
ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Date: TUESDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2004 at 6.30 p.m.

****Please note time of meeting****

**Committee Room 5
Civic Suite
Lewisham Town Hall
London SE6 4RU**

**Enquiries to: Mike Brown
Telephone: 020-8-314-8824 (direct line)**

MEMBERS

Councillor Maslin	(L)	(Chair)
Councillor Huntbach	(LD)	(Vice-Chair)
Councillor Bodimeade	(L)	
Councillor Carlisle	(L)	
Councillor Eytle	(L)	
Councillor Massey	(L)	

Members are summoned to attend this meeting

**Barry Quirk
Chief Executive
Lewisham Town Hall
Cafford
London SE6 4RU
Date: 7 December 2004**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The public are welcome to attend our committee meetings, however, occasionally, committees may have to consider some business in private. Copies of reports can be made available in additional formats on request.

ORDER OF BUSINESS - PART 1 AGENDA

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ELECTIONS COMMITTEE			
Report Title	MINUTES		
Key Decision			Item No. 1
Ward			
Contributors	CHIEF EXECUTIVE		
Class	Part 1	Date: 14 DECEMBER 2004	

Recommendation

To agree the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee, which was open to the press and public, held on 16 July 2004 (copy attached).

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE			
Report Title	DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS		
Key Decision			Item No. 2
Ward			
Contributors	CHIEF EXECUTIVE		
Class	Part 1	Date: 14 DECEMBER 2004	

Members are asked to make any declarations of personal interests or other interests they may have in relation to items on this agenda (if any). Members are reminded to make any declaration at any stage throughout the meeting if it then becomes apparent that this may be required when a particular item or issue is considered.

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

MINUTES of the meeting of the ELECTIONS COMMITTEE, which was open to the press and public held on FRIDAY, 16 JULY 2004 at LEWISHAM TOWN HALL, CATFORD, SE6 4RU at 6 p.m.

Present

Councillor Maslin (Chair); Councillor Huntbach (Vice-Chair); Councillors Carlisle, Eytle and Massey.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bodimeade.

Under Standing Orders: Councillor Anderson.

Minute No.	Action
1	<p>MINUTES page</p> <p>RESOLVED that, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Anderson as attending under Standing Orders, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30 June 2004, which was open to the press and public, be confirmed and signed.</p>
2	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (page</p> <p>None was declared.</p>
3	<p>REVIEW OF COMBINED ELECTION ON 10 JUNE 2004 (page and Appendix page</p> <p>A copy of the comments made by Mary Ney, Chief Executive of the London Borough of Greenwich, on the investigation report was circulated at the meeting (copy attached at page).</p> <p>Steve Gough, Head of Resources, Education and Culture, presented the findings of his report and referred to the comments of the Chief Executive on the London Borough of Greenwich.</p>

The Chief Executive stated that Electoral Services do all they can to cover all aspects of an election. However, on this occasion a mistake had occurred and he apologised for the error and took full responsibility for it. He assured the Committee that this would never happen again.

Following questions and answers it was agreed that the Committee should consider the issue of spoilt votes at a later date.

The Committee thanked the officers for a thorough and speedy report and the Chief Executive for his full and frank apology.

In conclusion it was

RESOLVED that

(i) the recommendations set out in paragraphs 62-70 be agreed; and

(ii) the report be referred to the Council to note the findings of the investigation and to endorse the action taken by the Committee.

The meeting ended at 6.55 p.m.

Chair

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE		
Report Title	RE-CODING POLLING DISTRICTS	
Key Decision		Item No. 3
Ward		
Contributors	HEAD OF LAW	
Class	Part 1	Date: 14 DECEMBER 2004

1. Summary

This report suggests that polling districts be given different prefixes to identify the parliamentary constituency.

2. Purpose

To provide clarity for the MP's and parties as to the electorate within their constituency.

3. Recommendation

That the changed coding for cross boundary polling districts appearing at appendix 1 be adopted.

4. Background

4.1 In March 2002 the review of the local ward boundaries was implemented and the number of wards was reduced from 26 to 18. The parliamentary constituencies were unaffected by this review but they are no longer coterminous with the new ward boundaries. The maps at appendix 2 show where these anomalies lie.

4.2 Parliamentary boundaries are not expected to change until 2006 at the earliest and it is anticipated that the boundaries will be the same. Small parts of polling districts are allocated to one ward for local elections, but remain in their existing parliamentary constituency. For example: Bournville Road is in the Rushey Green Ward for local elections.

4.3 Bournville Road is however in the Deptford Parliamentary constituency because the parliamentary constituencies have not changed to catch up with the new ward boundaries. Most of Rushey Green ward is in

Lewisham West parliamentary constituency (not Deptford constituency like Bournville Road).

4.4 Voters in Bournville Road will vote in local elections in Rushey Green ward – WRAZ (ie Committee Room 5, Civic Suite), but at a parliamentary election they will vote in the Deptford constituency at: The Sixth Form Centre, Crofton School.

