

<b>COUNCIL</b>		
<b>Report Title</b>	Polling District Review	
<b>Ward</b>	All Wards	
<b>Contributors</b>	Chief Executive, Director of Law, Electoral Services	
<b>Class</b>	Open	Date: 27 November 2019

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1. The Returning Officer (RO) is required by law to undertake a review of the authority's polling districts and places every 5 years. The current review must be complete by 31 January 2020.
- 1.2. The process of the review requires the RO to publish proposals for changes to polling districts and places and put them up for consultation. This began on 3 September 2019 and ran until 11 October 2019.
- 1.3. A small number of submissions was received and feedback was sought from Councillors. The RO's proposals have been updated following consultation.
- 1.4. It is proposed that the revised polling districts and places, once agreed, would not be effective immediately. They would take effect from 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2020 when the new electoral register will be published. The December general election would not be affected.
- 1.5. Currently the Local Government Boundary Commission is in the process of reviewing the ward boundaries across the borough. A final decision will be made in May 2020, following which the RO will need to carry out a further and thorough polling district review. The new wards and the resultant polling district review will only take effect at the local elections in May 2022.

## **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Council approve the RO's proposals on polling districts and places appearing at Appendix A with effect from 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2020.

## **3. Policy Context**

- 3.1. The Council has a responsibility to encourage electoral participation. Our polling scheme must enable accessibility of the voting process.

## **4. Background**

- 4.1. Reviews of polling districts and places must take place every 5 years.
- 4.2. Feedback from voters and party agents for the last few elections has been broadly supportive of our current polling scheme. Few changes have been proposed as a result.
- 4.3. Continuity of polling places is considered to aid turnout, as people remember their polling venue from previous elections.
- 4.4. Because of the snap Parliamentary election to be held on 12 December 2019, the RO advises that the Council should not publish the outcome of the current polling district review until after that election. Publication prior to the general election may confuse electors that these new arrangements would take effect for the December election, which is not the case. They would not have any effect until January 2020.
- 4.5. The RO's proposals can be read in full in the attached Polling District Review documents. There are only a small number of changes proposed. Most changes have been proposed by the relevant ward councillors.
- 4.6. The revised publication date would be 2 January 2020.

## **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1. The proposals document reflects the legal issues associated with holding a review.
- 5.2. Legislation and the Council's Constitution requires the RO's proposals to be submitted to Full Council for approval
- 5.3. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 5.4. In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
  - eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 5.5. The RO's proposals have considered the impact of polling districts and places on residents with protected characteristics. All polling places have

been assessed for accessibility and suitability.

## **8 Financial implications**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **9 Appendices**

Appendix A: PD Review 2019. RO's Proposals