

Report for: Corporate Committee

Item number:

Title: Review of polling districts, polling places and designation of polling scheme

Report authorised by: Mark Stevens, Project Sponsor

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Ward(s) affected: All

**Report for Key/
Non Key Decision:** Non key decision

1. Describe the issue under consideration

The ward boundaries in Haringey are about to change, with effect from the local elections on 5 May 2022. The new ward boundaries, their names and the number of councillors for each ward have been decided by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and approved by Parliament.

As a consequence of the above, new polling districts need to be drawn and approved to allow elections to take place. Each new polling district needs to have a designated polling place. As such, a full review of polling districts and polling places has been carried out.

This report sets out the recommendations for each polling district and the associated polling place, including where feedback was received and any changes that were made as a result of the consultation phase.

2. Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the polling scheme describing the polling districts and the polling places for the new 21 wards of Haringey as set out in Appendix 1a & b is approved.
2. The (Acting) Returning Officer (ARO) and the Deputy (Acting) Returning Officers are given delegated authority to amend the polling scheme where the names of buildings change and for specific elections where strictly necessary for a particular election, including changing polling places.
3. That minor errors in transferring the maps in Appendix 1a & b into the electoral registration software can be corrected with ARO approval

3. Reasons for decision

Recommendation 1 – the Council has a statutory duty to sub-divide parliamentary constituencies into polling districts. The Council also has a statutory duty to allocate a polling place for each polling district. Whilst there is no statutory requirement for local government electoral wards to be split into polling districts, in order to deliver local government elections, wards need to be divided into polling districts, and each with an allocated polling place. Thus, Recommendation 1 is required to support the delivery of the 2022 borough elections. It is also a statutory requirement to consult on the creation of the scheme.

Recommendation 2 – this polling place scheme is put in place for future elections until further notice. Names of buildings can change and this will allow the polling scheme to reflect these name changes. Additionally, at the time of any particular election, a designated polling place may not be available. The delegation of this decision to the (A)RO will ensure that polling places can be booked in a timely manner, especially where a snap election is called at short notice, without the need to call an extraordinary meeting of the Corporate Committee. This will not be used to amend the polling scheme outside of the requirements of an election.

Recommendation 3 – there have been numerous technical issues with the mapping software that officers have worked to address with the software supplier. Before officers load the data into the software system hosting the electoral register, they will redraw all the approved maps in the Council's GIS system. This process may highlight minor errors in the boundaries of land parcels that will need to be corrected.

4. Alternative options considered

A set of proposals was drafted, and a two-stage consultation process was carried out. During the first stage, the Electoral Registration Officer consulted the Returning Officer on the draft proposals. The second stage was to consult key stakeholders and the public on the draft proposals. These initial proposals were shared with all Members and published on the Council's website at the beginning of the consultation process. As a result of the consultation feedback, alternative proposals were developed for some areas for consideration by the Committee.

5. Background information

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) commenced a periodic review of Haringey's wards in July 2018. This was the first such review since the LGBCE's predecessor undertook a review in 1999, which culminated in the current 19 three-Member wards.

The LGBCE published its final recommendations in December 2019:

- Haringey should be represented by 57 councillors, the same as there are now
- Haringey should have 21 wards, two more than there are now
- The boundaries of all wards should change; none will stay the same

These new wards will come into effect on Thursday 5 May 2022, the date of the next scheduled full Council elections.

As a consequence of the above, new polling districts need to be drawn and approved to ensure the successful delivery of elections. Each new polling district needs to have a designated polling place. As such, a full review of polling districts and polling places has been carried out.

All the information about that review can be found on the LGBCE's website - <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/greater-london/greater-london/haringey>

This review is separate to the current review of parliamentary boundaries.

As entirely new ward boundaries would come into effect for the May 2022 elections, this review presented an opportunity to revisit custom and practice spanning many years. The parameters that were applied are set out in Appendix 1a to this report. However, one particularly notable potential related to moving away from the use of portacabins as much as possible, unless there were absolutely no viable alternative options.

As portacabins are not fixed buildings, they have very limited facilities for polling station staff – i.e. chemical toilets, no separate rest space, and no kitchen facilities, far from ideal for what is a very long working day. Furthermore, portacabins also bring with them increased risk - experience has shown that power supplies regularly fail, there can often be delivery issues/problems getting the temporary building correctly situated, there is an unwillingness for many staff to work in a building with so few facilities and access for those with physical disabilities can be challenging.

Officers visited all existing polling places, as well as a number of new potential venues. The Electoral Commission's guidance on polling district and polling place reviews was followed and officers completed the Commission's checklist when reviewing all the polling places.

A two-stage consultation process was carried out on a set of draft proposed polling districts and polling places.