4.5 To identify these small pockets of overlap, the areas affected were coded to show:

W	R	A	Z
Constituency in which ward lies for local elections	Ward - Rushey Green	Polling District identifier	Shows cross boundary

4.6 Parties and MP's have stated that there is nothing in this code which identifies the actual constituency for parliamentary purposes.

4.7 The committee is therefore asked to agree that a prefix be added to each polling district coding to identify the actual parliamentary constituency;

D	W	R	A	Z
Parliamentary Constituency	Constituency in which ward lies for local elections	Ward - Rushey Green	Polling District identifier	Shows cross boundary

These prefixes are shown at appendix 1.

5. Conclusion

It is recommended the new polling district codings appearing in appendix 1 be approved.

6. Legal Implications

There are no specific legal implications associated with this report.

7. Financial Implications

There are none

APPENDIX 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

**REGISTER OF ELECTORS 2005
STREET INDEX
EFFECTIVE 1ST DECEMBER 2004**

PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY	WARD	POLLING DISTRICTS
LEWISHAM DEPTFORD	BROCKLEY CROFTON PARK EVELYN LADYWELL NEW CROSS TELEGRAPH HILL	DBA, DBB, DBC, DBD, DBE, DBF DCA, DCB, DCC, DCD, DCE, DCF DEA, DEB, DEC, DED, DEE, DEF DLA, DLB, DLC, DLD, DLE, DLF DNA, DNB, DNC, DND, DNE, DNF DTA, DTB, DTC, DTD, DTE, DTF
	CROSS BOUNDARY	DECBZ, DECCZ, DECDZ, DWRAZ, DWRBZ
LEWISHAM EAST	BLACKHEATH DOWNHAM GROVE PARK LEE GREEN LEWISHAM CENTRAL WHITEFOOT	EBA, EBB, EBC, EBD, EBE, EBF EDA, EDB, EDC, EDD, EDE, EDF EGA, EGB, EGC, EGD, EGE, EGF ELA, ELB, ELC, ELD, ELE, ELF ECA, ECB, ECC, ECD, ECE, ECF EWA, EWB, EWC, EWD, EWE, EWF
	CROSS BOUNDARY	EWCBZ, EWCCZ, EWCDZ
LEWISHAM WEST	BELLINGHAM CATFORD SOUTH FOREST HILL PERRY VALE RUSHEY GREEN SYDENHAM	WBA, WBB, WBC, WBD, WBE, WBF WCA, WCB, WCC, WCD, WCE, WCF WFA, WFB, WFC, WFD, WFE, WFF WPA, WPB, WPC, WPD, WPE, WPF WRA, WRB, WRC, WRD, WRE, WSA, WSB, WSC, WSD, WSE, WSF, WSG
	CROSS BOUNDARY	WDCEZ, WEWBZ

Published by the Electoral Registration Officer of the London Borough of Lewisham

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE		
Report Title	REVIEW OF POLLING PLACES	
Key Decision		Item No. 4
Ward		
Contributors	HEAD OF LAW	
Class	Part 1	Date: 14 DECEMBER 2004

1. Summary

This report sets out the results of a comprehensive review of the premises used as polling stations, with proposals for some changes to improve the facilities for local electors.

2. Purpose

In reviewing the premises used as polling stations, the intention was to identify any problem areas (with particular emphasis on access for disabled people) and to propose amendments to usage as appropriate.

3. Recommendation

To consider the possible alternative polling stations set out in paragraph 5. below and decide which of those changes should be implemented.

4. Polling stations

4.1 A list of all polling stations currently in use, together with ward maps showing the locations of all those polling stations appears at Appendix 1. There are 108 polling stations, six in 16 wards, 5 in Rushey Green and 7 in Sydenham. Of those 108 polling stations, 6 are secondary schools, 45 are primary schools, 11 are community centres in Council ownership, 23 are churches or church halls and 5 are portakabins.

4.2 So far as possible a polling station needs to be conveniently situated for the polling district it serves, in a visible position, and provide easy access for all electors, both able-bodied and disabled. Ideally, the building should be in good condition and provide facilities of sufficient size for polling purposes.

4.3 In October/November 2004 the Head of Law and the Electoral Services Manager visited all of the Council's 108 polling stations to assess:

- i) the general condition of the premises
- ii) the suitability
- iii) the location in the polling district
- iv) access arrangements
- v) type of normal usage.

Although a time-consuming process, this review has borne fruit. Not only did it identify polling stations where access for wheelchair users might be problematic, it also allowed officers to make proposals to resolve other issues at particular stations.

