

Committee: General Purposes Committee	Date: 25 th April 2007	Classification: Unrestricted	Report No:	Agenda Item No:
Report of Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services)		Title: Review of Polling Places and Districts		
Originating Officer: Tim Revell Interim Electoral Services Manager		Ward(s) Affected: All		

Summary

1. This report sets out the Returning Officer's representations on the review of polling districts and polling places and the further steps which must be taken to complete this process.

Recommendations

2. That the Committee;
 - (1) agree that formal notice of holding the review be published;
 - (2) note the preliminary representations from the Returning Officer and authorise the Interim Electoral Services Manager to finalise and publish them within thirty calendar days of this meeting;
 - (3) note any issues raised by elected members for consideration during the review process;
 - (4) authorise the Interim Electoral Services Manager on behalf of the Returning Officer to seek representations from persons who have particular expertise in relation to access to premises and facilities for persons who have different forms of disability; and
 - (5) authorise the Interim Electoral Services Manager on behalf of the Returning Officer seek representations from individual electors, ward councillors, local constituency political parties and independent candidates.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 (SECTION 97)

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

Brief description of "background papers"	Tick if copy supplied for register	If not supplied, name and telephone number of holder
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None

Background

3. In the report to the previous meeting on 13th February 2007, members were advised that the review of polling places must be completed by the end of 2007 under the new legislation (section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006). This report initiates the formal part of the process whereby the Returning Officer makes representations to the Council about polling districts and polling places. Within thirty days these representations must be formally published. The Council is then required to seek representations from “persons with particular expertise” regarding access for the different forms of disability and from electors who wish to make representations. The Council then decides what the outcome will be and gives its reasons.
4. In April 2006 the Head of Facilities reviewed all polling stations for disabled access prior to the election and temporary ramps etc were provided for those polling places that required it. This would always be the case but there may be other reasons why a disabled group consider changes should be made.
5. The Returning Officer wrote to all members on 19th February 2007 seeking views on the review and feedback from the polling station officers in the May 2006 elections. At the date of this report no comments have been received. Members are reminded that whilst it is acknowledged that many schools do not wish to have polling stations within their boundary or school building it is often not possible to find alternative locations for schools currently used.

Definitions

6. To ensure clarity in discussing issues arising from the review the following definitions are used:

polling district; a geographical sub-division of an electoral area ie a UK parliamentary constituency, a European parliamentary electoral region, a ward or an electoral division.

polling place; a geographical area in which a polling station is located. however, as 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.

polling station; the actual area where the process of voting takes place, and must be located within the polling place designated for the particular polling district.

Returning Officer’s representations

6. Once the review has been initiated the authority is required to consult the Returning Officer who must make representations to the authority. These representations are:
 - (a) generally there should no more than 1,500 electors allocated to a

polling station subject to the practicability of providing an additional polling station;

- (b) the polling place at a portacabin adjacent to Winford House (BE1) should be relocated if practicable (Bow East);
- (c) a new polling district BE5 to vote at either Bow Community Hall or Bow Secondary School (Bow East);
- (d) a new polling station for district BW4 to vote at Malmesbury Primary School, if practicable (Bethnal Green West);
- (e) a new polling station for district BBB2 to vote at Clara Grant Primary School, (Bromley by Bow);
- (f) a new polling station for district EIL1 to vote at St Saviour's Primary School, (East India & Lansbury);
- (g) a new polling station for district MGT2 to vote at The Tramshed, Digby Street (Mile End & Globe Town);
- (h) polling district MEE1 to vote at the Adult Services Resource Centre, Southern Grove, if practicable (to replace Council Offices, 60 Southern Grove which will no longer be available) (Mile End East);
- (i) a new polling station for district MI1 to vote at Seven Mills Primary School, Malabar Street, if practicable (Millwall);
- (j) a new polling station for district SH2 to vote at St Mary & St Michael Primary School, Sutton Street, if practicable (Shadwell);
- (k) a new polling station for district SH4 to vote at or near Royal Foundation of St Katherine (possibly additional Portacabin) (Shadwell);
- (l) a new polling district SDS4 to reduce pressure on Cayley Primary School, Aston Street, which cannot accommodate an additional polling station (St Dunstan's & Stepney Green);
- (m) a new polling station for district SDS3 to vote at Sir John Cass Foundation & Redcoat Secondary School, if practicable (St Dunstan's & Stepney Green);
- (n) a new polling station for district SK4 to vote at Hermitage Primary School, Vaughan Way, if practicable (St Katherine's & Wapping);
- (n) a new polling district WE4 to reduce pressure on William Davis Primary School, Wood Close, which cannot accommodate an additional polling station (Weavers);
- (o) a new polling station for district WH1 to vote at Kobi Nazrul primary

School, if practicable (Whitechapel);

- (p) a new polling station for polling district WH2 (to replace Cheviot House which may no longer be available) (Whitechapel);
 - (q) polling district WH3 to be split by the creation of a new polling district WH5 to vote at new polling places at Smithy Street Primary School and Redlands Primary School respectively, if practicable, (to replace Stepney Library which has closed) (Whitechapel).
7. A complete schedule of existing and proposed polling districts and polling places with commentary as appropriate is attached as appendix A.

Other representations

8. The authority is required to 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. Such persons must have an opportunity to make representations and to comment on the returning officer's representations. A list of potential consultees has been identified in liaison with the Corporate Equalities Team and is attached at appendix B.
9. Any elector may make representations on the designations of polling places to the relevant authority. The formal notice to be published after this meeting will invite such representations and the review will also be publicised on the website and in East End Life. Although not required by the legislation it is recognised as good practice to consult widely amongst the key stakeholders in the electoral process. It is therefore also intended to invite further representations from ward councillors and to consult local constituency political parties and independent candidates who contested the last borough council elections.

Process

10. Following this meeting formal notice of the commencement of the review will be published at the Town Hall, at other venues where official council notices are published, on the website and in East End Life. Within thirty days of the meeting the Returning Officer's representations (paragraph 6) must also be published. It is proposed that the period for consultation and receipt of representations should extend until 31st July 2007 after which final proposals will be drawn up for consideration by this Committee on 14th November. This Committee's recommendations will then be considered by the Council meeting on 28th November. The polling districts and polling places will then be formally designated.

Comments of Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services)

11. It is a legal requirement to carry out the review of polling places this year before 31st December 2007 and thereafter every four years in accordance with the requirements of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (see appendix C).

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

12. The costs of the review will be met from within budget.

Equal Opportunities Implications

13. It is essential that disabilities issues are taken into account in election matters particularly in the polling station review.

Anti Poverty Implications

14. There are no implications in this report.

Sustainable Action for a Greener Environment

15. 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.

Appendices

- A Returning Officer's representations
- B Consultees on disabilities issues
- C Schedule A1 of the Representation of the People Act 1983