

Committee	Date	Classification	Report No.	Agenda Item No.
General Purposes Committee	25th September 2013	Unrestricted		4.1
Report of: Electoral Registration Officer/ Returning Officer		Title: Polling district/polling place review – further report		
Originating Officer(s): John Williams, Service Head, Democratic Services/ Louise Stamp, Electoral Services Manager		Ward(s) affected: All		

REASONS FOR URGENCY

This report was not circulated with the Committee agenda and was unavailable for inspection within the timescales set out in the Authority's constitution because consultation on the Returning Officer's proposals closed on 13th September 2013. The report is nevertheless recommended for consideration at this meeting in order to ensure that there is no delay in the implementation of the new polling district and polling place arrangements.

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Committee is aware that the Council is currently undertaking a review of polling districts and polling places in accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended).
- 1.2 The review is being undertaken following the confirmation by parliament of the Council size and ward boundary changes recommended by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE); and will determine the polling districts and polling places to be used within each of the twenty new wards in the borough from 2014 onwards.
- 1.3 The functions of the General Purposes Committee include certain powers in relation to the holding of elections and the maintenance of the electoral register. On 17th June 2013 the Committee received a report on the proposed arrangements for the review of polling districts and polling places.
- 1.4 This report provides a further update on the review, including the proposals of the Returning Officer; the representations received during the consultation period; and the final recommendations for new polling arrangements (to follow).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee note the information in the report and the proposed new arrangements for polling districts and polling places (to be tabled at the meeting).

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council is required by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 to undertake a polling district and polling place review at least once every five years. A relevant authority must during each compulsory review period carry out and complete —

- (a) the period of 16 months beginning with 1st October 2013, and
- (b) the period of 16 months beginning with 1st October of every fifth year after that.

- 3.2 This does not prevent a relevant authority carrying out a review of some or all of the polling districts or polling places in its area at other times.

- 3.3 In accordance with the Electoral Administration Act 2006, reviews have taken place in 2007 and 2011, with a supplementary review in 2009. At the 2011 review, the Committee agreed that polling districts should remain unchanged pending the Electoral Review to be conducted by the LGBCE. Now that the Commission's recommendations are known, a review of polling districts and polling places has been carried out.

Definitions

- 3.4 Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a number of changes in respect of the way in which the review of polling districts and polling places must be undertaken. Polling districts, polling places and polling stations are defined as follows:-

polling district - 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.

polling place - the building(s) or area(s) within each polling district in which polling stations will be selected by the Returning Officer.

polling station - the actual room or building chosen by the Returning Officer, within the polling place, where the process of voting takes place at an election.

- 3.5 The Electoral Commission has issued guidance on the practical procedures involved in conducting a review of polling districts and polling places, including measures to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act. In determining polling places, an authority must:

(a) seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and

(b) seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons

3.6 Over the past two years Electoral Services have conducted a number of reviews. In 2008, all the premises used as polling stations were visited with a particular emphasis on access and the requirements of the DDA.

Statutory requirements

3.7 Schedule A1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983 sets out the steps that authorities must follow in undertaking any review of polling districts and/or polling places. The authority must:-

- Publish notice of the holding of the review
- Consult the Returning Officer for every parliamentary election held in a constituency that is wholly or partly within its area. The Returning Officer must make representations which must include information as to the location of polling stations (both existing and proposed) within polling places (both existing and proposed).
- Within thirty calendar days of their receipt, the relevant authority is required to publish the Returning Officer's representations
- Actively seek representations from such persons as it thinks have particular expertise in relation to: access to premises; or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability

3.8 On completion of a review, the authority is required to give reasons for its decisions in respect of the designation of both polling districts and polling places. In addition, the authority must publish:

- all correspondence sent to a Returning Officer in connection with the review;
- all correspondence sent to any person whom the authority thinks has particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability;
- all representations made by any person in connection with the review;
- the minutes of any meetings held by the authority where details of the review have been considered;
- details of the actual designations of polling districts and polling places agreed as a result of the review; and
- details of where the results of the review have been published.

4. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES - PROGRESS

- 4.1 General Purposes Committee on 17th June 2013 agreed the process and timetable for the review. During the first stage of the review from 8th to 26th July, the Returning Officer sought the initial views of Members and reviewed reports from the presiding officers at recent elections.
- 4.2 In accordance with the legislation mentioned above the ROs proposals for the new polling districts, including information on the location of existing and proposed polling stations within polling places (existing or proposed) were then published for public consultation which closed on Friday 13th September. As part of the consultation process, a Members' Seminar was held on 2nd September. A copy of the consultation document setting out the RO's proposals is attached at Appendix 'A'.
- 4.3 In addition to all elected members, specific invitations to comment on the proposals were sent to the political group leaders on the Council, the local MPs and GLA Member, constituency organisations of the political parties, the Metropolitan Police Service and the Corporate Director, Education, Social Care and Wellbeing (in connection with the use of school premises)). In accordance with statute the Council also sought the views of groups representing, and/or with expertise regarding accessibility for, people with disabilities; and any elector may make representations on the designation of polling places.
- 4.4 Detailed maps showing the new wards, each proposed polling district and polling place may be viewed on the Council's website by clicking on the 'Electoral Registration Quick Link' on the Home Page, or direct at the following link:- http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgs/351-400/362_voting/lq_boundary_commission_england.aspx
- 4.5 A range of submissions were received during the consultation process and these were assessed including visits to suggested polling stations to check accessibility etc. A schedule of the representations made, the RO's comments on these, and the final proposals for polling districts and polling places are currently being prepared and will be available at the General Purposes Committee meeting on 25th September.

5. THE ELECTORAL REGISTER

- 5.1 Where an authority makes any alterations to the polling districts within its area, the Electoral Registration Officer must amend the register of electors accordingly. The Electoral Commission recommends that alterations to polling districts be timed to coincide with the annual revision of the register of electors in order to avoid confusion both for electoral professionals and other recipients of the register.
- 5.2 A revised Register of Electors 2014 will be amended to reflect the new wards and polling districts effective for the local elections in 2014. As part of a package of measures associated with the forthcoming introduction (after the

2014 elections) of Individual Electoral Registration, the Government has amended the timing of the canvass in 2013/14, which will run from the beginning of October to 16 February 2014.

- 5.3 Councillors will continue to receive updates of the electoral register for their current wards for the remainder of the municipal year. In addition candidates and agents for the 2014 elections will be supplied with the appropriate register based on the new ward arrangements.

6. CONCURRENT REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL)

- 6.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is established by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and the electoral review of Tower Hamlets was conducted in accordance with that legislation and associated regulations.

- 6.2 In carrying out a review of polling places, the Electoral Administration Act 2006 requires that each polling district must have sufficient and suitable designated polling places that provide 'such reasonable facilities for voting that are practicable in the circumstances' including accessibility for electors with disabilities. The Council is under a duty to promote equality for those with a disability and the recommendations of the review will be drafted with this duty in mind.

- 6.3 Other legal comments are incorporated into the body of this report.

7. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

- 7.1 The reduction in the number of Councillors from 51 to 45 will result in a saving of approximately £60k per annum in the Members' Allowances budget with effect from 2014/15.

- 7.2 The report describes a review of polling districts and polling places in Tower Hamlets ahead of the 2014 elections. Any financial implications arising from changes to the polling districts or polling places are expected to be fully contained within existing budgets.

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR ONE TOWER HAMLETS

- 8.1 The aim of the electoral review is to secure appropriate and as far as possible equal representation for electors across all wards of the borough.

- 8.2 Disability issues have been taken fully into account in election matters particularly in the polling station review. All recommended polling places will as far as practicable be located centrally within the polling district and accessible for people with disabilities.

9. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 9.1 Within the constraints of the suitability and availability of the accommodation, polling places are located so as to minimise the distance electors need to travel to cast their vote.

10. ANTI POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no anti-poverty implications arising directly from this report.

11. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The polling place review exercise is concerned with managing risk at all premises used as polling places

12. IMPLICATIONS FOR CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION

- 12.1 There are no crime and disorder reduction implications arising directly from this report.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Returning Officer's proposals – Consultation document

Appendix B (to be circulated at the meeting): Schedule of representations made, RO's comments and final proposals.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2000 (SECTION 97)

LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Brief description of "background paper"	Name and telephone number of holder and address where open to inspection
Correspondence from LGBCE	John Williams 020 7364 4204
Electoral Commission guidance on Polling Place review	John Williams 020 7364 4204

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2013

RETURNING OFFICER'S PROPOSALS: CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 26th June 2013 Tower Hamlets Council gave notice of a review of polling districts and polling places in accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983 as amended ('The 1983 Act').
- 1.2 The review is being conducted following implementation of the recent electoral review of the borough by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), which proposed changes to the council size and ward boundaries for local government elections. From 2014, 45 councillors will represent two single-member, eleven two-member wards and seven three-member wards across the borough. The current review will determine the polling districts and polling places to be used within each of the 20 new wards.
- 1.3 In accordance with legislation the representations of the Returning Officer on the review must be published for consultation, including information on the location of polling stations (existing or proposed) within polling places (existing or proposed).
- 1.4 This consultation document sets out the Returning Officer's proposals. Comments are invited from all interested parties and the general public by **5.00 p.m. on Friday 13th September 2013.**
- 1.5 Any comments should be directed to the Electoral Services Office by email electoralservices@towerhamlets.gov.uk or phone 020 7364 0872.

2. THE REVIEW – CRITERIA AND PROCESS

- 2.1 The following definitions are used in this document:-
 - Polling district - 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.
 - Polling place - the building(s) or area(s) within each polling district in which polling stations will be selected by the Returning Officer.
 - Polling station - the actual room or building chosen by the Returning Officer, within the polling place, where the process of voting takes place at an election.

2.2 The 1983 Act (section 18B (4)) sets out rules that apply to a review of polling districts and polling places. The authority must:-

- Seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
- Seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place is accessible to electors who are disabled; and
- When considering or reviewing the designation of a polling place, have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.

2.3 The polling place for a polling district must be:-

- In an area in the district, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the district; and
- Small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station.

2.4 In making these proposals, every effort has been made to find suitable alternative polling places for secondary schools, portakabins and where there is uncertainty about availability for future elections. The aim is to enhance the convenience, suitability and practical electoral arrangements for electors.

2.5 Close attention has been paid to DDA provisions whilst conducting the review. Before determining the suitability of the proposed alternative polling places set out below, each venue will be inspected and the results recorded on a checklist, which assesses suitability, safety and compliance.

2.6 Regard has also been had to representations received by the ERO since the launch of the review on 26th June 2013, including from Councillor Craig Aston on behalf of the Conservative group and Councillor Marc Francis as a member for Bow East ward.

3. PROPOSALS: POLLING DISTRICTS

3.1 The Returning Officer's new polling district proposals are as follows:

<u>New Ward Name</u>	<u>New Polling Districts</u>
Bethnal Green	BG1, BG2, BG3, BG4, BG5
Blackwall and Cubitt Town	BC1, BC2, BC3, BC4
Bow East	BE1, BE2, BE3, BE4, BE5
Bow West	BW1, BW2, BW3
Bromley North	BN1, BN2, BN3
Bromley South	BS1, BS2, BS3
Canary Wharf	CW1, CW2, CW3
Island Gardens	IG1, IG2, IG3
Lansbury	LA1, LA2, LA3, LA4
Limehouse	LI1, LI2
Mile End	ME1, ME2, ME3, ME4, ME5
Poplar	PO1, PO2
Shadwell	SH1, SH2, SH3

Spitalfields and Banglatown	SB1, SB2, SB3
St Dunstan's	SD1, SD2, SD3, SD4
St Katharine's and Wapping	SK1, SK2, SK3, SK4
St Peter's	SP1, SP2, SP3, SP4
Stepney Green	SG1, SG2, SG3
Weavers	WE1, WE2, WE3
Whitechapel	WH1, WH2, WH3, WH4, WH5P

