

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Report of:	The Returning Officer, Charlotte Benjamin
Submitted to:	Corporate Affairs Committee
Date:	1 September 2026
Title:	Polling Districts and Places Review 2026
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	Delivering Best Value

Proposed decision(s)

That Corporate Affairs Committee APPROVES the:

- location of a new mobile polling station at the junction of Merlin Road and Kestrel Avenue to support voters on the Boyds Estate.
- minor changes to other polling district boundaries to match the new ward boundaries.
- proposed list of Polling Places to be used for all elections and referendums held from May 2027 until the next scheduled review in 2028/29.

Executive summary

New ward boundaries come into effect in Middlesbrough from the date of the next scheduled Local and Mayoral elections on 6 May 2027. Although the overall number of wards remains at 20, some ward boundaries will change meaning electors may have to vote at a different polling station to the one they have used previously.

In particular, the Boyds Estate being moved into the new North Ormesby and Boyds ward means that an additional mobile polling station is required to serve that estate.

Electoral Services carried out a review of all existing polling districts and polling places during the first half of 2026 and compiled a list of proposed polling places to suit the new ward boundaries. This was published on 1st July 2026, and feedback was invited from members of the public and elected representatives.

1. Purpose of this report and its contribution to the achievement of the Council Plan ambitions

- 1.1 To seek Members' approval to changes to polling stations, polling district boundaries and polling places for all elections and referendums held from May 2027 until the next scheduled review in 2028/29.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Corporate Affairs Committee

APPROVES the:

- location of a new mobile polling station at the junction of Merlin Road and Kestrel Avenue to support voters on the Boyds Estate.
- minor changes to other polling district boundaries to match the new ward boundaries.
- proposed list of Polling Places to be used for all elections and referendums held from May 2027 until the next scheduled review in 2028/29.

Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

- 2.2 New ward boundaries come into effect in Middlesbrough from the date of the next scheduled Local and Mayoral elections on 6 May 2027. Although the overall number of wards remains at 20, some ward boundaries will change meaning electors may have to vote at a different polling station to the one they have used previously.
- 2.3 The Boyds Estate was previously part of the Brambles and Thorntree ward. It was served by a mobile station until 2019 when following a review, it was agreed that this should be removed and electors from this estate would vote at Brambles Farm Community Centre. However, this estate is to be included in the new North Ormesby and Boyds ward and the existing polling stations in North Ormesby are located almost a mile from the estate. As there are no public buildings nearby it is proposed to reinstate the mobile station in its previous location.

3. Background and relevant information

- 3.1 A Polling District is defined as the area created by the division of a constituency, ward or division into smaller parts, within which a polling place can be determined which is convenient to electors. A Polling Place is defined as the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the Returning Officer. A Polling Station is the room or part of the building where the poll takes place. These are chosen by the Returning Officer for the election.
- 3.2 The choice of polling place will often be a balance between the quality (access, facilities, etc.) of a building and the distances between the residents' homes and that building compared to other options for polling places.
- 3.3 The Electoral Commission recommends that there be no more than 2,500 electors per polling station (excluding electors registered for a postal vote).

