

BOUNDARY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Boundary Review Committee held on Wednesday 6 May 2026 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

Present: Councillors Z Hannington (Vice-Chair), K T Blundell, M Boylan, N A Dugmore, N A M England and R A Overton

In Attendance: A Lowe (Director: Policy & Governance), M Wallace (Member Support Officer) and R Phillips (Head of Registrars, Public Protection, Legal & Democracy)

Apologies for Absence: Councillors G Luter

BRC19 Declarations of Interest

None.

BRC20 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

BRC21 Update on the Polling Districts, Places and Stations Review 2026

The Committee received a presentation on the Interim Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations 2026, delivered by the Head of Policy, Insight, Partnerships and Elections.

It was noted that the review related to the statutory arrangements for polling districts, polling places and polling stations, and that clear definitions applied to each. The Committee was informed of the legislative requirements governing the designation of polling districts and polling places, including the expectation that each parish should normally constitute a separate polling district, that polling places should be located within the relevant district unless exceptional circumstances applied, and that accessibility and convenience for electors, including those with disabilities, must be taken into account.

The Committee noted that the review had been prompted by changes arising from the Community Governance Review, which would come into effect at the May 2027 local elections. It was reported that an interim review was therefore required to ensure that polling arrangements remained appropriate in advance of those changes.

The Committee was advised that the review process followed statutory requirements, including the publication of a notice, consultation with the Acting Returning Officer and relevant stakeholders, and the consideration of

representations prior to the publication of final decisions with supporting reasons.

Details of the consultation and engagement undertaken were presented. It was noted that a range of stakeholders had been consulted, including Members of Parliament, Town and Parish Councils, community groups, partner organisations and ward members. The Committee noted that a total of seven responses had been received. These included requests to retain existing polling station arrangements in several areas, as well as proposals for changes in St Georges, including alterations to polling district boundaries and relocation of certain polling stations. It was further reported that a request had been made for the establishment of an additional polling station at the Allscott Meads development, and that the Making it Real Board had been consulted, with site visits scheduled.

The Committee was informed that site visits had been undertaken to a number of polling places and stations by Members and officers. The outcomes of these visits were noted, with the majority of locations found to meet the required criteria. However, it was reported that some locations required improvement measures, including enhancements to accessibility, lighting and facilities for staff, and in certain cases consideration was being given to alternative venues.

The Committee noted the next steps in the review process, including the completion of visits with the Making it Real Board, the development of options for consideration in response to the findings, and the finalisation of polling district boundary proposals. It was also noted that, although the formal consultation period had closed, any further feedback received would continue to be taken into account.

It was noted that, although response levels to the review had been relatively low, polling station inspectors were deployed at each election; part of their role, when visiting polling stations, was to record any issues requiring improvement. Any matters raised were taken into account as part of the consultation process. The committee was encouraged to promote further engagement and invite additional feedback to help inform future reviews. It was also acknowledged that, where evidence suggested higher demand or particular pressures, options such as additional polling stations or alternative arrangements would be considered. A balanced assessment of all available information would be undertaken before recommendations were finalised.

Members expressed thanks for the report and reflected on the value of visiting polling stations, which demonstrated the wide variety of venues in use. Questions were raised regarding legislative requirements and whether the general principle should always be to maintain a polling station within each polling district, or whether, in some cases, it would be preferable to allocate voters to a neighbouring location that offered better facilities. Concerns were also raised about participation, particularly where voters lived close to a polling station but were unable to use it due to boundary restrictions. It was

suggested that any measures to make voting easier and increase participation should be explored.

In response, it was explained that the preferred principle was to have a polling station within each polling district. However, this was dependent on the availability, accessibility, and suitability of buildings. Where no suitable option existed within a district, alternative venues in nearby districts might be considered, particularly if they offered better access or parking. The overarching aim remained to provide the best possible experience for voters and encourage participation. It was also noted that national pilot schemes for "polling hubs," where electors could vote at central locations regardless of the location in which they lived within a council area, were being trialled elsewhere and were being monitored for effectiveness. Where changes to polling stations were required at short notice, efforts were made to select locations that were as central as possible for the affected electorate.

It was confirmed that feedback from site visits would be recorded within the consultation data and would be reflected in the recommendations presented at a later stage.

Further discussion highlighted interest in the composition of advisory groups and the impact of new housing developments on polling provision. It was noted that significant residential growth in certain areas would likely necessitate additional polling arrangements in future. Questions were also raised about the complexity introduced by boundary changes and the implications for parish and borough arrangements, particularly with preparation timelines approaching.

It was confirmed that communications would be issued to town and parish councils outlining the process and expected timelines. Although confirmation of the legal order was still pending, it was anticipated that there remained sufficient time to proceed with preparations. Efforts would continue to ensure that all relevant councils were informed and engaged. The use of residential or care-based settings for polling purposes was discussed, with an emphasis on improving accessibility for those who might otherwise struggle to attend traditional polling stations. However, it was acknowledged that such arrangements could present safeguarding considerations depending on the nature of the residents.

Clarification was also provided that polling arrangements were based on polling districts rather than wards or parish boundaries, and that communication with electors would be managed accordingly through polling cards.

The Committee noted the contents of the presentation.

The meeting ended at 6.28 pm

Chairman:

Date: Tuesday 7 July 2026