- 4.4 During the course of the review, it became apparent that most of the polling stations are fit for purpose. Out of the 108 polling stations, officers do not propose to make any changes to the use of premises in 92 cases. Inspections have identified where operational issues might be improved, for example the provision of additional signage and/or the provision of new ramps or handrails. However, those matters will be taken on board immediately and should enhance the quality of service to electors for the next election at 30 stations.
- 4.5 However, in the remaining 16 polling stations, alternatives have been identified. In making these proposals, officers have tried, wherever possible, to reduce the use of secondary schools. Elections are often held in May or June, the busiest time of the academic year for these schools when often exams are in progress. The conduct of an election on secondary school premises at this time either involves the closure of the school, or partial use whilst school life continues. Even partial use of school premises can create difficulties and disruption.
- 4.6 Particular attention has also been paid to the question of access to the building and/or room used for polling. Members of the Committee may recall that at the GLA/Euro elections in June, there were particular problems at two polling stations in this respect. These are dealt with in the paragraph discussing proposed changes below (see 5.16.b, and 5.19.a).
- 4.7 There has been consultation with the political parties, MPs and all Councillors about the proposed changes listed below. The responses appear in full at Appendix 2. Where relevant, the substance of the consultation responses is summarised in relation to each particular change in the text of this report.

5. Proposed Changes:

CONSTITUENCY – Lewisham Deptford

5.1 Brockley Ward

5.1.a DBA

Current arrangements - First New Cross Scout Group, Breakspears Road, SE4

This polling station is an old wooden scout hut in very poor condition. It is approached by a narrow uneven and unlit path from Tack Mews which runs off Breakspears Road. The entrance to the site is badly littered with fly-tipping and rubbish with a small shed at the entrance to the path. Overall, the building and its environs are very shabby. However, it is centrally located within the polling district. The premises are in private ownership. Officers are of the view that the use of this hut ought to be discontinued so that the voting experience can be improved for local electors.

Elector Nos at DBA	Turnout at GLA	Average Brockley Turnout	Average Deptford Turnout
1441	35.67%	31.5%	32.42%

Possible alternative

Despite a search by officers in the area, they were unable to locate a feasible alternative permanent structure. However, it would be possible for a portakabin to be located on the corner of Breakspears Road, SE4, opposite Lloyd Villas. This is only a few hundred metres from the existing polling station and is on a service road in front of Lea House, which is part of Lewisham College who have confirmed their consent to such use.

Consultation responses

No responses had been received at the time of despatching this report. Any responses received will be reported at the meeting.

5.1.b DBC

Current arrangements: - Brockley Social Club, Brockley Road, SE4 2SU

Following the demolition of the building previously used for this polling station (St Peter's Church Hall, Cranfield Road, SE4), this small social club was only used for the first time at the GLA/Euro elections. It is not centrally located in the polling district, being right on the border. The polling station is set up in the front bar of the club which also has a rear room used as a bar. Although the room at the rear of the premises remains in use during polling day, it is accessed by an entirely separate entrance and kept completely separate and secured from the front part of the premises. The premises are in good condition.

Elector Nos at DBC	Turnout at GLA	Average Brockley Turnout	Average Deptford Turnout
1637	32.84%	31.5%	32.42%

Possible alternative:

Officers did investigate the possibility of the newly refurbished premises at St Andrews Church, which is situated very close to the social club being used as a double station. However, this was discounted as St Andrews falls not only within another polling district but also within another ward, i.e. DLE – Ladywell Ward. This would mean that at local elections, if two stations were located in the same building, there would be two different ballot papers and the potential for votes cast to be placed in the wrong ballot box, which would be unacceptable.

ELIM Pentecostal Church is situated at 76/78 Foxberry Road, SE4 2SP. These are newly renovated church premises. The standard of renovation is high and the property is in ideal condition for use as a polling station. About a kilometre from the existing polling station the Pentecostal Church is not on the main road, nor central for the polling district. Foxberry Road is not a main thoroughfare and there are few passers by.

Consultation responses

- 2 responses have been received from local councillors who support the discontinuation of the use of the Social Club as a polling station. They agree that the use of the Pentecostal church, though much more preferable, is still far from ideal as it is on the very edge of the ward.

It is suggested that a portacabin might be placed in the forecourt of Poplar House in Wickham Road. This possibility is being investigated and the outcome will be reported verbally at the meeting.

The Councillors who responded also suggest that there may be other locations central to the DBC polling district. These too are being explored and will be reported to the meeting.

