



# Representation of the People Act 1983

## 1983 CHAPTER 2

### PART I

#### PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT FRANCHISE AND ITS EXERCISE

##### *Place and manner of voting at parliamentary elections*

#### **<sup>F1</sup>18 Polling districts and places at parliamentary elections.**

- (1) Every constituency shall be divided into polling districts and subject to the provisions of this section there shall be a polling place designated for each polling district.
- (2) In England <sup>F2</sup> . . . it is the duty of the council of each district or London borough [<sup>F3</sup>, and in Wales it is the duty of the council of each county or county borough,] to divide their area into polling districts for the purpose of parliamentary elections for so much of any constituency as is situated in their area, and to designate the polling places for those polling districts, and to keep the polling districts and polling places under review, in accordance with the following rules—
  - (a) the council shall exercise the powers conferred by this section with a view to giving all electors in so much of the constituency as falls within their area such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances [<sup>F4</sup>and, in particular, they shall, so far as is reasonable and practicable, designate as polling places only places which are accessible to electors who are disabled];
  - (b) <sup>F5</sup> . . . , each parish or community shall in the absence of special circumstances be a separate polling district or districts;
  - (c) the polling place for any polling district shall be an area in that district, except where special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the polling district, and shall be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the polling district how they will be able to reach the polling station;
  - (d) a polling place need not be designated for any polling district, if the size and other circumstances of the district are such that the situation of the polling

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stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electors or any body of them.

(3) In Scotland it is the <sup>F6</sup>duty of every local authority to divide their area into polling districts for the purpose of parliamentary elections for so much of any constituency as is situated in their area and to designate the polling places for those polling districts], and to keep the polling districts and polling places under review in accordance with the following rules—

- (a) the <sup>F7</sup>local authority] shall exercise the powers conferred by this section with a view to giving all electors in <sup>F8</sup>so much of the constituency as falls within their area] such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances <sup>F9</sup>and, in particular, <sup>F10</sup>the local authority] shall, so far as is reasonable and practicable, designate as polling places only places which are accessible to electors who are disabled];
- (b) <sup>F11</sup>each electoral ward, within the meaning of section 5 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994, which is wholly or partly within so much of any constituency as falls within their area], shall, in the absence of special circumstances, be a separate polling district or districts;
- (c) the polling place for any polling district shall be an area in that district, except where special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the polling district, and shall be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the polling district how they will be able to reach the polling station;
- (d) a polling place need not be designated for any polling district, if the size and other circumstances of the district are such that the situation of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electors or any body of them.

(4) In the case of a polling district for which no polling place is designated the polling district shall be taken to be the polling place for the purposes of this Act.

(5) If <sup>F12</sup>. . . not less than 30 electors in a constituency make a representation to <sup>F13</sup>the Electoral Commission] that the powers conferred by this section have not been exercised so as to meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency or any body of those electors, <sup>F13</sup>the Electoral Commission] shall consider the representation and may, if <sup>F14</sup>they think fit]—

- (a) direct the council <sup>F12</sup>. . . by whom the powers are exercisable, to make any alterations which <sup>F13</sup>the Electoral Commission] thinks necessary in the circumstances, and
- (b) if the council <sup>F15</sup>. . . fails to make those alterations within a month after the direction is given, himself make the alterations,

and any alterations made by <sup>F13</sup>the Electoral Commission] under this subsection shall have effect as if they had been made by the council <sup>F15</sup>. . .

In this subsection the expression “interested authority”, in relation to any constituency, means—

- (i) as respects England, the council or where there is no such council the parish meeting of a parish which is wholly or partly situated within the constituency;
- (ii) as respects Wales, the council of a community which is so situated;
- <sup>F16</sup>(iii) . . . . .

(6) On the exercise of any power given by this section, the council <sup>F17</sup>. . . —

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- (a) shall publish in the constituency a notice showing the boundaries of any polling districts or polling places constituted as a result of the exercise of the power;<sup>F18</sup>
- <sup>F19</sup>(b) .....
- (7) Subsections (2) to (6) above do not apply to Northern Ireland, and in Northern Ireland the polling districts and polling places are those for the time being established under the law relating to [<sup>F20</sup>local elections within the meaning of section 130 of the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962].
- [<sup>F21</sup>(8) Where any alteration of polling districts in an area is made under this section—
- (a) the registration officer who acts for the area shall make such adaptations of his register of parliamentary electors as are necessary to take account of the alteration; and
- (b) the alteration shall be effective on the date on which the registration officer publishes a notice stating that any such adaptations have been made by him.]
- (9) An election shall not be questioned by reason of—
- (a) any noncompliance with the provisions of this section; or
- (b) any informality relative to polling districts or polling places.

