

**Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places****CORPORATE COMMITTEE  
MEETING DATE 2018/19****08 January 2019****CLASSIFICATION:****Open****If exempt, the reason will be listed in the  
main body of this report.****WARD(S) AFFECTED****All Wards****GROUP DIRECTOR****Tim Shields, Chief Executive**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 Section 18c (as amended by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 Section 17) introduced a duty for all parliamentary polling districts and polling places to be reviewed every 5 years. The review must be undertaken between October 2018 and January 2020. The review that has been undertaken meets this requirement.

1.2 This report and the appendices set out the Council's final proposals for polling districts and polling places as a result of this review, along with the responses received during the review process.

1.3 The Electoral Commission provides guidance on the review process, which has been taken account of during the review and in the formulation of the recommendations.

1.4 This report is presented to Corporate Committee as part of its remit in relation to Polling Districts and Polling Places carried out under the Representation of the People Acts and is presented for DECISION and for Corporate Committee to note the submissions made to the Council in respect of the review of polling districts and polling places for the London Borough of Hackney.

1.5 Corporate Committee is also asked to note that it is the responsibility of the (Acting) Returning Officer to designate actual polling stations for each election or referendum

## 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

**To approve the final proposals in respect of the review:**

**i) To make no changes to the existing Polling Districts.**

**ii) To continue to designate the entire Polling District as the Polling Place for that Polling District.**

## 3. REASONS FOR DECISION

3.1 To comply with the relevant legislation.

## 4. TERMINOLOGY USED IN THIS REPORT

4.1 **Polling district:** the area created by the division of a constituency or

ward or European Parliamentary electoral region into smaller parts, within which a polling place can be determined which is convenient to electors.

4.2 **Polling place:** the geographical area in which polling stations will be sited by the Returning Officer. In Hackney this is proposed to be the entire polling district given the geography, density and availability of suitable buildings to use as polling stations within polling districts.

4.3 **Polling station:** the actual physical space where the poll takes place. These are chosen by the (Acting) Returning Officer and publicised in the Notice of Situation of Polling Stations and communicated to electors via their poll cards.

## 5. THE DESIGNATION OF POLLING DISTRICTS, PLACES AND STATIONS

5.1 The designation of the Borough's polling districts and places is the responsibility of the Council.

5.2 The allocation of polling stations within polling places is not a Council function and is the responsibility of the (Acting) Returning Officer.

5.3 Although the allocation of polling stations is the responsibility of the Returning Officer for the election concerned, in practice the consideration of the location of likely polling stations will have an important impact on the choice of polling places. The Electoral Commission's Guidance on statutory reviews of polling places and polling districts recognises that the identification of suitable locations for polling stations is a key factor in determining polling places and districts, and consequently this has been a significant factor in forming the basis of final proposals.

5.4 Polling districts for local government elections are not automatically part of the statutory review. However, the Electoral Commission advises that reviews of parliamentary polling arrangements should always be conducted simultaneously with a review of local government arrangements and that the polling districts for UK parliamentary and local government elections should always be the same. Consequently, polling places and polling districts adopted by the Council for parliamentary elections will also be effective for local government elections.

5.5 In conducting a statutory review the Council must, when designating polling districts, seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.

5.6 In designating polling places it must:

(a) seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;

(b) seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling

places it is responsible for are accessible to all electors who are disabled;

(c) have regard to the accessibility of disabled persons to potential polling stations in the polling place;

(d) other than in special circumstances, locate the polling place in the polling district it serves; and

(e) ensure the polling place is appropriate to indicate to electors in different parts of the polling district how they will be able to reach the polling station.

5.7 Whist ideally the (Acting) Returning Officer would have the choice of a range of fully accessible buildings to use as polling stations, conveniently located for the electors in the area, this is not always the case and there may be little choice available particularly in some areas. In these areas, the (Acting) Returning Officer selects the best fit building available to use as the polling station in the circumstances. More information on this can be found in the (Acting) Returning Officer's response to the consultation, attached to this report.

5.8 The (Acting) Returning Officer must make representations to the Council as part of this review. The local authority is required to publish these proposals within thirty days of receipt. This was completed and the response is attached in the appendices to this report.

## **6. THE REVIEW PROCESS**

6.1 Stage 1 - Intelligence and data collection. Statistical information was collated about electorates, postal voters and turnout. Maps of each ward were produced.

6.2 Stage 2 - The (Acting) Returning Officer wrote to all Councillors, MPs and candidates and agents for the May 2018 elections inviting comments or suggestions regarding the suitability of polling places and districts.