5.2 Crofton Park Ward

No changes proposed

5.3 Evelyn Ward

No changes proposed

5.4 Ladywell Ward

No changes proposed

5.5 New Cross Ward

No changes proposed

5.6 Telegraph Hill Ward

No changes proposed

CONSTITUENCY - LEWISHAM EAST

5.7 Blackheath Ward

5.7.a **EBA**

Current arrangements – **Heathside & Lethbridge Community Hall,
Blackheath Hill, SE10 8DW**

The polling station is a community hall close to the corner of Lewisham Hill and Blackheath Hill. The entrance to the polling station is on Blackheath Hill. Access to the front of the polling station on Blackheath Hill is via a stairway of 5/6 steps which is ramped on polling day. To gain access to the polling station from the Lethbridge Estate means negotiating a staircase of some 20 or 30 steps, or going to the front of the building via Lewisham Hill and Blackheath Hill, then negotiating the ramped stairway at the front. Although possible, it is far from convenient. It is acceptable, however, and has been used several times without complaint. It is not centrally located, being on the edge of the polling district

Elector Nos at EBA	Turnout at GLA	Average Blackheath Turnout	Average Lewisham East Turnout
1432	34.3%	38.6%	33.6%

Possible alternative

58 Lethbridge Close – this is a room used by senior citizens as a clubroom on the ground floor of a block of flats on the estate. A small step would need to be ramped both inside and outside the building and use as a senior citizens' clubroom on polling day would not be possible. In all other aspects the room is suitable and is conveniently located, being in the middle of the estate.

Consultation Responses

No responses had been received at the time of despatching this report. Any responses received will be reported at the meeting.

5.8 Downham Ward

5.8.a EDA

Current arrangements – Ravensbourne Community Centre, Brangbourne Road, BR1 4LL

This community centre is located in the bottom of a block of flats on the main Ravensbourne Estate. It is conveniently located for many voters on that estate. However, once in the centre, access to the only room available for polling is via a very narrow doorway (only 75 cms wide). This doorway could present difficulties for wheelchair users, particularly those in larger motorised chairs. Though this has not presented difficulties in the past it may do so in future. The centre is in Council ownership. There are no proposals to widen this doorway at present.

Elector Nos at EDA	Turnout at GLA	Average Downham Turnout	Average Lewisham East Turnout
1631	30.49%	29.2%	33.6%

Possible alternative

Meadows Community Hall, Chestnut Close, SE6 3NS. This is a Council owned community centre situated in the centre of the Beckenham Hill Estate. It is currently used as a playgroup each day of the week which could not take place on polling day were the Centre used as a polling station. It has good disabled access with the doorway being wide and access to it flat. Facilities within the centre are suitable for polling purposes. The location is of course further from the Ravensbourne Estate but more convenient for those on the Beckenham Hill Estate. It is central in the polling district and close to the main road.

Consultation Responses

One response has been received from a ward councillor who appreciates the reasons for trying to identify an alternative location for this polling station. His concern is that the current polling place is central to the blocks of flats on the main Ravensbourne Estate and is very convenient for a large number of voters. By contrast the Meadows Community Hall is less convenient with fewer voters close by. As it is situated in the centre of the Beckenham Hill Estate there is little passing traffic either pedestrian or vehicular. It is not on the main throughfare.

5.9 Grove Park Ward

5.9.a EGB

Current arrangements - – Portakabin in Car Park, Grove Park Youth Club, Marvels Lane, SE12 9PR

This portakabin was placed in the Grove Park Youth Club car park and the

centre itself not used previously because the centre had poor disabled access. A large flight of stairs leads to the main entrance of the centre.

Elector Nos at EGB	Turnout at GLA	Average Grove Park Turnout	Average Lewisham East Turnout
1444	28.33%	33%	33.6%

Possible alternative

It is now proposed that the polling station be located in the entrance hall area of the Grove Park Youth Club as it has had a stair lift fitted. Facilities within the youth centre are suitable for polling purposes. It is usually used on a Thursday evening for a club for deaf people. It is not used during the daytime. This use could not take place on election day. The centre is in Council ownership. Discontinuing use of the portakabin would improve the voting experience for local electors and provide a more secure option with the use of a permanent structure.

Consultation responses

One response has been received from a ward councillor who endorsed the proposal.

5.10 Lee Green Ward

5.10.a **ELB**

Current arrangements - **Northbrook C of E School, Taunton Road, SE12 8PD**

This is a secondary school where part of the building is used for polling purposes. Use of the school continues on polling day with the polling station being cordoned off from the rest of the premises. Alternative solutions to avoid the use of secondary schools have been actively sought and this is particularly appropriate in the case of Northbrook in the long term as there are proposals for its refurbishment in any event.

Elector Nos at ELB	Turnout at GLA	Average Lee Green Turnout	Average Lewisham East Turnout
1851	47.88%	42.85	33.6%

Possible alternative

St Winifred's Catholic Nursery and Infants School, which is situated at 103 Effingham

Road, Lee, SE12 8NS and is very close to the existing polling station. It has good facilities and easy disabled access. The school has indicated it would consent to its use as a polling station.

Consultation Responses

No responses had been received at the time of despatching this report. Any responses received will be reported at the meeting.

5.11 Lewisham Central Ward

5.11.a **ECA**

Current Arrangements – Hither Green School, Beacon Road SE13 6EH

This is a primary school which has not in the past presented any difficulties as a polling station. It is a suitable location and facilities were acceptable for polling purposes. However, this school is undergoing a major refurbishment at present and in its current condition the rooms used for polling previously are not available. However, the major works currently in progress are scheduled for completion in February 2005. The works appear to be progressing well and completion is expected on time. Whilst it is not suggested at this stage that an alternative be found, officers will report back in March 2005 if an alternative is required.

