

Report for: General Purposes Committee 21 December 2023

Title: Review of polling districts, polling places and designation of polling scheme 2023/2024

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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 All local authorities are required to conduct a review of its polling districts and polling places between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025. A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency for the purposes of a UK Parliamentary election. A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the (A)RO).
- 1.2 It is essential that Haringey Council completes this 'polling scheme' review work by January 2024 in preparation for a general election which could be called at any time as well as in time for all the preparations for the May 2024 GLA Mayoral and Assembly Elections.
- 1.3 The polling district and polling place review has been carried out which builds upon the work of the past two recent reviews:
 - In 2021, the ward boundary review undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) and the subsequent Haringey Council review of its polling districts and places to reflect this.
 - A further review was carried out in October 2022 to build on feedback from the May 2022 elections and population changes. This was approved by Corporate Committee in February 2023.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 Four proposals are made for changes to the polling scheme approved in February 2023:
 - The boundary between CEN-A and CEN-B in the Crouch End ward is moved to the north to make walking distances to the polling stations in those polling districts more even.

- The boundary between WHL-A and WHL-B in the White Hart Lane ward is moved to the south to make walking distances to the polling places in those polling districts more even.
- The boundary between HRN-A and HRN-D moved to put the whole of Nightingale Lane in HRN-D
- The boundary between STG-A and STG-B moved to allocate the electors in Chettle Court to the polling place Hornsey Vale Community Centre

1.6 The revised boundaries are set out in the draft polling scheme attached to this report.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

N/A

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the General Purposes Committee:

- 3.1 Approves the polling scheme describing the polling districts and the polling places for the London Borough of Haringey as set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.2 Grants the (Acting) Returning Officer ((A)RO) and the Deputy (Acting) Returning Officers delegated authority to amend the polling scheme. This would be where the names of buildings change and for specific elections, where strictly necessary, this could include changing polling places (in the event an election is called and a building is not available, for example).
- 3.3 Delegates to the Electoral Registration Officer (“ERO”) the authority to approve corrections of any minor errors in allocating properties to polling districts on transferring the maps in Appendix 1 into the electoral registration software.

4. Reasons for decision

- 4.1 **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, to deliver local government elections, wards need to be divided into polling districts, and each must have 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.
- 4.2 This review is a statutory requirement and must take place between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025. It is, in fact, essential that Haringey Council completes this work by January 2024 so that any necessary changes are in place in time for all the preparations for the impending general election as well as the May 2024 GLA Mayoral and Assembly Elections.

4.3 **Recommendation 2** – this polling scheme is to be used 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 General Purposes Committee. This will not be used to amend the polling scheme outside of the requirements of an election.

4.4 **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 have been placed into the “wrong” polling district (but still within the correct ward). Additionally, the import into the Council’s GIS mapping 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.

5. **Alternative options considered**

5.1 The Council could decide to make no changes to the current polling scheme. However, given the consultation process undertaken and the feedback received (which generated helpful suggestions), it would be detrimental to groups of electors not to make changes to the current polling scheme.

6. **Background information**

6.1 The Council has a statutory duty to sub-divide parliamentary constituencies into polling districts and to allocate a polling place for each polling district. These polling districts and polling places are reviewed on a regular basis. All local authorities are required to conduct a review between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.

6.2 The current statutory review builds upon the work of the past two recent reviews:

- In 2021, following the ward boundary review undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), the Council reviewed its polling districts and polling places.
- A further review was carried out in October 2022 to build on feedback from the May 2022 elections and population changes. This was approved by Corporate Committee in February 2023.

6.3 Whilst there is no legal requirement to sub-divide local government wards, from a practical perspective, this is necessary to deliver elections. It is therefore sensible to ensure wards use the same sub-divisions as parliamentary constituencies (i.e., polling districts).

6.4 The following terminology is used in Electoral Services:

- **Polling districts:** A polling district is a geographical area created by dividing parliamentary constituencies. For the proposed local elections, they are divisions of the wards in the borough.
- **Polling places:** A polling place is the building or area in which the polling stations will be designated. There will only be one polling place proposed for each polling district.
- **Polling stations:** A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place.
- The **polling scheme** is the document that sets out the approved polling places and polling districts in the borough.

6.5 The reviews consider:

- How each ward can be divided as evenly as possible – the Electoral Commission (EC) guidance is that there should be, at most, 2,250 electors per polling station.
 - Voters now need to show ID in a polling station so the ballot paper issuing process is slightly longer. Therefore, the number of electors allocated to each polling station has been reduced in the EC guidance from 2,500 to account for this.
- Where polling will be held, each polling district must have a polling place. A polling place may be divided into more than one polling station.
- The availability of suitable locations for polling as well as natural boundaries or features such as railways or hills which may limit access to that location.
- Building flexibility 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.

6.7 The polling scheme broadly worked well in the May 2022 elections and was improved by the February 2023 review which built on feedback gathered after the election from all those involved (including political parties, candidates, staff and voters).

6.8 The current review commenced with ensuring all polling places were checked against the current electorate to ensure there was capacity for up to 2,250 electors. The focus was on polling district boundaries and polling place locations. Practical and logistical issues regarding the arrangements to make sure that polling places are accessible are being managed as part of the preparations for the May 2024 Mayor of London and London Assembly Elections. This will include how polling places within the scheme are used, signposted and made fully accessible to meet the new accessibility requirements of the Elections Act 2022.

6.9 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.

