



monmouthshire
sir fynwy

Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations 2021

Introduction

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Introduction

The Representation of the People Act 1983 places a duty on Monmouthshire County Council to divide its area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each district. The Council also has a duty to keep these polling arrangements under review. Following the community and electoral reviews, which are due to be formalised by Welsh Government in September 2021 and take effect at the 2022 Local Government elections, there is a need to review the polling arrangements on the new boundaries to ensure they are fit for purpose.

What does the review aim to achieve?

A polling district, polling place and polling station review looks at the arrangements that are in place for electors to cast their vote and how the local authority area is split down to define these different areas.

What is a polling district?

A polling district is a geographical area with a defined boundary that must contain a polling place and polling station for voters within that polling district to cast their vote. Generally, a polling district will cover the same geographical area and use the same boundaries as the community ward boundaries.

What is a Polling Place?

A polling place is the geographical area in which a polling station is located. There is no legal definition of what a polling place is. The geographical area could be defined as tightly as a particular building or as widely as the entire polling district. On the whole, the polling places in Monmouthshire are coterminous with the polling districts. Exceptions to this rule are:

- Clydach
- Gilwern
- Clytha
- Dixton with Osbaston
- Llandenny
- Usk
- Mill
- West End

Where possible polling places should be within the polling district unless it is not possible to find a suitable place within the area. There are a number of instances in Monmouthshire where this occurs. For example, Caerwent is split into five polling districts and four of the five polling districts vote at one polling station as there is no suitable venue within the polling districts to use as a polling station.

Due to the boundary changes, we are seeking views on whether the above existing wards should be retained with a polling district splits or merged to be the same as the ward itself.

Details of why there is a polling district split is below:

Clydach

The Clydach ward covers areas both sides of the A465 heads of the valleys road. The ward was split previously as voters have voted in different polling stations on either side of the road (Clydach School, Wesleyan Chapel). There is currently no alternative place for voters to the east of the heads of the valley road to cast their vote and in recent elections have moved to vote in Clydach AFC along with the rest of Clydach voters. Given that it is likely that all voters will vote in the same place there is no need to retain a polling district split. Should an alternative venue surface in the future then the polling district can be split again at that time.

Clytha

The Clytha ward is currently split with properties surrounding the A40 area of the ward voting in Llanarth and the rest voting in Bettws Newydd. Under the community review, the ward boundary has moved to follow the A40. We seek views on whether a polling district split should be retained given the community ward boundary has moved to a more defined boundary of the A40 and no properties above that road now fall within the Clytha ward. All voters within the Clytha ward would then vote a Bettws Newydd.

Dixton with Osbaston

The current Dixton with Osbaston ward is split with a section of the town area voting in the Leisure Centre and the more rural area of Osbaston voting at Buckholt Hall. A section of the Dixton area will now move to the newly created Town ward. We seek views on whether a split should be retained for the new Osbaston ward or whether all voters should be allocated to a single polling station.

Gilwern

The Gilwern ward is currently split into two polling districts with some voters attending Gilwern Village Hall and others voting at Gilwern Community Education Centre. Given the high electorate within this ward (approx. 2,300) it is considered that the split is still required and should be retained.

Llandenny

The current Llandenny ward is split east to west, with properties in the north of the ward voting at Old School Raglan and the south at Parish Hall, Llandenny. The current Llandenny ward covers areas both sides of the A449 whereas the new boundaries use the A449 as a boundary between Llandenny and a new Kingcoed ward. We seek views on whether the split for Llandenny should remain and also what the most appropriate voting arrangements for the new Kingcoed ward should be.

Mill

Magor with Undy currently consists of five polling districts, Denny, Mill split into two districts, Salisbury and The Elms. Under the new boundaries there will be three wards, Magor West, Magor East and Undy with much of the Salisbury area moving from Magor into Caerwent. Following the principal of polling districts matching ward boundaries, an option could be that all Magor West voters attend Magor Baptist Church, Magor East voters attend Memorial Hall, Undy and that Undy voters attend either Undy Church and Community Hall or Undy RFC. We seek views on this proposal and other potential voting arrangements for the area.