Elector Nos at ECA	Turnout at GLA	Average Lewisham Central Turnout	Average Lewisham Turnout
2097	31.26%	28.94%	33.6%

5.11.b **ECE**

Current Arrangements – British Legion Hall, 440 Lewisham High Street, SE13 6LJ

This is a small social club which has been used as a polling station for many years. The building is damp and has steps giving access to the pathway and to the building itself. The steps can be ramped and normally are. The building is in poor condition.

Elector Nos at ECE	Turnout at GLA	Average Lewisham Central Turnout	Average Lewisham East Turnout
1664	28.07%	28.94%	33.6%

Possible alternative

The Saville Centre, 436 Lewisham High Street, SE13 6LJ. This centre is situated next door to the current polling station so any change of venue would not create a lot of disruption for voters. The Saville Centre has easy uninterrupted access for disabled users with a ramp in situ. The centre is in Lewisham ownership but it is in use as a day centre on a daily basis. That use could not take place and the centre would have to be closed as a day centre on the day of election

Consultation responses

No responses had been received at the time of despatching this report. Any responses received will be reported at the meeting.

5.12 Whitefoot Ward

5.12.a **EWA**

Current arrangements – Forster Park School, Boundfield Road SE6 1PQ

This primary school is approached by a long drive set back from the road with poor visibility to the electors.

Elector Nos at EWA	Turnout at GLA	Average Whitefoot Turnout	Average Lewisham East Turnout
1696	24.8%	29.5%	33.6%

Possible alternative

A possible alternative, which is situated close to the school, near a shopping parade and much more central and visible to the public is Goldsmith's Community Centre, Castillon Road. This building is used as a health centre, children's nursery and community centre. The entrance to these facilities is entirely separate to the room proposed for use as a polling station. The community centre has easy access for disabled people and use as a polling station would not interfere with the building's other uses. Access to the main hall, which would be the proposed polling station, could be achieved with continuing use by other centre users. The users of the health facilities the nursery and the community centre generally would be separate from the voters. The centre is visible, central and has the advantage of not being school premises. It appears not to present any access difficulties.

Consultation Response

No responses had been received at the time of despatching this report. Any responses received will be reported at the meeting.

5.12.b EWD

Current arrangements – Portakabin, (Opp. No. 5) Shaw Path, BR1 5NP

This portakabin has been situated on a green in Shaw Path for use as a polling station for several years. On more than one occasion, including the GLA/Euro Elections in June 2004, the positioning of this portakabin on Shaw Path has caused severe security problems. In June 2004 gangs congregated the day before polling day on delivery of the portakabin behaving in an extremely threatening manner. The Police were called on more than one occasion to disperse the crowds who returned, vandalised the portakabin and the portaloo. They broke the windows, urinated in the cabin and stole the furniture. They returned the following day threatening staff. The portakabin had to be removed immediately on close of poll at additional cost to the Council because youths were threatening to burn it down. The portakabin's location is on the edge of the polling district.

Elector Nos at EWD	Turnout at GLA	Average Whitefoot Turnout	Average Lewisham East Turnout
970	30.99%	29.5%	33.6%

Possible alternative

Officers searched for an alternative permanent structure close to Shaw Path. Enquiries were made of a private playgroup who initially consented but could not secure their management committee approval to use as a polling station. Other suitable permanent structures could not be identified. It is therefore proposed that a double polling station be established in the Whitefoot Lane Christian Centre, 480 Whitefoot Lane, BR1 5SF. This centre (EWB) is on the edge of its own polling district and therefore centrally located between EWB/EWD. It is in very good condition, has easy access to the building, is on a main thoroughfare and has suitable facilities inside the building. There are no DDA issues. The building lends itself easily to use as a double station.

The current combined electorate of EWB and EWD is 2075. If 70% turnout were to be achieved at the General Election, then approximately 1450 voters could call at the centre that day. Officers are of the opinion that the Christian Centre could cope with such numbers

Consultation responses

No responses had been received at the time of despatching this report. Any responses received will be reported at the meeting.

CONSTITUENCY - LEWISHAM WEST

5.13 Bellingham Ward

5.13.a **WBF**

Current arrangements – Sedgehill School, Sedgehill Road, SE6 3QW

The polling station is a room within the main secondary school with the school remaining open on election day. Polling areas are cordoned off. The use of the school as a polling station is a distraction for the school and pupils usually at the busiest time of the academic year.

Access to the polling station requires a ramp for two large steps. The polling station is on the edge of the polling district.

