

## **Polling Place & Polling District Review 2019 – Kettering Borough Council**

### **Terms of Reference**

The following criteria shall be used when undertaking the review and considering the provision for each polling place:

- Convenience to voters
- Accessibility externally and internally
- Location within a polling district
- Previous satisfactory usage of premises
- Availability of other public buildings in each area
- Suitability of other public buildings in each area
- Future-proofing

Kettering Borough Council will strive to ensure that all electors wishing to vote at elections held within its area are able to access the facilities used for this purpose. In order to facilitate this, the Council provides the following:

- Low level polling screens at each building used for voting
- Temporary ramps for buildings that require additional access facilities
- Large print documents in polling stations
- Documents in foreign languages inside the polling station
- Tactile templates to facilitate voting for electors with visual impairment
- Pictorial guides to the voting process for people whose first language is not English, or who have literacy problems
- Staff training to deal with all types of access issues whether to do with the buildings of the voters themselves

The Council will ensure that it uses buildings that are accessible to all voters. The Council hires many of those buildings for polling day, and therefore the usual arrangements for access are the responsibility of the owners. However, the Council will provide temporary facilities to assist with any access problems on that day. It is the policy only to use such premises when no other suitable alternative is available.

### **Principles to be considered when evaluating premises suitability**

- Each polling district will have its own polling station within that polling district unless there are no premises available in that polling district that provide adequate and suitable access and facilities for all electors and staff in relation to both external and internal areas
- Where there are no premises available within a polling district, then a building as close as possible to that polling district shall be used or a suitable site for a mobile polling station that provides adequate and suitable access and facilities in relation to both external and internal areas shall be identified from within that polling district

- All new premises and sites that are suggested for use as polling places will be inspected by electoral services staff to determine their suitability in relation to both external and internal areas and the facilities available
- All polling stations should be well served, as far as possible, by public transport links
- In relation to the use of schools, these premises will only be used where there is no other suitable provision available within the polling district that provides adequate and suitable access facilities for all electors and staff in relation to both external and internal areas
- The RO and his staff will always work with Schools in order to establish if it is possible for both the school and the polling station to be operational on the same day. However, the final decision on this will rest with the Returning Officer
- The Returning Officer will only use his statutory powers to close a school for polling day as a last resort
- Any decisions made in relation to the opening/closure of a school should be on an election-by-election basis only, and should be made with due consideration being given to anticipated turnout, the time of year of the poll and any other factors that are considered relevant at that time by the Returning officer
- The following factors shall be taken into account when considering internal and external access facilities:
  - approaches to the premises;
  - visibility from the street;
  - facilities to erect signage;
  - parking;
  - lighting;
  - level access;
  - ramps;
  - handrails;
  - wheelchair access;
  - doors that can be easily opened and closed;
  - doormats that are level with the floor;
  - external security and any other factors that are considered relevant by the Returning Officer.
- The following factors shall be taken into account when considering internal facilities at a polling place:
  - sufficient space for staff, polling agents, observers and voters;
  - availability of other rooms where multiple polling stations are required;
  - sufficient space for managing the flow of electors and for siting equipment;

- adequate lighting throughout;
- suitable furniture for staff and voters who may need to rest;
- sufficient space for erecting notices;
- kitchen facilities;
- toilet facilities and any other facilities that are considered relevant by the Returning Officer.

There are statutory powers that enable the Returning Officer to use school premises under the following legislation:

- Representation of the People Act 1983 c. 2 Schedule 1 - Parliamentary Elections Rules
- The Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 Schedule 3 - Rules for Conduct of an Election of Councillors of a Principal Area where the Poll is taken together with the Poll at a Relevant Election or Referendum