Equalities principles were embedded in this process. The Equality Impact Assessment sets out the considerations for how to ensure that the Council will meet the requirements of equalities-related legislation. This is attached at Appendix 2

The consultation process and outcomes of this are described in Appendix 3 and are reflected in the recommendations of this report.

The changes to the proposals resulting from the feedback to the consultation are also shown in Appendix 3 to the report.

Once new polling districts are approved, these will be implemented on the electoral register, which will then be re-published. It is anticipated publishing the electoral register in December 2021 on the new ward boundaries. It is also

anticipated republishing the register in January 2022 to ensure all changes to the polling districts are fully implemented.

The final proposals are as follows:

Currently (2021)	Original Proposal (August 2021)	Final Proposals following Consultation	Comments
19 wards	21 wards	Already confirmed	Already confirmed
83 polling districts	74 polling districts	76 Polling Districts	This includes three small districts required to align the new wards with the current parliamentary boundaries
80 polling places (at the recent GLA)	70 polling places	73 Polling Places (some with one and some with two polling stations)	The three small districts share a polling place with the larger, adjacent district
6 Portable Buildings	4 Portable Buildings	4 Portable Buildings	

6. Contribution to strategic outcomes

It is a statutory requirement to have a polling scheme setting out polling districts and polling places and to consult on this.

Ward boundaries are often used to structure Council services. The changes to the ward boundaries have been communicated to managers across the Council to ensure that services aligned to ward boundaries are appropriately amended.

7. Statutory Officers' comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Head of Legal & Governance, Equalities)

Finance

The recommendations in this report will, if approved, result in a minor reduction in the number of venues designated as a polling place. These recommendations will also see a reduction in the number of portable buildings hired as a polling place. This will have a minor reduction in costs at future elections (expected to be less than £10,000).

The Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer will develop a communications plan to ensure residents are made aware of the changes to the polling scheme. This will, where possible, link in with communications already planned (such as the Household Notification Letter sent to each property in January/February) and by way of an insert sent out with poll cards. Thus, the additional cost of this will be minimal.

The cost of the electoral register and the mapping software is met within existing budgets.

Strategic Procurement

Strategic Procurement note the contents of the report and that there are no procurement implications in the report.

Legal

The Head of Legal & Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report and makes the following comments.

The London Borough of Haringey Council (Electoral Changes) Order 2020, to implement recommendations made by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for new electoral arrangements in Haringey Council, was made on 12th October 2020.

New ward arrangements for the Council successfully completed a 40-day period of Parliamentary scrutiny and will come into force at the local elections in **May 2022**. As a consequence, all existing Wards will be abolished and replaced with 21 new ones. The Order also establishes the names and areas of the new electoral wards and the number of Councillors for each.

It is noted that in formulating these proposals, the Electoral Commission's guidance on polling district and polling place reviews was followed, and that equalities principles were embedded into the process. In addition, that an appropriate public consultation exercise was conducted, the results of which led officers to make changes to the proposals. The committee is also required to conscientiously take the feedback received from the consultation into account in finalising any proposals.

Under the provisions of Part Three, Section B of the Constitution, and Reg. 2 and Schedule 1 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 S.I. 2853 (as amended or further amended in any statute or subordinate legislation), Corporate Committee has as one of its Terms of Reference the following Schedule 1 function: *Paragraph D – Elections; all functions relating to Elections except the approval of pilot schemes for local elections which is reserved to full Council*. Accordingly, this Committee has the power to make a resolution in relation to the Recommendations contained in this report.

Equalities

The council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and people who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not

The three parts of the duty apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

The decision is to approve the new polling districts in the 21 wards of Haringey as set out in Appendix 1a & b and approve delegated authority arrangements.

A full Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken to understand the potential impacts of this proposal on individuals with protected characteristics. The EqIA is attached at Appendix 2.

Individuals who may be impacted by the proposals are those who may find it difficult to physically go to or access a polling station, whether due to age, disability or pregnancy. The EqIA sets out the measures taken to reduce the impact on these groups by making polling stations accessible and also promoting alternative ways of voting such as by post or by proxy. Assessment and understanding of accessibility, as required by the Electoral Commission Guidance on Polling Districts and Polling Places reviews, have been embedded in the review from the beginning of the project.

8. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 – consisting of:

- a) The details of the proposed polling districts and polling places recommended for the 21 wards
- b) Statutory Polling scheme for the London Borough of Haringey, consisting of the polling district maps, polling district codes and polling places

Appendix 2 – Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix 3 – The consultation report

9. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

This review was conducted following the Electoral Commission's guidance: [Polling place reviews | Electoral Commission](#)

All the information about the Boundary Commission's review can be found here - [Haringey | LGBCE Site](#)

The consultation documentation was shared here: [New electoral arrangements \(haringey.gov.uk\)](https://haringey.gov.uk)

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