary election. The snap election in 2017 means that these reviews are potentially no longer coterminous with Parliamentary elections as was initially intended.

b) Harrogate has recently undergone a Local Government Boundary Review. This was a major evaluation, looking the number of wards, the ward boundaries and the ward names.

c) As we are no longer required to administer European Parliamentary elections, the only scheduled poll for the life of this review are the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May 2020.

The outline timetable for the Council’s review is therefore as follows:
• 1 January 2019 – 31 March 2019 - Formulation of initial proposals by the (Acting) Returning Officer
• w/c 1 April 2019 - Publicise review dates via press release and social media accounts
• 15 April 2019 - Publish Statutory Notice of Commencement of the Polling District Review
• 15 April 2019 - Proposals published
• 15 April – 27 May 2019 - Consultation on proposals
• 10 June 2019 - (Acting) Returning Officer to consider any representations and revise proposals where appropriate and publish all responses to consultation
• 20 June 2019 - Report submitted to General Purposes Committee
• 30 June 2019*1 - Publish final report
• 10 July 2019* - Notice of intention to republish the electoral register (if polling districts amended)
• 1 August 2019* - Republish electoral register (if polling districts amended)

As there are no scheduled elections during this time frame it is recommended that the Council conduct the review prior to the start of the annual canvass. In the event of an unscheduled election being called then the consultation period can be extended or the review paused. Starting in April allows sufficient contingency ahead of the January 2020 deadline.

In addition to the statutory reviews carried out to date and a major review following the introduction of new ward boundaries in 2017, the suitability and accessibility of polling station locations has been an integral part of the planning for each major election in the borough. It is therefore likely that there will be no significant changes required to the current arrangements.

Central Government are due to vote on the final proposals for new Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries at any given time, following which the Council would then be required to conduct a full review its polling district and places again if the proposals are approved by Parliament.

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1 the above dates are subject to change following the final proposals being approved by General Purposes Committee
6.0 REQUIRED ASSESSMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The following were considered: Financial Implications; Human Resources Implications; Legal Implications; ICT Implications; Strategic Property/Asset Management Considerations; Risk Assessment; Equality and Diversity (the Public Sector Equality Duty and impact upon people with protected characteristics). If applicable, the outcomes of any consultations, assessments, considerations and implications considered necessary during preparation of this report are detailed below.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 As the review is a statutory responsibility we are limited to when we can conduct the review and the time frame outline above is the most appropriate in line with managing demands on the service.

7.2 If the Parliamentary constituency boundary changes are implemented an additional review will be carried out at that stage addressing any changes to the Harrogate and Knaresborough Constituency.

Background Papers –

OFFICER CONTACT: Please contact Laura Jolly Elections Manager if you require any further information on the contents of this report. The officer can be contacted at laura.jolly@harrogate.gov.uk or on 01423 556011. The elections team can be located on the 3rd floor at the Civic Centre, St Lukes Avenue, Harrogate HG1 2AE