#### Textual Amendments

- F1** Ss. 18A-18E substituted (1.1.2007 for E.W.S. and 1.7.2008 for N.I.) for s. 18 by [Electoral Administration Act 2006 \(c. 22\)](#), **ss. 16(1)**, 77; S.I. 2006/3412, art. 3, **Sch. 1 para. 14(c)** (subject to transitional provisions in art. 4, Sch. 2); S.I. 2008/1316, **arts 2**, 4
- F2** Words in s. 18(2) repealed (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 19, s. 66(6)(8), Sch. 16 para. 68(2), **Sch. 18** (with ss. 54(4)(7), 55(5), Sch. 17 paras. 22(1), 23(2)); S.I. 1996/396, art. 4, **Sch. 2**
- F3** Words in s. 18(2) inserted (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 19, s. 66(6), **Sch. 16 para. 68(2)** (with ss. 54(4)(7), 55(5), Sch. 17 paras. 22(1), 23(2)); S.I. 1996/396, art. 4, **Sch. 2**
- F4** Words inserted by [Representation of the People Act 1985 \(c. 50, SIF 42\)](#), s. 24, **Sch. 4 para. 4(1)(a)**
- F5** Words repealed by [Representation of the People Act 1985 \(c. 50, SIF 42\)](#), ss. 24, 28, **Sch. 4 para. 4(1)(b)**, Sch. 5
- F6** Words in s. 18(3) substituted (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, s. 142(2)(a); S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a), **Sch. 1**
- F7** Words in s. 18(3)(a) substituted (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, s. 142(2)(b)(i); S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a), **Sch. 1**
- F8** Words in s. 18(3)(a) substituted (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, s. 142(2)(b)(ii); S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a), **Sch. 1**
- F9** Words inserted by [Representation of the People Act 1985 \(c. 50, SIF 42\)](#), s. 24, **Sch. 4 para. 4(2)**
- F10** Words in s. 18(3)(a) substituted (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, s. 142(2)(b)(iii); S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a), **Sch. 1**
- F11** Words in s. 18(3)(b) substituted (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, s. 142(2)(c); S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a), **Sch. 1**
- F12** Words in s. 18(5) repealed (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, ss. 142(3)(a), 180(2), **Sch. 14**; S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a)(b)(d), **Schs. 1**, 2
- F13** Words in s. 18(5) substituted (1.7.2001) by 2000 c. 41, s. 158(1), **Sch. 21 para. 6(2)(a)** (with s. 156(6)); S.I. 2001/222, art. 4, **Sch. 2 Pt. I** (subject to transitional provisions in Sch. 2 Pt. II)
- F14** Words in s. 18(5) substituted (1.7.2001) by 2000 c. 41, s. 158(1), **Sch. 21 para. 6(2)(b)** (with s. 156(6)); S.I. 2001/222, art. 4, **Sch. 2 Pt. I** (subject to transitional provisions in Sch. 2 Pt. II)
- F15** Words in s. 18(5) repealed (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, ss. 142(3)(b), 180(2), **Sch. 14**; S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a)(b)(d), **Schs. 1**, 2
- F16** S. 18(5) para. (iii) of the definition of “interested authority” ceased to have effect and repealed (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, ss. 142(3)(c), 180(2), **Sch. 14**; S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a)(b)(d), **Schs. 1**, 2

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- F17** Words in s. 18(6) ceased to have effect and repealed (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 39, ss. 142(4), 180(2), **Sch. 14**; S.I. 1996/323, art. 4(1)(a)(b)(d), Schs. 1, 2
- F18** Word repealed by Representation of the People Act 1985 (c. 50, SIF 42), ss. 24, 28, Sch. 4 para. 4(3), **Sch. 5**
- F19** S. 18(6)(b) repealed by Representation of the People Act 1985 (c. 50, SIF 42), ss. 24, 28, Sch. 4 para. 4(3), **Sch. 5**
- F20** Words substituted by Representation of the People Act 1985 (c. 50, SIF 42), s. 24, **Sch. 4 para. 4(4)**
- F21** S. 18(8) substituted (29.1.2001 for certain purposes and 16.2.2001 otherwise) by 2000 c. 2, s. 8(a), **Sch. 1 para. 11**; S.I. 2001/116, **art. 2(1)(2)** (with art. 2(4))

**Modifications etc. (not altering text)**

- C1** S. 18 applied (with modifications) (31.7.1997) by 1997 c. 61, s. 3, **Sch. 3 para. 13** Table 1  
 S. 18: functions of local authority not to be responsibility of an executive of the authority (E.) (16.11.2000) by S.I. 2000/2853, reg. 2(1), **Sch. 1 D8**
- C2** S. 18(1) applied (N.I.) by S.I. 1986/2250, regs. 2, 3, 5, **Sch. 1 Pt. I**
- C3** S. 18(1) applied with modifications (E.W.S.) by S.I. 1986/2209, regs. 2, 3, 5(1)(6)–(8), **Sch. 1 Pt. I**
- C4** S. 18(1)(7)(9) applied (with modifications) (N.I.) (4.5.1996) by S.I. 1996/1220, arts. 3(1)(b)(5)–(8), **Sch. 1**  
 S. 18(1)(7)(9) applied (N.I.) (25.4.1998) by S.I. 1998/1126, art. 6, **Sch. 2**  
 S. 18(1)(7)(9) applied (with modifications) (1.8.2001) by S.I. 2001/2599, art. 3, **Sch. 1**
- C5** S. 18(2) extended (11.3.1999) by S.I. 1999/450, **art. 6(4)** (which S.I. was revoked (29.2.2003) by S.I. 2003/284, **art. 1**)
- C6** S. 18(3) applied (11.3.1999) by S.I. 1999/787, **art. 5(2)**
- C7** S. 18(7) applied (N.I.) by S.I. 1986/2250, regs. 2, 3, 5, **Sch. 1 Pt. I**
- C8** S. 18(9) applied (N.I.) by S.I. 1986/2250, regs. 2, 3, 5, **Sch. 1 Pt. I**
- C9** S. 18(9) applied with modifications (E.W.S.) by S.I. 1986/2209, regs. 2, 5(1)(6)–(8), **Sch. 1 Pt. I**

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