- 3.2 **Bethnal Green;** the new ward is comprised of current polling districts BGS2, MGT1, MGT2, and MGT3, plus a small part of polling district BGN2. There are now five new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.3 **Blackwall and Cubitt Town;** the new ward is comprised of current polling district BCT2, the majority of polling district BCT3, part of polling districts BCT1 and BCT5, plus a small part of BCT4. There are now four new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.4 **Bow East;** there are no split polling districts to consider for this ward. However, representations were made by Councillor Marc Francis to deal with the distance residents living in Fish Island need to travel to reach their current polling place allocation. As the area has been identified for future growth over the next few years, a new polling district (BE2) has been proposed for the residents of Fish Island and current polling district boundaries re-drawn to reflect the change. There are now five new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.5 **Bow West;** there are no split polling districts to consider for this ward. However, existing polling districts have been split and merged to ensure equality of property and elector numbers. There are now three new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.6 **Bromley North;** the new ward is comprised of current polling district BBB1, and the majority of polling district MEE2. There are now three new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.7 **Bromley South;** the new ward is comprised of current polling districts BBB2 and BBB3. There are now three new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.8 **Canary Wharf;** the new ward is comprised of current polling districts MI1 and MI4. There are now three new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.9 **Island Gardens;** the new ward is comprised of current polling districts MI2, MI3, the majority of polling district BCT4 and a small part of polling district BCT3. There are now three new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.10 **Lansbury;** the new ward is comprised of current polling districts EIL1, EIL2, EIL3, EIL4, EIL5 and a small part of polling district LI2. There are now four new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.11 **Limehouse;** the new ward is comprised of current polling district LI4 and the

majority of polling district SH4. There are now two new polling districts proposed for this ward.

- 3.12 **Mile End**; the new ward is comprised of current polling districts LI1, MEE1, MEE3, MEE4, the majority of polling district LI2 and a small part of MEE2. There are now five new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.13 **Poplar**; the new ward is comprised of current polling districts LI3, the majority of polling district BCT1 and a small part of BCT5. There are now two new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.14 **Shadwell**; the new ward is comprised of current polling districts SH1, SH2, SH5, SH6, the majority of polling district SH3 and a small part of SH4. There are now three new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.15 **Spitalfields and Banglatown**; the new ward is comprised of current polling districts SPB1, SPB2, SPB3, plus a small part of WE3. There are now three new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.16 **St Dunstan's**; the new ward is comprised of current polling districts MGT4, SDS4, the majority of polling district SDS2 and a large part of SDS1. There are now three new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.17 **St Katharine's and Wapping**; the new ward is comprised of current polling districts SK2, SK3 and SK4. There are now four new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.18 **St Peter's**; the new ward is comprised of current polling districts BGN1, BGN3, BGN4, BGS1, BGS3 and the majority of polling district BGN2. There are now three new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.19 **Stepney Green**; the new ward is comprised of current polling districts SDS3, WH3, the majority of polling district SDS1 and a small part of SDS2. There are now three new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.20 **Weavers**; the new ward is comprised of current polling districts WE1, WE2 and the majority of polling district WE3. There are now three new polling districts proposed for this ward.
- 3.21 **Whitechapel**; the new ward is comprised of current polling districts SK1, WH1, WH2 and WH4. There are five new polling districts proposed for the ward.

NB: Polling district SK1 (proposed WH5P) is situated outside Bethnal Green and Bow parliamentary constituency boundary. It was therefore decided not to change the borders of this polling district. For the next UK Parliamentary election in 2015, WH5P polling district electors will vote in Poplar and Limehouse constituency.

4. PROPOSALS – POLLING PLACES

4.1 The table below sets out the Returning Officer’s proposals for polling places within each of the proposed new polling districts:-

New Ward	Polling District	Current/Proposed Polling Place(s)
Bethnal Green	BG1	Gatehouse School – proposed; or St James the Less Church - proposed
	BG2	Globe Primary School - proposed
	BG3	The Tramshed, Digby Street – current; or Rachel Keeling Nursery School - proposed
	BG4	John Scurr Primary School - current
	BG5	Tower Hamlets Inclusion Support Centre – current
Blackwall and Cubitt Town	BC1	Portakabin, Car Park Blackwall Way - proposed
	BC2	Bushy Tails Nursery, Woodwharf Business Park - proposed
	BC3	The Gallery, Jack Dash House - current
	BC4	Cubitt Town Infants School – current
Bow East	BE1	Francis Lee Community Centre - current
	BE2	Portakabin, Car Park Stour Road - proposed
	BE3	Eastside Youth Centre – current; or Old Ford Primary School – proposed; or Ranwell Playgroup, McCullum Road - proposed
	BE4	Tredegar Centre – current; or Bromley by Bow Centre - proposed
	BE5	Our Lady and St Catherine of Siena RC Church - proposed
Bow West	BW1	Chisenhale Primary School - current
	BW2	Olga Primary School - current
	BW3	Malmesbury Primary School - current
Bromley North	BN1	Wellington Primary School - current
	BN2	St Agnes RC Primary School - proposed
	BN3	Old Palace Primary School - current

