

**Report for:** Corporate Committee

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

**Report authorised by:** Mark Stevens, Assistant Director Direct Services & 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**

- 1.1 A full review of polling places and polling districts was conducted in 2021 following the ward boundary review undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). The outcome of the polling place and polling district review was implemented for the May 2022 borough elections.
- 1.2 Following the elections, a further review was carried out based on feedback from polling day and population changes.
- 1.3 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**

**It is recommended that Corporate Committee:**

- 2.1 Approves the polling scheme describing the polling districts and the polling places for the London Borough of Haringey as set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Grants the (Acting) Returning Officer ((A)RO) and the Deputy (Acting) Returning Officers 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.
- 2.3 Delegates to the Electoral Registration Officer (“ERO”) the authority to approve correction of any minor errors in allocating properties to districts on transferring the maps in Appendix 1 into the electoral registration software

## **3. Reasons for decision**

- 3.1 **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 elections. It is also a statutory requirement to consult on the Polling Scheme.
- 3.2 **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.
- 3.3 **Recommendation 3** – The maps produced for this report need to be imported into the Council’s GIS Mapping system. When doing this, it may highlight a small number of properties on the edge of a polling district boundary that has been placed into the “wrong” polling district (but still within the correct ward). Additionally, the import into the Council’s GIS system may flag properties that have a polling district boundary cutting through them, splitting a property into two or more polling districts. Recommendation 3 gives the ERO the authority needed to correct these errors.

#### 4. **Alternative options considered**

- 4.1 A set of proposals was drafted, and a two-stage consultation process was carried out. During the first stage, the ERO 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**

- 5.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England conducted a review of the Haringey Borough wards. The resulting change from 19 to 21 wards (albeit with no change to the number of councillors - 57) came into effect from the May 2022 elections. A full review of the Polling Districts and Polling Places in Haringey Borough was carried out in 2021 in preparation for implementing the new wards. This was reflected in the Polling Scheme that was approved by the Corporate Committee on 16 November 2021.
- 5.2 The Polling Scheme broadly worked well. Feedback was gathered after the election from all those involved (including political parties, candidates, staff and

voters) and it was agreed that a further light touch review would be beneficial, looking at the following issues:

- (a) All polling places would be checked for electorate capacity.
- (b) There were some known issues, such as the growing population in Noel Park, which meant that an additional polling district and place was required; also, the polling place for Seven Sisters district SES-A was outside the ward.
- (c) The focus would be on polling district boundaries and polling place locations – practical and logistical issues that need to be improved would be dealt with outside the scope of this review. These were around how the polling places within the scheme are used, signposted and made fully accessible.
- (d) All new potential polling places were visited to check for suitability and accessibility

5.3 The working assumptions that were used for the last review were retained (see Appendix 2).

In addition, requirements for voter ID that will be brought in from May 2023 will increase the workload of polling station staff. The target electorate that was set for each individual polling station was changed to 2300 from 2000-3000. This was in anticipation that the Electoral Commission Guidance, which currently suggests that the electorate per polling station is 2500, would be reduced to reflect the changes brought in by the Elections Act 2022. The figure recently announced by the Commission is 2250, which is closely aligned to the target. Where a polling place has capacity, this can be used to accommodate two polling stations so the district could have an electorate of around 4600. Where the polling place is too small to accommodate two polling stations, the district then needs to be reduced in size.

There is flexibility built into the polling scheme, as the actual electorate at any given election will be used to decide on the number of polling stations in a polling place.

5.4 Having looked at the feedback and population data, a set of proposals were prepared. In summary, the following changes were proposed (with the full consultation paper including the maps included at Appendix 3):

- **Highgate Ward:** Jackson's Lane proved not to be overly suitable for use as a polling place. It is proposed to designate Highgate Library as the polling place, in place of Jackson's Lane. Jackson's Lane would be retained as a polling place until the renovations at Highgate Library are completed.
- **Hornsey Ward:** Amend the polling district boundaries to reduce the number of electors allocated to the Kurdish Advice Centre and increase the number of electors allocated to Middle Lane Methodist Church.
- **Noel Park Ward:** Splitting this ward into four polling districts rather than the current three polling districts. Proposing using either Alevi Cultural Centre

and Cemevi OR Faith Miracle Church OR McQueen's Theatre as the fourth polling place. Advice from Members was sought on this.

- **Seven Sisters Ward:** Designating the whole of polling district SES-A as the polling place, to allow the Returning Officer to site a portable building on a suitable site for use as a polling place.
- **Tottenham Central Ward:** Increase the number of polling districts from three to four. Designate Dorset Halls / West Green Baptist Church as the polling place for the fourth district (this is situated in Tottenham Central ward but is currently designated a polling place for Seven Sisters Ward)
- **West Green Ward:** Milton Hall Community Centre is not large enough to accommodate the electorate it currently has. We are proposing splitting this ward into five polling districts as opposed to the current four. It is proposed using the Harris Primary Academy School as the additional polling place.