Usk

With Usk covering a small compact area the community council area is not warded however the area is split into two polling districts. The current polling district split runs behind Bridge Street to Usk Square then down to the river dividing the area in two. The split exists due to the high electorate in the area and ensures the polling station is split to allow voters to cast their vote quickly and prevent queues. With the electorate increasing in the area it is recommended that the split remains and we seek views on this option.

West End /

The current West End ward boundary includes a number of properties near Durand Junior School and a polling district split was created to allow those voters to vote in that building as it was easily accessible for them. The new ward boundary follows the B4245 and these electors now fall within the Village ward. Because of this it is proposed that the polling district split for West End is removed and the polling district matches the ward boundary with all voters attending Caldicot Rugby Club. We are also seeking views of the most appropriate voting arrangements for the new Village and Severn wards in Caldicot.

What is a Polling Station

A polling station is the actual area where the process of voting takes place, e.g a room in a community centre or school.

A number of new polling stations were used at the May 2021 elections to assist with adhering to social distancing arrangements and feedback suggests these changes were well received. These new polling stations have been carried through to the new wards and we seek your views on the preference of polling stations for the new wards.

There are a number of new wards have been created as part of the community review and we seek your views on the most suitable polling stations for these wards. In the attached scheme, where the majority of a ward remains the previous polling station has been included. These new wards include:

- Caldicot Cross
- The Village (Caldicot)
- Severn

- Magor West
- Magor East
- Kingcoed
- Town (Monmouth)
- Whitecastle
- Nant-Y-Derry
- Goetre Wharf
- Llanvihangel Tor-Y-Mynydd
- Mount Pleasant

What is not covered by this review

Neither the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies nor the boundaries and names of electoral areas within Monmouthshire will form part of this review. New polling districts can be created within the existing ward boundaries where it would improve the voting arrangements for the electorate however they cannot overlap the boundaries of the community wards.

Principals of the review

There are a number of guidelines that the Returning Officer has considered when drawing up the proposals. Any person wishing to make representations should keep these in mind. The first four requirements are statutory requirements that are included in the Representation of the People Act:

- The council must seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
- The council must seek to ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, every polling place is accessible to electors who are disabled
- Every community shall be in a separate polling district
- Where possible the polling place should be in its own polling district
- As far as is practicable, no polling station should be shared by two wards because of the risks associated with holding different elections in the same polling station however this is not always practicable due to the geographical make up of the wards in Monmouthshire.

The Review Process

Monmouthshire County Council must publish notice of their intention to conduct a review.

Notice of the review was given on 22 September 2021 and published on the Councils website. Notice of the review along with the consultation guidance was also sent to elected members and Community/Town Councils.

As part of the review process the Returning officer must publish their comments on the suitability of the current arrangements. The Returning Officer comments:

“Given that significant changes to the boundaries of community & town council as well as County wards will take effect at next years elections, the current arrangements that are in place have little relevance. A draft polling district scheme has been created which utilises the polling stations used for previous elections where they remain the most suitable solution for voters in that area. There are some polling districts that are new and we seek views on the most suitable polling arrangements for these new wards as well as the appropriateness of the existing polling stations.”

The consultation period will run until 22 October 2021 and all representations received will be published in the final proposals that will be presented to a meeting of Full Council for Monmouthshire Councillors to approve.

Any changes proposed as part of this review will take effect upon publication of the 2022 electoral roll on the 1st December 2021.



Notice of Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

The review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006

The above regulations require Monmouthshire County Council to carry out a review of its polling districts and polling places.

We are looking for feedback on any aspect of polling districts and/or polling places currently used, as well as those that will be implemented for elections in 2022 and invite representation and comments from interested persons.

Local political parties and councillors will be consulted, and views are invited from electors within the Monmouthshire County Council area as well as such persons as may have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.

The consultation period for the review will commence on 22 September 2021 and end on 22 October 2021.

Although the review is of polling districts and polling places it is accepted that polling stations are inexorably linked to the review and comments are invited regarding those stations currently used and/or any suggested alternatives.

Information regarding the current polling districts and places can be found on the Council's website at www.monmouthshire.gov.uk or from the electoral services office by emailed elections@monmouthshire.gov.uk.

Any person wishing to make representation regarding this review should send their comments to John Pearson, Local Democracy Manager, Monmouthshire County Council, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA or emailed to elections@monmouthshire.gov.uk.

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