Elector Nos at WBF	Turnout at GLA	Average Bellingham Turnout	Average Lewisham West Turnout
1576	24.45%	28.7%	33.4%

Alternative proposal

Sedgehill Centre, 69-85 Sedgehill Road, SE6 3QN – this is a Council owned building in use as a community centre. It is close to Sedgehill School, only a few hundred metres away. Marginally it is more central to the polling district. Access to the building is flat and the doorway is wide, providing easy access to the building for wheelchair users. The centre is generally used on a Thursday for a playgroup in the morning and badminton in the evening.

Use of the centre would enable use of the school to stop but would also mean that the use of the centre as set out above would also not be possible.

Consultation responses

No responses had been received at the time of despatching this report. Any responses received will be reported at the meeting.

5.14 Catford South Ward

No change proposed.

5.15 Forest Hill Ward

5.15.a **WFB**

Current arrangements – Sydenham School, Dartmouth Road, SE26 4RD

The polling station is in the school's Sixth Form Centre in Dartmouth Road. The area used for polling is cordoned off from the secondary pupils and the teaching programme is not interrupted. The school remains open on polling day and there have been no complaints. The school is central to the polling district, on the main road with good public transport.

Elector Nos at WFB	Turnout at GLA	Average Forest Hill Turnout	Average Lewisham West Turnout
1627	30.2%	36.5%	33.4%

Possible alternative

Forest Hill Library (Children's Room) Dartmouth Road, SE23 3HZ – the Children's Room has separate access to the rear of the library, by a pathway leading from Thorpewood Avenue, SE26. The access is wheelchair user friendly. The store of books is organised on moveable trolleys/shelves and the room could be easily cleared and suitable for polling purposes. General access to the remainder of the library would not be disrupted as the door between the Children's Room and the main library could be secured.

The library is situated in a central position for the polling district on the same main road as the current polling station, only a few hundred metres away.

In considering whether to use the children's room as an alternative, Members will need to weigh the desire to have school life uninterrupted as little as possible with the loss of the use of the children's room at the library for one day.

Consultation responses

No responses had been received at the time of despatching this report. Any responses received will be reported at the meeting.

5.16 Forest Hill Ward

5.16.a **WFD**

Current arrangements - Horniman Primary School, Horniman Drive, SE23 3PB

This primary school is built on a steep hill. Much of the structure of the school stands

on large metal upright supports. Access to the polling station is through a gate (which is separate to the main entrance) and down a steep ramp providing an entrance to the school on the lower level at the back. The school closes for polling day.

At the GLA elections, the Head Teacher raised an issue about the use of the school. Her concerns were that access via the ramp is difficult for many electors and particularly for disabled people because it is so steep. Apparently in the past a portakabin had been provided in the car park at the school, near the main entrance at the front, but these arrangements changed several years ago so that the school itself was used instead. The Head Teacher would prefer the use of the portakabin to be reinstated.

Elector Nos at WFD	Turnout at GLA	Average Forest Hill Turnout	Average Lewisham West Turnout
1409	46.07%	36.5%	33.4%

Possible alternative

The use of a portakabin in the car park situated at the front of Horniman Primary School would mean that the steep ramp would not have to be used at all. Additionally, it would mean that the school could remain open on polling day provided that the front entrance to the school building itself were secured. Pupils and parents could use the ramp and the entrance to the school at the back instead. The head teacher has indicated her support for this amended practice.

Consultation responses

No responses had been received at the time of despatching this report. Any responses received will be reported at the meeting.

5.16.b **WFF**

Current Arrangements – Community Room at Macklin House, Shackleton Close, SE23 3YP

This very small community room is situated in the ground floor of Macklin House, Shackleton Close, Forest Hill, SE23. The building is in the middle of the Shackleton Estate. Access is gained from the front by a long ramp into a corridor off which is the community room. Access can also be gained to the rear of the building. Indeed, many voters at this polling station are likely to come from the large estate mainly at the rear of the polling station, the Shackleton Estate. Because of the terrain to the rear of the building, access to this entrance is via several flights of stairs set into the pathways. For those who are less agile, this method of access would prove difficult and inconvenient as the access to the

from this estate is tortuous.

Once in the building, access into the community room, which is the polling station, requires the elector to turn into a further narrower corridor within the premises. The turning circle is very small.

At the GLA/Euro Elections one voter in a large wheelchair could not gain access into this corridor. She could not turn her wheelchair in the turning circle. The Presiding Officer offered to bring the ballot papers and the ballot box to the doorway to enable the elector to vote. However, the voter declined and left without voting.

Inside the community room is laid out as a playgroup and it is used for this purpose on a daily basis. It is cramped and the floor uneven with an open grid in the middle of it. This grid is usually hidden by static playgroup equipment which has to be moved for election day and so presents a health and safety hazard.

