

COUNCIL	DATE 30 October 2019	ITEM NO 14
TITLE Review of parliamentary and local government polling districts and polling places – full periodic review	WARD (S) All	
CHIEF OFFICER Director of Communities and Environment	CABINET MEMBER Leader of the Council	
DECISION CLASSIFICATION Non-Key	FINAL DECISION ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS REPORT TO BE MADE AT THIS MEETING Yes	

I. Decision required

This report makes the following recommendation to the full council:

- 1.1 Approve the designation of polling places and polling districts for UK parliamentary and local government elections as set out in this report and appendices.
- 1.2 That the approved polling places and polling districts shall take effect at the same time as the next revised register of electors is published (scheduled for 1 December 2019)

2. Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 2.1 Section 18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983 requires the Council to periodically undertake a full review of its polling places and polling districts. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires the next review to be completed by 31 January 2020.
- 2.2 The Council has delegated the decision making powers for this part of electoral law to the Chief Executive however on this occasion she has determined that the Full Council should scrutinise the proposals and make the decision.
- 2.3 This report contains proposals for polling places and polling districts as part of that review. The proposals have been subject to public consultation.

- 2.4 These proposals are for both Parliamentary and Local Government polling places and polling districts and proposes that they continue to be coterminous so that polling arrangements are the same for every electoral event.
- 2.5 This report generally proposes no change to the existing polling arrangements. The existing arrangements generally work well and we have received very few complaints regarding accessibility for electors to their local polling station and none where a suitable alternative was requested. The only change of note in this report is that the polling place at Jubilee Club Room is proposed to be discontinued and changed to combine with the existing place at St. Mark's Community Centre approximately 150 meters along the same road.

3. Introduction and Background

Polling districts and polling places

- 3.1 A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a constituency or ward into smaller parts. A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected. The duty and responsibility to designate polling districts and places rests with the Council. The Council has delegated this duty to the Chief Executive in Schedule C, of Part 3 of the constitution.

Polling stations

- 3.2 Polling stations are selected by the Returning Officer and will be in or around the polling place designated. They are the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. In exceptional circumstances, the Returning Officer can choose to have the polling station elsewhere such as when the designated polling place becomes unavailable.
- 3.3 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.**

3.4 While the Council has delegated the duty and responsibility to designate polling districts and polling places to the Chief Executive she has decided that the Full Council should receive this report and make the decision on this occasion.

3.5 The Council has consulted with the Acting Returning Officer for the Royal Borough responsible for the parliamentary constituencies of Greenwich and Woolwich and of Eltham and the Acting Returning Officer for London Borough of Bexley as she is responsible for the three Wards which form part of the Erith and Thamesmead Constituency. Both are content with the proposals and have made the appropriate submissions required by law to that effect.

3.6 The proposals are contained within Appendix A, B and C to this report. The three appendices relate to the three Parliamentary Constituencies which are contained within the Royal Borough.

4. Available Options

4.1 Do nothing. The Council could not undertake this review or not take a decision on the recommendations in this report. However, the Representation of the People Act 1983 and The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires a review to be undertaken and completed by 31 January 2020. The Council may face consequences if it does not complete the review including taking a decision to approve a proposal. The Chief Executive may consider making a decision under the delegated powers to ensure the necessary decision is made by the deadline in law.

4.2 Reject the proposals. Officers would then look to prepare a new set of proposals and undertake additional public consultation and look to gain approval by the review deadline of 31 January 2020. The Chief Executive may consider making a decision under delegated powers ensure the necessary decision is made by the deadline in law.

4.3 Accept the proposals. The majority of the proposals are to retain the same polling arrangements that have been in place for some time. If accepted, the proposals will be implemented on 1

December 2019 (or alternative date as detailed above) and the duty to complete a review will have been met.

5. Preferred Options and reason for recommendation

- 5.1 The preferred option is to accept the proposals for the new polling place and polling district arrangements.
- 5.2 The reason for recommending the polling place and polling district proposals is that an internal review by Electoral Services has determined that the places and districts proposed provide a suitable set of arrangements for polling which receive very few negative comments. The review identified that, in the view of the Head of Electoral Services, all polling places meet the legal requirements to provide suitable and accessible places for polling as far as local circumstances reasonably allow.
- 5.3 The proposals have been open for public inspection and no adverse comments have been received. The only comments received were of information or to show that they were content with the proposals.

6. Consultation Results

- 6.1 Public consultation was carried out. No comments were made opposing the proposals or suggesting alternative arrangements.

7. Next Steps: Communication and Implementation of the Decision

- 7.1 Implementation of the agreed proposals will be on 1st December 2019 (or with the publication of the revised register of electors whichever is earlier).
- 7.2 Polling maps will be amended and published on the Council website as soon as practicable and the electoral software will be updated so that the new polling arrangements will be in place for future electoral events.

8. Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Legal including Human Rights Act	The legal implications are set out in the report.	John Scarborough, Director of Legal Services, 16/10/2019
Finance and other resources including procurement implications	<p>The report recommends that full Council approve the designation of polling places and polling districts for UK parliamentary and local government elections as set out in this report and appendices and that the approved polling places and polling districts shall take effect at the same time as the next revised register of electors is published (scheduled for 1 December 2019).</p> <p>There are no financial implications arising from these recommendations.</p>	Joanne Stark Accountancy Business Change Manager 14/10/19
Equalities	The decisions recommended in this paper have been made with due consideration with the requirements of the Equality Act with regards to access to the electoral process for persons with protected characteristics. Decisions have been made with consideration of the electoral law and guidance issued by the Electoral Commission on providing suitable polling places for electors which recognise the duties contained in the Equality Act.	James Pack, Head of Electoral Services, 3/10/2019

9. Report Appendices

9.1 The following documents are to be published with and form part of the report:

- Appendix A, B and C contain the proposals, reasoning and show if they are a change from existing arrangements

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