

<b>ELECTIONS COMMITTEE</b>			
Report Title	Audit of Polling Places pending the Mayoral and Local Elections on 3 May 2018		
Key Decision	n/a		Item No.
Ward	Various		
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Class	Part 1	Date: 7 December 2017	

1. **Summary**

This report identifies the proposed changes to polling places for the elections scheduled for 3 May 2018.

2. **Purpose**

Changes to specific polling places are proposed in order to make them more accessible to voters and to enable a more cost effective solution to portacabins.

3. **Recommendation**

That the Committee approve the preferred options identified in Appendix X and to agree the fallback position for any proposals where the preferred option is not available.

4 **Background**

- 4.1 Lewisham has 109 polling districts. Each polling district has an allocated polling place.
- 4.2 For various reasons it has become necessary for electoral services to review the allocated polling place in 11 polling districts.
- 4.3 In some cases the review is triggered because the previous venue is no longer available. In other cases the building has been deemed unfit for purpose.
- 4.4 In 5 polling districts the polling place is an area of land upon which we place a portacabin. These are a considerable challenge to install and are high risk items. They require temporary electricity and additional security

due to the high risk of fire and vandalism. Portacabins are also very expensive.

4.5 Efforts have been made to find suitable alternative venues for each of the 5 portacabins.

4.6 All proposals are covered in detail on Appendix X.

## 6. **Legal implications**

6.1 It is a legal requirement for the local authority to specify a polling place for every polling district. The polling place must be inside the polling district unless there are exceptional circumstances.

## 7. **Equalities implications**

7.1 Polling places must be accessible to the voters and the Council must have due regard to the public sector equality duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act. which 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.

7.2 Of particular relevance is the need , to ensure that polling places are accessible to all. This means clear wheelchair access, facilities for the visually impaired, guidance for the learning disabled, staff trained to assist voters who need assistance, access for companions of voters with disabilities, etc.

## 8. **Financial implications**

8.1 Each portacabin costs electoral services approximately £5,000 per election. Where alternative polling places are identified, a rental may be payable for use on election day, but such rentals depend on the ownership of the facility. In any event the fee for use of the facility is likely to be much smaller than the cost of a portacabin, and carry fewer risks.

8.2 In the case of DLA4, it is proposed to replace the portacabin with the bowling green clubhouse. Although renovation work on the clubhouse

would cost approximately £5,000, this would be a one-off cost and the hire charge for the venue would be zero. After 2 elections the venue would effectively pay for itself and save Lewisham money.

9. **Crime and disorder implications**

There are no crime and disorder implications arising.

10. **Environmental implications**

There are no environmental implications arising.

11. **Background documents**

See Appendix X