## Consultation

- 5.5 The consultation was formally launched on 20 September 2022 and was due to close in October. This was then extended to 24 November to allow full engagement with consultees. It was sent to all ward councillors, Haringey elected representatives, people who work in organisations that are experts in accessibility and political party representatives. Six email responses were received. Information on the consultation responses is included in Appendix 2.
- 5.6 This feedback resulted in changes being made to the Hornsey proposal to adjust the boundary between HRN-A and HRN-D west to a more logical natural boundary.
- 5.7 Feedback on the options for Noel Park ward was in favour of establishing the Cemevi as a new polling place. Other than that, the proposals were unchanged from the consultation and have therefore been included in the revised polling scheme at Appendix 1.
- 5.8 As with the previous review, the aim was to minimise the use of portable buildings. The reasoning, as set out in the 16 November 2021 report, is as follows:

*As portable buildings 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.*

- 5.9 Equalities principles were embedded in this process. A Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that the Council meets the requirements of equalities legislation was carried out, in alignment with the 2021 EQIA as the approach

was unchanged. The majority of the changes proposed in the review will result in shorter walking distances for most electors. The Elections Act 2022 brings in the requirement to ensure accessibility of polling stations. The details of how this should be implemented will be set out in Electoral Commission Guidance, which is currently being consulted on. Most of the draft guidance is already implemented in Haringey and, once the final document is published, all the election processes will be reviewed to align with this.

- 5.10 Once revised polling districts are approved, the Electoral Registration Officer will make any necessary alterations to the electoral register and give notice of having done so.
- 5.11 Visits to eleven polling places plus the sites for the five portable buildings to finalise details of how each will be used will be carried out before an election takes place. The data held on each polling place will also be refreshed through engagement with the people who manage each building.

## **6. Contribution to strategic outcomes**

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

### **Statutory Officers' comments**

## **7. Finance**

- 7.1 The recommendations in this report will, if approved, result in a minor increase in the number of venues designated as a polling place with an associated increase in cost (expected to be less than £10,000).
- 7.2 The cost of the electoral register and the mapping software is met within existing budgets.

## **8. Strategic Procurement**

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

## **9. Legal**

- 9.1 The Head of Legal & Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report and makes the following comments.
- 9.2 The London Borough of Haringey Council (Electoral Changes) Order 2020 was made on 12th October 2020 and the resultant new ward arrangements for the Council came into force at the local elections in **May 2022**.
- 9.3 S18A(2) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 ("RoPA") requires the Council to divide each Parliamentary constituency in its area, and s31 of RoPA empowers the Council to divide its area for the purpose of local elections into

polling districts and to designate polling place(s) for each district. In each case the Council is under a duty to keep the polling districts and places under review.

- 9.4 On any review of polling districts and places for Parliamentary constituencies the Council must consult pursuant to s18C(6) and Schedule A1 of RoPA, and upon completion of the review the Council must give reasons for its decisions in the review.
- 9.5 Pursuant to s18A(5) of RoPA, on any alteration of Parliamentary polling districts the ERO must make such adaptation of the electoral register as is required, and this will take effect on the date of publication of a notice to this effect.
- 9.6 It is noted that in formulating these current proposals, the Electoral Commission's guidance on polling district and polling place reviews was followed, and an EQIA has been carried out. In addition, an appropriate statutory public consultation exercise was conducted, the results of which led officers to make changes to the proposals. The committee is required conscientiously to take the outcome of the consultation into account in taking its decision.
- 9.7 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.

## 10. Equalities

- 10.1 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. Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey Council treats socioeconomic status as a local protected characteristic.

- 10.2 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.



- 10.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) was undertaken for the review, which built on the EqIA carried out for the 2021 review to understand the potential impacts of proposals as to polling districts and places on individuals with protected characteristics. Additional polling districts will, on the whole, reduce travel distance/time for residents and thereby make them more accessible. Officers developed principles (set out in appendix 2) as to the extent of polling districts and the siting and characteristics of polling places in the light of that assessment, which have guided and been applied in the current review (see next paragraph).
- 10.4 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 measures that should be 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. Early information will also be provided to residents regarding accessibility to mitigate any impacts as much as possible. Where possible alternative venues were found, and ward districts were redrawn to promote accessibility for these groups. Ramp access is provided to polling stations where a ramp is needed and not already present. All polling stations are within easy access of public transport. 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.

## 11. Use of Appendices

**Appendix 1** –The polling scheme

**Appendix 2** – Working assumptions from the 2021 Review

**Appendix 3** – Feedback to the consultation

**Appendix 4** – Equalities Impact Assessment

## 12. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 12.1 This review was conducted following the Electoral Commission’s guidance: [Polling place reviews | Electoral Commission](#)
- 12.2 All the information about the Boundary Commission’s review can be found here - [Haringey | LGBCE Site](#)
- 12.3 The consultation documentation was shared here: [New electoral arrangements \(haringey.gov.uk\)](#)

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