

## Appendix 28

### Equality Impact Assessment: Statutory Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2021

The Equality Act 2010 includes a general duty which requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- **Eliminate discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- **Foster good relations** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

In order to comply with the general duty, Local Authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

Authorities which fail to carry out equality impact assessments risk making poor and unfair decisions which may discriminate against particular groups and worsen inequality.

1. **Key recommendations:** That the Constitution and General Purposes committee approves the Returning Officers proposals for polling places, as outlined within the report to committee on 6 January 2022.
2. **Committee name and date:** Constitution and General Purposes (CGP) committee – 6 January 2022
3. **Stakeholders:** All registered electors; election staff, election candidates and polling agents, official election observers.
4. **Consultation:** Public consultation took place on the Returning Officer's initial polling place proposals (as approved by CGP committee on 4 October 2021) between 11 October 2021 and 19 November 2021. The Returning Officer's final proposals were then sent to the London Borough of Barnet's 'Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing' for review ahead of CGP committee on 6 January 2022.
5. **Factors to consider in the assessment:** For each of the groups below, an assessment has been made on whether the proposed recommendation will have a positive, negative, or neutral impact. Where the impact is negative, a high, medium or low assessment is given. The assessment rates the impact of the decision(s) versus the current situation (i.e. disregarding any previous decisions made).
  - High impact – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.
  - Medium impact – some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence
  - Low impact – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive, Negative or Neutral Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
<b>Age</b>	Neutral	N/A	No changes made to polling provision that affect this characteristic
<b>Disability</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<i>(where relevant)</i>	A positive impact for certain persons with this protected characteristic (where specific to a mobility impairment) by the removal of those polling venues that previously used a portable office for voting. The portable offices had poor access for persons with mobility issues and minimal space provided inside to manoeuvre (e.g., for wheelchair users).
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	Neutral	N/A	No changes made to polling provision that affect this characteristic.
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Neutral	N/A	No changes made to polling provision that affect this characteristic.
<b>Race</b>	Neutral	N/A	No changes made to polling provision that affect this characteristic.
<b>Religion or belief</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Low</b> <i>(where relevant)</i>	An increased number of the venues used for polling are attached to (or managed by) religious organisations. In all cases, actual halls or rooms used as places of worship are avoided. In addition, electoral law allows for the Presiding Officer at any polling station to take a ballot paper to an elector outside of the venue if they are unable or unwilling to enter the premises being used.
<b>Sex</b>	Neutral	N/A	No changes made to polling provision that affect this characteristic.
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Neutral	N/A	No changes made to polling provision that affect this characteristic.
<b>Marriage and Civil partnership</b>	Neutral	N/A	No changes made to polling provision that affect this characteristic.