Elector Nos at WFF	Turnout at GLA	Average Forest Hill Turnout	Average Lewisham West Turnout
1393	35.39%	36.5%	33.4%

Possible alternative

Eliot Bank Primary School, Thorpewood Avenue, SE26 4BU

The school itself is built on the hillside and within the school building there are numerous steps. However there is an outbuilding at the school to which there is an approach by ramp. This building is currently used as a resource centre. There are two entrances to it, with 3 stairs which would need to be ramped at one door. The building would be suitable for polling purposes, although it is not in the main school building. Cars could have access on to the site, thereby eliminating the need to negotiate the longer ramp. The school would need to close for the day as separate areas for the children and the voters could not otherwise be achieved. The Head teacher has indicated her support for the use of the building as a polling station.

Consultation Responses

No responses had been received at the time of despatching this report. Any responses received will be reported at the meeting.

5.17 Perry Vale Ward

5.17.a **WPC**

Current Arrangements – Forest Hill Boys School, Mayow Road SE23 2XG

This secondary school is currently undergoing major works. The polling station in the past has been the gym at the school. However, a recent visit has shown that the gym has been demolished and the school reports that other parts of the building are not suitable for shared use. To continue there as a polling station would require closure of at least one school building on election day. The school is, however, central to the polling district.

The school is, in any event, scheduled for further major building works.

Elector Nos at WPC	Turnout at GLA	Average Perry Vale Turnout	Average Lewisham West Turnout
1571	28.9%	35.9%	33.4%

Possible alternative

Our Lady and St Philip Neri Catholic Primary School – this primary school has excellent facilities with easy access for wheelchair users and the head teacher has confirmed her support for the use of the school as a polling station. The school is central for all electors in the polling district but would, of course, have to close on polling day.

Consultation Response

No responses had been received at the time of despatching this report. Any responses received will be reported at the meeting.

5.17.b **WPF**

Current Arrangements - St George's Church Hall, Carholme Road, SE23 2HT

This church hall has closed for associated redevelopment of the church and community centre on the current site of the church on the corner of Vancouver Road. The community centre is therefore not available for polling station use in future. It is no longer open.

Elector Nos at WPF	Turnout at GLA	Average Perry Vale Turnout	Average Lewisham West Turnout
1676	35.37%	35.9%	33.4%

Possible alternative

St George's Christ church Hall – Vancouver Road SE23 2AG

Depending on the facilities in the new development which is advanced but not yet complete, it would be hoped to transfer the polling station to the community facilities on the corner of Vancouver Road in the new development. Enquiries show that this work should be complete in January/February 2005. If it is, the property will be visited. The plans show that the building will be suitable. Members of the Committee are asked to agree to its use and in the event that the inspection proves it to be unsuitable a further report will come back to this Committee.

If the new development is not suitable for polling station use, officers would propose that a double polling station be set up at Kilmorie Road School with polling district WPE. Kilmorie Road School is only just outside polling district WPF and offers excellent polling facilities. If a further report is necessary, further details will be provided then.

Consultation Responses

No responses had been received at the time of despatching this report. Any responses received will be reported at the meeting.

5.18 Rushey Green Ward

No changes proposed

5.19 Sydenham Ward

5.19.a **WSB**

Current Arrangements – Wells Park Hall, Coombe Road, SE26 6AD

This polling station is situated in an old community centre on the corner of Wells Park Road and Coombe Road, SE26. There are two entrances, one in Coombe Road via several steps, the other disabled access in Wells Park Road. The disabled access is very narrow (only 75cms) and does not allow access by large wheelchairs. The hall itself is in shabby condition.

A complaint was raised in the GLA/Euro Elections by an elector in a wheelchair who could not get access into this polling station as the door was too narrow. The Presiding Officer brought ballot papers and a ballot box to the door and the elector, though dissatisfied, exercised his democratic right to vote. This episode resulted in adverse publicity for the Council. Although on the edge of the polling district, this polling station is a convenient location for the polling district.

Elector Nos at WSB	Turnout at GLA	Average Sydenham Turnout	Average Lewisham West Turnout
1662	34.76%	34.8%	33.4%

Possible alternative

The Grove Centre, 2 Jews Walk, SE26 6PL – this community centre is privately owned and run by the church adjacent to it in Jews Walk. It consists of a large entrance area with a community room and luncheon club to the rear. If the entrance hall area were used as a polling station, community use of the rear rooms could continue as they could be made secure and entirely separate from the polling station. The polling station and the rear part of the building would be accessed via separate entrances. The entrance hall is sufficiently large for a polling station and is in very good condition, bright and accessed via a permanent ramp in situ. The management committee of The Grove Centre have confirmed their consent to operate as a polling station. This venue is much more suitable than Wells Park Hall, though it is on the edge of the polling district. However, it is still accessible and close to the main thoroughfare, Kirkdale.

Consultation responses

No responses had been received at the time of despatching this report. Any responses received will be reported at the meeting.