6.3 Stage 3 – Data on Polling Stations. Polling station inspectors visit each polling station several times at each election. Any issues they raise have been taken account of in these proposals, as have comments supplied by Presiding Officers at polling stations in May 2018. Further, a number of polling stations were changed for the May 2018 elections by the (Acting) Returning Officer. He details more information about this in his response to the consultation, attached to this report at Appendix 4. Particular visits were made to new polling stations as part of this process to ensure their suitability. All members, and in particular relevant Ward Members, were part of the process in 2017 to change these polling stations. All polling stations are well known to the electoral services team.

6.4 Stage 4 – Receipt of responses and collation of final proposals within this report

## **7. CONSULTATION**

7.1 During the review any elector in a constituency located in wholly or partly in the Council's area may make representations. By law, representations must also be sought from such persons as the Council considers to have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability; such persons must also have an opportunity to make representations and comment on the (Acting) Returning Officer's representations. The Council invited responses from disabled persons via the Policy and Partnerships team.

7.2 Copies of the Council's proposals and the (Acting) Returning Officer's representations were published on the elections section of the Council's website and provided an email address to submit comments. The proposals were also available for inspection at Hackney Town Hall.

7.3 The Council sought representations on both its proposals and the (Acting) Returning Officer's representations from the following groups:

- i) London Borough of Hackney Councillors
- ii) Candidates and agents from the May 2018 Mayoral and Local Elections
- iii) Candidates and agents from the June 2017 Parliamentary General Election
- iv) The Borough's two Members of Parliament
- v) Disabled residents

7.4 A total of one response was received from electors (who is a disabled elector). One response was received from a Councillor and one from an MP. These are detailed in Appendix 3.

7.5 All polling station staff receive a copy of the Electoral Commission's Handbook and this includes guidance on dealing with disabled electors. These issues (along with many others) are also covered in the training for polling staff undertaken before each election.

## **8. THE FINAL PROPOSALS**

8.1 The final proposals meet the statutory requirements that the Council must consider when designating polling districts and polling places.

8.2 Throughout the review, consideration was also given to the following factors:

- (a) geographical size of polling districts;
- (b) size of the electorates of polling districts (however, a large polling district electorate may not itself be an issue, provided that its polling place is such that the required number of polling stations can be properly accommodated);
- (c) need for polling districts to have boundaries that enable it to contain a suitable polling place;
- (d) distance of the polling place from all areas of the polling district;
- (e) features of the polling district's geography;
- (f) accessibility of the polling place to disabled electors;
- (g) the likely location of any polling station(s) within the polling place, including consideration of their accessibility for disabled electors;
- (h) suitability of the polling place in terms of the space required to effectively conduct polling.
- (i) the need to minimise disruption caused to schools and other premises. The (Acting) Returning Officer is entitled to use free of charge schools maintained or assisted by the local authority as well as those schools that receive grants made out of monies provided by parliament. However, where alternative venues are available within the polling district, the use of schools has been avoided.

8.3 The final proposals for approval are:

- i) To make no changes to the existing Polling Districts.
- ii) To continue to designate the entire Polling District as the Polling Place for that Polling District.

## **9. OTHER ISSUES CONSIDERED**

### **9.1 Policy Context**

This review is a legal requirement.

### **9.2 Equality Impact Assessment**

Equality is a key consideration of the review and is considered throughout the report

**9.3 Sustainability**

Not applicable.

**9.4 Consultations**

Consultation has taken place as detailed in the report.

**9.5 Risk Assessment**

The carrying out of this review reduces the risk of unsuitable polling districts and polling places. The Council is legally required to carry out this review and thus not to do so is a significant risk.

**10. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report

**11. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR, LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE**

The legal requirements and implications are as set out in the body of the report.

**APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Consultation notice and additional information

Appendix 2: List of polling stations and number of in-person voters allocated to each station at the last election in May 2018

Appendix 3: Responses to the consultation

Appendix 4: (Acting) Returning Officer's consultation response

Appendix 5: Ward Maps detailing Polling District boundaries

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

<b>Report Author</b>	Dan Paul 0208 356 3110 Dan.paul@hackney.gov.uk
<b>Comments of the Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources</b>	Ramesh Teelock, Group Accountant Ramesh.Teelock@hackney.gov.uk
<b>Comments of the Director, Legal and Governance</b>	Dawn Carter-McDonald Dawn.carter-mcdonald@hackney.gov.uk



