

	<h2>General Functions Committee 11 November 2014</h2>
<p style="text-align: right;">Title</p>	<p>Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places for UK Parliamentary Elections</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Report of</p>	<p>Andrew Travers Chief Executive & (Acting) Returning Officer</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Wards</p>	<p>All</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Status</p>	<p>Public</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Enclosures</p>	<p>Appendix A: Polling Place reviews and proposals for Chipping Barnet parliamentary constituency Appendix B: Polling Place reviews and proposals for Finchley and Golders Green parliamentary constituency Appendix C: Polling Place reviews and proposals for Hendon parliamentary constituency Appendix D: Polling District proposals for Parliamentary constituencies in the London Borough of Barnet Appendix E: Copy of the Notice of Review and all representations received in response to this notice by the deadline date.</p>
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<h3>Summary</h3>
<p>This report advises the Committee of the findings of the statutory review of polling districts and polling places for use at UK parliamentary elections and seeks the Committee’s approval of the (Acting) Returning Officer’s proposals and that these proposals take effect in time for the 1 December 2014 publication of the revised Register of Electors. In addition the Committee is asked to instruct that an annual review of polling arrangements take place and that the borough’s polling arrangements be submitted to the Committee each year following this review.</p>

Decisions

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| 1. Approval of all proposed polling place arrangements as laid out in Appendices A, B and C. |
| 2. Approval of all proposed new polling district arrangements as laid out in Appendix D. |
| 3. Approval of an annual review of polling districts and polling places to be submitted to the General Functions Committee each year (following any borough – wide elections held). |

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 In order to comply with the requirements of the Representation of the People Act 1983 sections 18A-18E (as amended by section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013), the Council was required to undertake a full review of all polling districts and polling places in the period between 1 October 2013 and 31 January 2015. In doing so, the authority had to seek to ensure that all electors have reasonable facilities for voting -as are practicable in the circumstances- and have regard to the needs of electors who are disabled.

2. REASONS FOR DECISIONS

- 2.1 After detailed evaluation by the Electoral Projects Manager and the (Acting) Returning Officer, during which representations were sought from key stakeholders, it is submitted to the committee that the needs of electors are best met for the UK Parliamentary elections scheduled for May 2015 by the polling arrangements as proposed in the attached appendixes.
- 2.2 The pre-existing polling arrangements within the three parliamentary constituencies contained within the borough are considered to be predominantly satisfactory and have all been shown at previous recent elections to be practicable given the circumstances that prevail within the areas that they serve. The approach throughout the review has been to only propose changes where there a clear conclusion has been reached that new arrangements:
- will better serve the affected electors
 - will improve polling day arrangements for local residents *without* any detrimental effect upon the voting arrangements for affected electors
- 2.3 A review of polling districts and places should be conducted annually so that suitable voting arrangements are maintained for changes to the electorate (e.g. from new housing developments) within the borough's wards and constituencies. Regular more minor changes can then be adopted, rather than more drastic changes if the arrangements are only reviewed once every five years (as required by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013).

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 3.1 As the Council must undertake a statutory review of polling districts and polling places by the end of January 2015 in accordance with the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1983 section 18A-18E (as amended by section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013), and the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006, no alternative options for the conduct of this review apply.
- 3.2 Where alternative polling arrangements have been proposed (and supported by a suggested alternative arrangement) by submission of a representation to the review but has not been adopted, this is detailed within the assessment of the relevant polling place within the attached constituency appendices.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The polling districts and polling places as detailed will be used for the UK Parliamentary elections to be held on 7 May 2015.
- 4.2 On an annual basis (and following the borough-wide election/s in those years in which one is held), an Electoral Services officer will assess all polling arrangements for suitability. Following this, a report of all proposed arrangements for polling districts and polling places for the following year will be submitted for approval to the General Functions Committee.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- The designation of polling districts and polling places that give all electors reasonable and accessible facilities for voting (so far as is practicable within the circumstances), helps to ensure that the views of all residents that are eligible electors are expressed and taken into consideration on all aspects of the corporate priorities.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- There are minor additional costs in the administration and delivery of elections if the Committee approves a proposal that adds an additional polling place to the existing arrangements.
- In those instances where a polling place is proposed to move between permanent buildings, the cost will either be cost neutral or will create a negligible increase or decrease in comparison with existing costs.
- In those instances where a polling place is proposed to move away from portable offices to a permanent building, there will be savings in excess of £1000 per polling station, per election.
- The Council is responsible for the costs of conducting elections only at local elections (including if held, local by elections) that elect the Borough's own councillors. At all other elections, all costs are reclaimed from the relevant governing body for that election (e.g. central government meet's the costs of UK and European Parliamentary elections and the GLA meet the costs of London Mayoral and Greater London Assembly elections).