6. Factors to be weighed

Members are asked to consider each proposal individually, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of maintaining the status quo on moving to alternative premises. They are asked to consider carefully the consultation responses appearing in each instance. There are proposals in this paper which if implemented would mean that no secondary in Lewisham would be used as a polling station and the life of these schools would therefore not be disrupted in any way by polling. Members may also be interested to note that the use of portakabins would remain the same if the proposals are accepted (discontinue use at Grove Park Youth Centre and Shaw Path and introduce new portakabins at Lewisham College, Breakspears Road to replace New Cross Scout Group and at Horniman Primary School to provide easier access for disabled people and keep the school open.).

7. Informing the electorate

If Members of the Committee agree to amend the polling places as suggested then the Electoral Services Manager will write to all electors concerned to inform them of the change of polling station prior to the next election and endeavour to include a map on the poll cards.

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the Act) makes it unlawful for the provider of services to discriminate against a disabled person by failing to comply with the duty to make reasonable adjustments in circumstances where the effect of that failure is to make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for the disabled person to make use of any service. A “service” is defined by the Act to include access to and use of any place which members of the public are permitted to enter and the services of any local or other public authority.
- 8.2 With effect from 1st October 2004, where a physical feature of a premises makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for a disabled person to access that service, the duty to make reasonable adjustments required the Council to take such steps as are reasonable in all the circumstances in order to:
- remove the feature
 - alter it so that it no longer has that effect
 - provide a reasonable means of avoiding the feature; or
 - provide a reasonable alternative method of making the service available to the disabled person.
- 8.3 The returning officer is under a duty to provide a sufficient number of polling stations and allot electors to those polling stations in such manner as he thinks most convenient. The Council is required to designate polling places for polling districts and to keep them under review in accordance with elections rules. It must exercise this duty with a view to giving all electors such reasonable facilities for voting as are practical in the circumstances. So far as is reasonable and practicable the Council is required to designate as polling places, only those places which are accessible to electors who are disabled. A Council should not designate as a polling place a building if the only means of access to the polling station in it would be by means of steps when another more suitable building is available. However, a building will not be a more suitable polling place if it is so far removed from most of the electors in the polling district as to be inconvenient for them to reach it. A polling place for any polling district must, except in special circumstances, be an area in that district.
- 8.4 Election law provides that polling places for parliamentary, European parliamentary and local government elections should, so far as possible, be the same places unless special circumstances make it desirable for separate places to be designated.
- 8.5 So far as possible polling places have been identified within the polling district unless no suitable building or premises exists. So far as possible polling places in Lewisham are within the polling districts to which they relate.

9 Financial Implications

- 9.1 If the proposals in this report are accepted, then rental will be paid in respect of the new polling stations to replace that paid to the current polling stations. Whether or not the new rent is higher or lower will depend upon costs incurred by the usual users of the polling station facility. At general elections, the cost of rental of polling stations is generally recoverable from central Government.
- 9.2 The use of portakabins is a comparatively expensive option with rental in the region of £1,240 per portakabin.
- 9.3 The overall cost of polling station provision as suggested in this report would be contained within existing budgets.

10. Equalities Implications

- 10.1 One of the main purposes in reviewing the use of polling stations was to try to ensure that all electors, irrespective of any disability should have access to the electoral process in the same way as able-bodied voters. Proposals within this report to replace Wells Park Hall, Macklin House and the Ravensbourne Community Centre are attempts to address potential difficulties in this respect.
- 10.2 Where the use of community centres is agreed, Members will need to bear in mind that for polling day facilities offered to playgroups, senior citizens and youth clubs would not be possible as the buildings are needed for election purposes from 6 a.m. until 10.p.m. This will have an impact on some of the most vulnerable residents, though where possible alternative arrangements are made for these groups.

11. Crime and Disorder Implications

- 11.1 The use of the portakabin at Shaw Path has created serious crime and disorder implications as outlined in this report. The proposal to double up the polling station at Whitefoot Lane Christian Centre is an attempt to alleviate the security problems which arise as a result of the use of the portakabin at this site in Downham. Where portakabins are unavoidably used, officers liaise very closely with the Metropolitan Police to ensure additional security following delivery of the portakabin on the day before the election takes place.
- 11.2 On election day itself there are standard arrangements with the local Police who tour polling stations and who co-operate with the Council on election day to respond quickly to any potential difficulties.

12. Environmental Implications

There are no specific implications arising from this report.

13. Conclusion

- 13.1 Proposals have been made to alter polling places as set out in this report. The purpose of making these proposals is to try to enhance the quality of polling station provision and to ensure that so far as is reasonably practicable they are accessible to all members of the community who are entitled to vote. The paper also addresses the significant security issues at Shaw Path involved in the use of a portakabin and suggests alternatives.
- 13.2 Proposals have also been made to minimise the use of secondary schools as polling stations and to anticipate requirements that will be needed as a result of this significant capital investment programme and associated building works in Lewisham schools.
- 13.3 Members are now asked to consider each of the proposals for amendment individually and to make a decision on each.

Appendix 1