- 6.10 Furthermore, the introduction of Voter ID means the process of issuing ballot papers takes longer than previously which will result in longer queues of voters. Portable buildings are less than ideal for this, particularly in inclement weather.
- 6.11 Having looked at the feedback and population data, a set of proposals were prepared.
- 6.12 Equalities principles were embedded in this process. An Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that the Council meets the requirements of equalities legislation was carried out. The changes proposed in the review will result in shorter walking distances for most electors.

Consultation

- 6.13 In advance of the formal consultation phase, ward councillors were sent a pack of information about the polling scheme that was in place. This included maps and electorates. Responses representing six wards were received. Only one change is being proposed as a result of this feedback. This is to move the boundary between Crouch End polling districts CEN-A and CEN-B to make the walking distance to polling stations more even. This feedback was built into the proposals before they were prepared.
- 6.14 The Acting Returning Officer was consulted on the proposals on the 24 October and confirmed he was happy with them.
- 6.15 Public consultation was launched on 25 October 2023 and closed on 15 November 2023. The consultation information was sent to all ward councillors, Haringey elected representatives, people who work in organisations that are experts in accessibility, and political party representatives. Four email responses were received. Information on all the consultation feedback and the responses to them is included in Appendix 3.
- 6.16 As a result of the feedback from the consultation, further potential changes to the polling scheme were identified. It is proposed that the following boundaries are moved:
- between WHL-A and WHL-BH in the White Hart Lane ward is moved south to make the walking distances more even. This has been included in the attached proposals.
 - between HRN-A and HRN-D in Hornsey ward (resulting in the whole of Nightingale Lane being in HRN-D)
 - between STG-A and STG-B in Stroud Green ward (resulting in properties in Chettle Court being allocated to the polling place Hornsey Vale Community Centre)

- 6.17 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.

7. Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2022-2024 High-Level Strategic outcomes

- 7.1 Electoral Services contribute to the “Resident experience, participation and collaboration” of the Corporate Delivery Plan
- 7.2 It is a statutory requirement to have a polling scheme setting out polling districts and polling places and to consult on this.

8. Carbon and Climate Change

- 8.1 It is a requirement to make polling stations local to the electors so that accessibility requirements can be met. The walking distance measure for the review has been set at 10-15 minutes which allows polling places to be accessible without electors driving.
- 8.2 In more densely populated areas and where the facilities allow, two polling stations can be located at a single polling place which reduces the space requirement.

9. Statutory Officers’ comments

9.1 Finance

The cost of implementing the two proposed boundary changes i.e., writing to affected electors to tell them that their polling station has changed, is not material (<£1,000) and will be accommodated within existing electoral registration budgets.

9.2 Strategic Procurement

Strategic Procurement was consulted in the preparation of this report, notes the report content and that the recommendations do not relate to a procurement decision. Strategic Procurement has no objections to the report recommendations in section 3.

9.3 Head of Legal & Governance

- 9.3.1 The Head of Legal and Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report.
- 9.3.2 The Representations of People Act (RoPA) 1983 requires the Council to divide each Parliamentary constituency in its area and empowers the Council to divide its area for the purposes of local elections into polling districts and to designate polling places for each district. In each case, the Council is under a duty to keep the polling districts under review.
- 9.3.3 On any review of polling districts and places, the Council must consult pursuant to s18C(6) and Schedule A1 of RoPA 1983. On completion of the review, the Council must give reasons for its decisions in the review.

- 9.3.4 Pursuant to s18A(5) of RoPA 1983, for any alteration of Parliamentary polling districts, the registration officer 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.
- 9.3.5 The Electoral Commission's guidance on polling district and polling places review was followed and an EqIA has been undertaken. In addition, a statutory consultation exercise was conducted, the result of which led officers to make changes as set out in this report.
- 9.3.6 Under the provisions of Part 3, Section B of the Constitution and Regulation 2 and Schedule 1 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, General Purposes Committee has as one of its Terms of Reference, Elections; all functions relating to elections - except the approval of pilot schemes for local elections which is reserved to Full Council. Accordingly, General Purposes Committee has the power to make a resolution in relation to the recommendations in this report.

9.4 Equality

- 9.4.1 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.

- 9.4.2 The decision is to approve the polling districts in the 21 wards of Haringey as set out in Appendix 1 and approve delegated authority arrangements.
- 9.4.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) was undertaken for the review, which built on the EqIA carried out for the 2021 and 2022 reviews to understand the potential impacts of proposals as to polling districts and places on individuals with protected characteristics. The amendments to polling district boundaries 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).
- 9.4.4 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 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. Inspections of all the polling places is being carried out to create a record of the reasonable adjustments required for each venue.

10. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 –The polling scheme.

Appendix 2 – Working assumptions for the review.

Appendix 3 – Feedback to the consultation.

Appendix 4 – Equalities Impact Assessment.

11. Background papers

11.1 This review was conducted following the Electoral Commission’s guidance: [Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations | Electoral Commission](#)

11.2 Review of polling districts and polling scheme and designation of the polling scheme – Report from 2021:
[Agenda for Corporate Committee on Tuesday, 16th November, 2021, 7.00 pm | Haringey Council](#)

11.3 Review of polling districts and polling scheme and designation of the polling scheme – Report from 2023
[Agenda for Corporate Committee on Thursday, 2nd February, 2023, 7.00 pm | Haringey Council](#)

11.4 The consultation documentation was shared here: [Revisions to Polling Districts and Polling Places | London Borough of Haringey](#)

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