5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

- In order to comply with the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1983 sections 18A-18E (as amended by section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013), and the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006 the Council must undertake a statutory review of polling districts and polling places in the period between October 2013 and January 2015.
- In carrying out the review, the local authority must comply with the steps set out in Schedule A1 Representation of the People Act 1983. The local authority is required to:
 - publish a notice of the holding of a review
 - consult the (Acting) Returning Officer for every parliamentary constituency which is wholly or partly in its area
 - publish all representations made by an (Acting) Returning Officer within 30 days of receipt by posting a copy of them at the local authority's office and in at least one conspicuous place in their area and, if the authority maintains a website, by placing a copy on the authority's website
 - 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 representations made by the (Acting) Returning Officer(s).
 - on completion of a review, give reasons for its decisions and publish:
 1. all correspondence sent to an (Acting) Returning Officer in connection with the review
 2. 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
 3. all representations made by any person in connection with the review
 4. the minutes of any meeting held by the council to consider any revision to the designation of polling districts or polling places within its area as a result of the review
 5. details of the designation of polling districts and polling places within the local authority area as a result of the review
 6. details of the places where the results of the review have been published
- Provision is contained within Section 18E RPA 1983 which provides that no election is to be questioned by reason of any informality relative to polling districts and polling places. Representations can be made to the Electoral Commission which may make directions to alter polling districts.
- The Council's Constitution, Responsibility for Functions, Annex A states the terms of reference of the General Functions Committee, including '...polling stations.'

5.4 Risk Management

- By approving the outcomes of this review the Council will meet its statutory duty to review polling districts and polling places as designated under the Representation of the People Act 1983 section 18A-18E (as amended by section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013) and thereby eliminates the risk of breaching this duty.
- In conducting and implementing the findings of this review of Polling Districts and Polling Places, the Council mitigates the risk that electors find the arrangements for polling within the Borough to be hampered by poor accessibility or the provision of sub-standard facilities (given the practicable circumstances prevailing in each polling district).
- By approving an annual review and submission to the General Functions Committee of the arrangements for polling districts and polling places within the borough, the Council will mitigate the risk of the polling arrangements becoming unfit for purpose. This may otherwise happen due to changes to the electorate that are likely to be brought about by housing re-developments and regeneration projects and/or changes to the various voter franchises (e.g. the accession of new EU member states, voting for 16 & 17 year olds being introduced by future legislation etc.).

5.5 Equalities and Diversity

- No separate equalities impact assessment has been undertaken as the delivery of this electoral process is strictly governed by legislation, which is in itself designed to provide for reasonable access for all electors – including persons who have different forms of disability (so far as is reasonably practicable in the circumstances). In addition to providing polling stations that are as accessible as practicable in the circumstances, electoral legislation provides that all voters have the right to request the use of postal or proxy voting arrangements.
- The legislation governing this review required that representations were sought from persons who are considered to have an expertise in access to locations for persons with different forms of disability. In order to fulfil this requirement, representations were sought from:
 - The Equalities Officer of the London Borough of Barnet
 - The 'Experts by Experience' Forum – facilitated by LBB's Adult Social Services
 - 'Access in the Borough of Barnet' – a section of 'DabB' (Disability Action in the Borough of Barnet) that reviews access arrangements for people with different forms of disability

5.6 Consultation and Engagement

- The notice of this review, which invites representations to be made regarding the polling arrangements within the borough, was published and displayed at Hendon Town Hall and posted on the Council's website on 18 July 2014. In addition a copy of the review notice was sent to:
 - All 63 Councillors
 - The three Members of Parliament that represent the constituencies within the London Borough of Barnet
 - The Barnet and Camden London Assembly Constituency Member
 - Those parties outlined in section 5.5 of this report

- All representations received to date in response to the notice of review are contained within Appendix E.

- The proposals of the (Acting) Returning Officer (as laid out in appendixes A, B, C and D to this report) were received on 20 October 2014 and must be published within 30 days of receipt. They will be published at Hendon Town Hall and on the Council's website following the committee's decisions and representations will be awaited on the arrangements provided by the committee's decision. Should any new representations be made that contain suggestions that are considered to improve the polling arrangements over those decided, these will be brought before the committee (at the GFC meetings to be held on 3/12/14 or 19/1/15) for a supplementary decision.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 At the meeting held on 16 January 2012, the Committee approved the current polling district and polling place arrangements:
(<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/Data/General%20Functions%20Committee/201201162000/Agenda/Document%201.pdf> -Agenda Item 7)
- 6.2 At the meeting held on 25 March 2014, the Committee delegated responsibility to the Chief Executive to find and use alternative polling places where existing polling places were no longer available for the Local Government and European elections taking place on 22 May 2014.
(<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=174&MIId=7527&Ver=4> – Agenda Item 8)
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