- 3.4 A key issue for the Council is that when conducting the review, all decisions made must have been consulted upon, be measured and practical. The whole process should be as transparent and open as possible to avoid possible conflict.
- 3.5 All polling districts and places are subject to a statutory review every 5 years to take into account population changes and new build developments etc which may necessitate adding, removing or amending a polling district or polling place. The last review in Middlesbrough took place in 2023/24 and the next is scheduled for 2028/29
- 3.6 New ward boundary arrangements for Middlesbrough were approved by Parliament in 2025 and will come into force on the date of the next scheduled elections, 6 May 2027. As a consequence, an interim review has been undertaken to match polling districts and places to the new ward boundaries.
- 3.7 The intention has been to continue to use existing polling places wherever possible, as these are familiar to electors in the area and provide the facilities needed.
- 3.8 The review has identified the need for one additional mobile station.
- 3.9 There are no changes to ward boundaries in the new Ayresome and Newport, Linthorpe West, Linthorpe East, Hemlington and Coulby Newham wards and therefore no changes are proposed to polling districts or polling places in these wards.
- 3.10 In Central ward the existing polling place at Breckon Hill School and approximately 610 electors served by it have moved to the new Longlands and Grove Hill ward. The proposal is to split the electors remaining in Central ward in this polling district between the existing stations at Abingdon Primary School and the International Centre, both of which are easily accessible from this part of the ward.
- 3.11 For the reasons stated at paragraph 2.2 of the report, in North Ormesby and Boyds ward it is proposed to reinstate a mobile station at the junction of Merlin Road and Kestrel Avenue.
- 3.12 In Acklam North ward there is an addition of approximately 10 electors from the Stainsby Grange area west of the A19. It is proposed that these electors will vote at the mobile station on Croft Avenue. Whilst none of the stations in this ward are particularly accessible for these electors, the journey is more straightforward than that to their previous polling place in Trimdon ward.
- 3.13 In Longlands and Grove Hill ward existing Central ward polling place at Breckon Hill School will remain, to serve the electors who previously voted there. It is not possible to combine these with the nearest existing station in this ward as this would take it over the 2500 recommended maximum electorate, particularly as this is a mobile station. The mobile station on Roseberry Road will lose approximately 120 electors to the new Beechwood and Easterside ward.

- 3.14 In Berwick Hills and Park End the polling place at Berwick Hills Primary School will gain approximately 36 electors from Dorien Crescent who previously voted at Pallister Park Primary School.
- 3.15 In Pallister and Priestfields ward it is proposed to keep the existing polling places. Approximately 91 electors in the Cobblewood and Creekwood area will move to Brambles and Thorntree ward.
- 3.16 In Brambles and Thorntree, Brambles Farm Community Centre will lose the electors on Boyds estate. Thorntree Community Hub will gain approximately 91 electors on Cobblewood and Creekwood.
- 3.17 In Trimdon Ward the mobile station loses approximately 16 electors from farms on the periphery of the ward. The station at Acklam Whin Primary school loses the Runswick Avenue/Sedgefield Road area to Kader ward.
- 3.18 In Kader ward the station at Kader Primary School loses approximately 265 electors to Acklam East and Tollesby Ward. St Margaret's Church Hall gains approximately 492 electors in the Runswick Avenue/Sedgefield Road area from Trimdon ward. Polling station electorate is still under 1500 and access to this station is straightforward for these electors.
- 3.19 In Acklam East and Tollesby ward there is the addition of 265 electors from Kader ward on Addcott Road, Bewley Grove, Cowley Road and Hall Drive. These electors have a straightforward journey to the existing station at Newham Grange Primary. The alternative would be to add them to polling district MA and use the station at Acklam Library, however with the ongoing development on St David's Way this would take the electorate at this station over the 2500 limit.
- 3.20 In Beechwood and Easterside ward there is the addition of approximately 121 electors in the Belle Vue Grove area and the hospital residences on Marton Road. These electors have a similar length journey to the station at Beech Grove Primary than to their previous polling station.
- 3.21 In Marton East ward the station at Captain Cook Primary school loses approximately 82 electors in The Wicketts and West Side.
- 3.22 In Stainton and Thornton ward the station at the Memorial Hall will become a dual station due to the addition of approximately 6 electors north of the A174 who fall outside of the parish boundary, and within the Middlesbrough and Thornaby East parliamentary constituency.
- 3.23 In Marton West ward the station at Marton Manor Primary school gains approximately 82 electors in The Wicketts and West Side. The mobile station at Fulford Way loses approximately 170 electors in the Plantation View area to Nunthorpe ward.
- 3.24 In Nunthorpe Ward the station at Nunthorpe Community Centre will become a dual station as the approximately 170 electors in the Plantation View area being added from Marton West ward fall outside of the parish boundary.

Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

- 3.25 Notice of the review and a list of proposed polling stations was sent to all ward members, the Mayor, The Tees Valley Mayor, both MPs and the Police and Crime Commissioner as well as Nunthorpe and Stainton and Thornton Parish Councils. It was also published on the Council's website and members of the public were invited to submit comments, with a month to respond.
- 3.26 Ward members for the existing Nunthorpe, Marton East and Newport wards expressed satisfaction with the proposed arrangements for their wards
- 3.27 Comments received from other ward members are discussed in Section 6 below.
- 3.28 Only one response was received from a member of the public, requesting that we do not use The Avenue School in Nunthorpe. Electoral Services confirmed to them that there was no intention to use The Avenue School.

4 Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended

- 4.1 A ward member for the current Longlands and Beechwood ward expressed dissatisfaction with the proposals for the new Beechwood and Easterside ward, and proposed St Thomas More's Church Hall, a mobile on a field off Gleneagles Road, and the current station at St Chad's Church. These suggestions are not recommended since although the church hall is convenient for Beechwood, the residents in the north of the polling district and in particular those east of Marton Road in the Belle Vue Grove area will have a particularly long journey to this station, whereas locating the station at Beech Grove School as proposed makes it central for all parts of the polling district. The station at St Chad's Church has been used for the previous three elections and there are no changes to boundaries in this area. It is therefore not considered appropriate or necessary to locate another mobile station to serve this area.
- 4.2 The same member raised concerns that the station at Easterside Community Hub is an uphill walk for many residents of Easterside. Whilst this is true, the Hub is situated at the centre of the community and has been used as a polling place for many years. If electors in the northern part of Easterside used a station in Beechwood, they would still be faced with an uphill walk on their way home.
- 4.3 A member for Central ward indicated that an additional station was needed in the Lothian Road area. Residents in this area previously voted at Breckon Hill School which will be in the new Longlands and Grove Hill ward. Whilst it is acknowledged that the journey to Abingdon School is slightly longer than to their current station, it is not excessively long. In addition there are no public buildings in this area and no suitable land to situate a mobile station and associated portable toilet.
- 4.4 Two members in the current Park End and Beckfield ward suggested another station is required to serve the Ormesby area. This area was served by a station at Ormesby Methodist Church until the Church closed in 2018. From 2019 onwards electors in this area have voted at Glastonbury House. There are no changes to the polling district boundaries in this area and no reason to change this arrangement.

- 4.5 The Deputy Mayor queried why schools are used as polling places. Schools are used as they are often in the centre of their communities, familiar to local electors and meet accessibility requirements. In addition, they are also often the only public building in the locality. Paragraph 22 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 gives the Returning Officer the authority to enforce the use of schools; a power that is not available in respect of other buildings such as church premises. Whether or not school needs to close on election day is a matter for the Head Teacher and the Returning Officer will always work with schools to negotiate the use of an area which prevents this being necessary.

5. Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Topic	Impact
Financial (including Social Value)	The cost of situating, equipping and staffing an additional mobile station to serve Boyds Estate will be approximately £2000 per election. With the next review due in 2028/29 we expect there to be two scheduled elections during the life of this review, therefore the total additional cost will be in the region of £4000.
Procurement	Not applicable as this is a report to approve new polling places following a Boundary Review.
Legal	Carrying out and completing this review ensures that the Council meets its obligations under Section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.
Risk	If the Council does not respond effectively and efficiently to legislative changes it would be in breach of statutory duties in relation to the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	The subject of this report is not a policy, strategy, function or service that is new or being revised. It is considered that an equality impact assessment is not required.
Reducing Poverty	Not applicable as this is a report to approve new polling places following a Boundary Review.
Climate Change / Environmental	Not applicable as this is a report to approve new polling places following a Boundary Review.
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	Not applicable as this is a report to approve new polling places following a Boundary Review.
Data Protection	Not applicable as this is a report to approve new polling places following a Boundary Review.

Appendices

1	List of proposed polling places.
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Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
HM Government	Electoral Registration and Administration Act	2013

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