Bromley South	BS1	Clara Grant Primary School – current; or Lincoln Hall Playgroup, Fern Street - proposed
	BS2	The Lighthouse Baptist Church Hall - proposed
	BS3	Marnier Primary School - current
Canary Wharf	CW1	Skillsmatch Centre, Heron Quays - proposed
	CW2	Seven Mills Primary School - current
	CW3	Tiller Leisure Centre - proposed
Island Gardens	IG1	St Edmund's RC Primary School - current
	IG2	Harbinger Primary School - current
	IG3	St Luke's CE Primary School - current
Lansbury	LA1	St Saviour's CE Primary School - current
	LA2	Bygrove Primary School - current
	LA3	Teviot Community Hall - current
	LA4	Culloden Primary School - current
	LA5	Teviot Neighbourhood Centre - current
Limehouse	LI1	Cruising Association, Northey Street - proposed
	LI2	Cyril Jackson Primary School - current
Mile End	ME1	Avery Hill College (Mile End campus) - proposed
	ME2	St Paul with St Luke CE Primary School - current
	ME3	Stepney Greencoat CE Primary School - current
	ME4	Stebon Primary School - current
	ME5	Hind Grove Community Centre - current
Poplar	PO1	Holy Family RC Primary School - current
	PO2	All Saints Church - proposed
Shadwell	SH1	Bigland Green Primary School - current
	SH2	Blue Gate Fields Junior School - current
	SH3	Ogilvie Community Hall - current
Spitalfields and Banglatown	SB1	Christ Church CE Primary School - current
	SB2	Thomas Buxton Junior School – proposed; or St Anne's RC Primary School - current
	SP3	Canon Barnett Primary School – current

St Dunstan's	SD1	Latimer Congregational Church Hall - current
	SD2	Joseph Stern Community Hall – proposed; or Alice Model Nursery School – proposed
	SD3	Ben Jonson Primary School - current
	SD4	Cayley Primary School - current
St Katharine's and Wapping	SK1	St Paul's Shadwell - proposed
	SK2	St Peter's London Docks Primary School - current
	SK3	John Orwell Sports Centre - current
	SK4	Hermitage Primary School - current
St Peter's	SP1	Mowlem Primary School - proposed
	SB2	St Peters with St Thomas Church – proposed; or Lawdale Junior School - current
	SP3	Beatrice Tate School - current
	SP4	Hague Primary School – current; or Stewart Headlam Primary School - current
Stepney Green	SG1	Smithy Street Primary School - current
	SG2	Brayford Square Playgroup - proposed
	SG3	Redcoat Community Centre – proposed; or Marion Richardson Primary School - proposed
Weavers	WE1	Virginia Primary School - current
	WE2	Columbia Primary School - current
	WE3	St Matthias CE Primary School – current; or William Davis Primary School - proposed
Whitechapel	WH1	Kobi Nazrul Primary School - current
	WH2	Ayasofia Primary School - proposed
	WH3	English Martyrs RC Primary School - proposed
	WH4	Harry Gosling Primary School - current
	WH5P	Shapla Primary School – current; or St Paul's CE Primary School - current

5. MAPS

- 5.1 Detailed maps of the new wards and the Returning Officer's proposals for new polling districts and polling places, may be viewed on the Council's website at http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgsi/351-400/362_voting/lg_boundary_commission_england.aspx

6. REGISTER OF ELECTORS

- 6.2 The revised Register of Electors 2014 will be amended to reflect the new wards and polling districts following the annual canvass in 2013/14. The first register based on the revised electoral arrangements will be published on 17th February 2014, implemented for the combined elections in May 2014.
- 6.3 A revised Register of Electors 2014, published on the current warding structure in accordance with the Representation of the People Regulations 1983 will be published alongside the revised electoral arrangements.

John Williams
Returning Officer
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
19th August 2013