

| ELECTIONS COMMITTEE | | |
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| Report Title | POLLING DISTRICT AND POLLING PLACE REVIEW 2007 | |
| Key Decision | | Item No. 4 |
| Ward | | |
| Contributors | CHIEF EXECUTIVE HEAD OF LAW | |
| Class | Part 1 | Date: 20 NOVEMBER 2007 |

1. Summary

This report sets out the results of a polling district and polling place review and makes proposals for the use of 7 alternative polling places and suggests that there be an amendment in respect of the extent of two polling districts.

2. Purpose

The Council is responsible for the conduct of a polling district and polling place review at least once every four years under the Electoral Administration Act 2006. Although the Council reviewed its polling places in 2004, there is now a requirement to conduct the review again to ensure compliance with the Act.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That the Committee recommend to the Council on 28th November 2007 the polling district changes set out in paragraph 5, for implementation in the revised Register of Electors 2008, which is due to be published on 1 December 2007.
- 3.2 That the Committee approve the polling place changes set out in paragraph 6 and Appendix A.
- 3.3 That efforts continue to be made to find suitable alternative polling places for those polling places where there is uncertainty about their availability for future elections.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 Over the past two years Electoral Services have conducted a number of reviews. In 2004, all the premises used as polling stations were visited with a particular emphasis on access and the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended on 1st October 2004. Two further minor reviews followed in 2005, one to deal with three polling place changes where circumstances had changed and one to re-structure the polling districts in Forest Hill Ward to allow more reasonable access for electors to vote.

4.2 Section 16 of the EA Act 2006 introduced a number of changes in respect of the way in which the review of polling districts and polling places must be undertaken. Polling Districts and Polling Places are defined as follows:-

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Polling District | The area created by the division of a constituency, ward or division into smaller parts, within which a polling place can be determined which is convenient to electors. |
| Polling Place | The building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the Returning Officer. |
| Polling Station | The room or building chosen by the Returning Officer where the poll takes place for each election |

4.3 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 places a responsibility on each local authority to carry out a review of polling districts and polling places within its area on a regular 4 yearly cycle, to ensure all electors have reasonable facilities for voting. The first such review must, by law, be completed by 31st December 2007.

4.4 The Electoral Commission issued guidance on the practical procedures involved in conducting a review of polling districts and polling places. In addition there has been close compliance with DDA provisions whilst conducting the review.

4.5 A checklist was drawn up in accordance with Electoral Commission and DDA guidance and a copy is attached at Appendix B. Each polling place was visited and the results recorded on the checklist, which assesses suitability, safety and compliance. The review resulted in proposals for change to polling places in 7 cases as set out in Appendix A.

5. Review of Polling Districts

5.1 Consultation – A notice was published on Friday 27th April 2007 inviting representations from any elector in the area or persons with particular expertise in relation to access and facilities for persons who have different forms of disability. The consultation period commenced on Monday 30th April with representations to be received no later than Friday 15th June 2007. None were received.

5.2 A letter explaining the purpose of the review was sent the Mayor, MP's, MEP's, ward councillors, party agents, and Lewisham Disability Coalition.

Councillor Morris made recommendations for change in Downham Ward. His representations related to the use of Ravensbourne Community Centre (EDA) and Good Shepherd Primary School (EDD). The representations and officer response are set out in Appendix A.

5.3 We also consulted Lewisham's accommodation services who have expert knowledge in connection with future property changes. His comments are incorporated in Appendix A.

Lee Henderson, SUM Property Management, advised on future development plans scheduled before May 2008.

- 5.4 It is recommended that Lewisham Deptford and Lewisham West constituency polling districts remain unchanged.

However, officer experience has identified that travel to the polling station in EWB polling district is inconvenient for those electors in the south west of the polling district. The polling stations is currently located in a Portakabin on the forecourt of Xpress Kitchens as shown in Appendix C.

Therefore it is proposed to move the polling district boundary between EWA and EWB to that shown in Appendix D enabling electors to vote in a more convenient location and reducing travelling time to the polling station.

The following table identifies the current situation.

| Polling District | Properties | Electors | Polling Place |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--|
| EWA | 983 | 1,651 | Goldsmith's Community Centre |
| EWB | 481 | 795 | Portakabin on forecourt of Xpress Kitchens |
| WEWBZ | 723 | 1,120 | Portakabin on forecourt of Xpress Kitchens |
| EWC | 798 | 1,278 | Merlin Primary School |
| EWD | 706 | 1,209 | Portakabin in Car Park of John Henry Neighbourhood Office |
| EWE | 883 | 1,566 | St. John Baptist CE School |
| EWF | 1,087 | 1,844 | ELIM Pentecostal Church & Community Centre |

- 5.5 Currently the polling station for EWB and WEWBZ is combined, but the recommendation is to merge polling districts EWA and EWB together making a total electorate of 2,446. However, the number of postal voters has increased over the years and therefore reduces the number of electors voting in person. Although large, this polling district will be more convenient for electors and will mean an additional poll clerk at the time of an election. Consequently, there will be a reduction in the number of poll clerks required at WEWBZ.

6. Review of Polling Places

A detailed breakdown of the recommendations can be found at Appendix A. Current polling places are shown in Appendix E and proposed changes shown in Appendix F.

7. Financial

These elections are funded by the GLA and there are no immediate financial implications for the Council.

8. Legal

Each polling district must have sufficient and suitable designated polling places that provide 'such reasonable facilities for voting that are practicable in the circumstances' including accessibility for electors with disabilities. The Council is under a duty to promote equality for those with a disability and the recommendations in this report are drafted with this duty in mind.

9. Risk Management

The entire polling place review exercise is concerned with managing risk at all premises used as polling places.

10. Community Safety

All recommended polling places are checked for safety and disabled access.

11. Equal Opportunities

All recommended polling places are accessible for people with disabilities.

12. Timetable for Implementation

The polling place changes will be implemented for the GLA elections to be held on 1st May 2008.

13. Conclusion

For the reasons set out in this report, officers recommend that the changes to polling districts set out in paragraph 5 and to polling places as set out in paragraph 6 and Appendix A promote compliance with the Electoral Administration Act 2006 and enhance the convenience, suitability and practical electoral arrangements for voters. These changes are therefore recommended.

Background Papers

None Reported

For further information on this report please contact Electoral Services Manager ext 46907