

COUNCIL	DATE: 26 October 2016
TITLE: Interim Review of Polling Arrangements for local government and parliamentary elections	ITEM NO: 11
CHIEF OFFICER: Central Services	CABINET MEMBER Leader of the Council

1. Purpose of the Report – decisions required

The Council is requested to:

- 1.1 Approve the designation of changed polling places and polling districts for UK parliamentary and local government elections, as set out in this report, with effect from the publication of the next revised register of electors (scheduled for 1 December 2016 or later if any by-elections occur).
- 1.2 Instruct the Registration Officer to write to affected households notifying them of the changes to polling arrangements.

2. Background

- 2.1 This report summarises the requirements regarding polling arrangements in section 3, summarises the current and proposed arrangements in section 4, and sets out in more detail in section 5 the proposals for a limited number of changes to polling district boundaries and polling places with effect from the next revised register of electors after the approval of these changes (if approved).
- 2.2 The polling districts where recommendations for changes have been made are WR1, WR2, WR3, WR7, WR8 and WR9 (Woolwich Riverside Ward). These proposals have arisen due to major developments in the area and for the convenience of the electors.
- 2.3 In each case the relevant Ward Councillors and M.P.s have been consulted on the proposals.
- 2.4 The report of the Acting Returning Officer regarding polling stations that he would be minded to choose, should the proposals be agreed is attached, **Appendix D.**

3. Summary of statutory requirements for polling arrangements

3.1 **Polling districts**

A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a constituency or ward into smaller parts. The duty and responsibility to designate polling districts rests with the council. A polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station.

3.2 **Polling places and polling stations**

A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the Returning Officer. Polling places should be within the polling district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area outside the district. A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place; unlike polling districts and polling places, the polling stations are determined by the Returning Officer.

3.3 The Council is responsible for dividing its area into polling districts for so much of any constituency as is situated in the borough, and for reviewing the polling districts and polling places at least once every four years.

3.4 Section 18B of the Representation of the People Act specifies that the Council 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 those who are disabled;** and
- when considering or reviewing the designation of a polling place, **have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.**

3.5 In conducting a review the Council must consult the (Acting) Returning Officer in a constituency wholly or partly within its area. Where the Council makes alterations to the polling districts within its area the Electoral Registration Officer must amend the register of electors accordingly.

4. Current and recommended arrangements

Parliamentary Constituency	Ward	Polling District	Current designated polling place	Recommended polling place	Recommended Polling District Changes
Greenwich & Woolwich	Woolwich Riverside	WR1	Boyle House, 1 Gallon Close	Boyle House, 1 Gallon Close	Yes current WR3 to be fully merged with WR1
		WR2	YMCA Thames Gateway (Greenwich), Antelope Road	YMCA Thames Gateway (Greenwich), Antelope Road	Yes top section of WR7 to be merged with WR2
		WR3	Woolwich Adventure Playground, Pett Street	Boyle House, 1 Gallon Close	Yes WR3 to be completely merged with WR1
		WR7	St Mary Magdalene School, Kingsman Street	St Mary Magdalene School, Kingsman Street	Yes top section of WR7 to merge with WR2
		WR8	The Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street	The Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street	Yes top section of WR8 to merge with current WR9
		WR9	Berkeley Gallery, Greenwich Heritage Centre	Building 41, Site of Greenwich Heritage Centre	Yes top section of WR8 to be merged with WR9. WR9 to be renamed WR3

5. Report - detailed proposals

5.1 **Polling districts WR1 / 3, Woolwich Riverside Ward, Greenwich & Woolwich parliamentary constituency**

This proposal is to increase the size of polling district WR1, by merging it with WR3.

5.1.1 The current designated polling place is Boyle House, 1 Gallon Close. The site is council property and no charge is paid for use of the facilities. It has been recently refurbished and is a pleasant building. It has therefore been proposed

that the current WR3 be incorporated into WR1, making a larger polling district and reducing the number of polling stations paid for by the council.

5.1.2 The condition of the proposed venue for residents in WR3, is far superior to those in which they currently use at Woolwich Adventure Play, making it a more pleasant experience for all.

5.1.3 The current WR3 is a small polling district with approximately 298 electors. The district of WR1 has approximately 387 electors, if combined this would total 685. This figure is more in line with the smaller polling districts within the borough. The cost of hiring premises would be reduced, as the proposed venue does not incur a hire charge and a presiding officer's fee would no longer need to be paid for WR3.

5.1.6 Maps showing the current and recommended polling arrangements are attached as **Appendices A.1 and A.2**. It is **recommended** that the Council resolve to remove the polling district line separating WR1 and WR3 to make a larger voting area. This district would be named WR1.

5.2 Polling districts WR2 / 7, Woolwich Riverside Ward, Greenwich and Woolwich parliamentary constituency

This proposal, if accepted, would see the polling district line between WR2 and WR7 being amended.

5.2.1 It has been proposed that the section to the north of WR7 be included in the current WR2. Anything that falls north of the line will be included in WR2. Electors would attend YMCA Thames Gateway (Greenwich). Currently, there are approximately 226 electors in this part of the current WR7. The new total electorate would be approximately 1647.

5.2.2 The suggestion to amend the line is for the convenience and safety of electors, who would no longer have to cross Woolwich Church Street, a busy main road.

5.2.3 A map showing the current and proposed arrangements is attached as **Appendices B.1 and B.2**. It is **recommended** that the council resolve to alter the polling district line as prescribed in this report and appendices.

5.3 Polling Districts WR8 / 9

This proposal would see the northern section of WR8 moved into the polling district of WR9.

- 5.3.1 Polling district WR9, currently has over 3,000 electors and is a double polling station. There are currently no electors in this part of WR8 that has been recommended as part of the move. Developments are scheduled for this site in the future and as a result the electorate will increase.
- 5.3.2 Under current polling arrangements, electors, who reside North of Woolwich High Street and Beresford Street would have to cross these roads to attend their current polling station. This proposal has been suggested to improve the convenience and safety of electors. The site of Greenwich Heritage Centre is a much safer alternative.
- 5.3.3 It is proposed that the whole site of the Greenwich Heritage Centre complex (Building 41) be assigned the polling place, rather than the Berkeley Gallery. The Berkeley Gallery was previously leased to Fire Power, who no longer use the site and will soon be part of the Greenwich Heritage Centre. A new exhibition is being sited in this room, making it impractical to house two or more polling stations. There are other rooms currently in the centre that would be suitable, e.g. The Temporary Exhibition Room.
- 5.3.4 It is proposed that the whole site of Building 41, including The Greenwich Heritage Centre and additional wings on this complex be designated the polling place. This will allow flexibility with a growing population and take in consideration availability of rooms due to exhibitions and refurbishments.
- 5.3.5 It is also recommended under this proposal to rename the amended WR9, to WR3. If these suggestions are approved, there would be 8 polling districts within Woolwich Riverside Ward instead of 9. For consistency, it has been recommended that they are named in sequence.
- 5.3.6 A map showing the current and proposed polling places and polling district boundaries is attached as **Appendices C.1 and C.2**. It is **recommended** that the Council approve to move the boundary between WR8 and 9, rename the former WR9 to WR3, as set out in the map and approve to amend the polling place.

6. Financial Implications and Comments of the Director of Finance

None

7. Legal Implications and Comments of the Head of Legal Services

None

Background Papers

The Electoral Commission documents

- Polling place reviews (<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/electoral-administrator/polling-place-reviews>)
- Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations (http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/word_doc/0020/161633/Polling-district-review-guidance.doc)

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