

**Review of Polling Districts and Polling places – response of the (Acting)
Returning Officer**

In recent times there have been an above average number of elections in Hackney. During 2016 my team ran 7 elections on 5 different dates. 3 of these were borough wide elections. There was 1 borough wide election in 2017 and 1 in 2018. All of these were run on the current polling district boundaries.

I have reviewed the electorate numbers at polling district, polling place and street level. It is my view that the current polling district boundaries are appropriate and should be retained. They have not caused problems at any recent election and I see no reason for amendment. It is also my view that the practice of designating the entire polling district as the polling place should continue. In a borough such as Hackney, it is important that I retain the flexibility to locate polling stations in the most appropriate places.

Generally, it is my view that polling stations themselves should only be changed when absolutely necessary. Multiple changes confuse electors and are to be avoided. Having said that, my team did make a number of changes for the 2018 Mayoral and Local elections with the following two aims:

1. Reduce disruption on schools.
2. Change polling stations that had become unavailable, uneconomic or where repeated issues had been experienced.

This did result in a number of changes and only two schools in the borough are now closed on Election Day (a number of nurseries are also closed). Whilst I will continue to look for alternative locations to reduce this further, at the current time this is the best that can be reasonably achieved. The two closed schools are:

1. Springfield Primary School
2. Colvestone Primary School

There are some polling places located outside of the relevant polling district. These are listed below along with the reasons and/or proposed action to be taken:

1. Polling Place 12 (Clissold Park Tennis Pavilion) – this is a relatively new polling place, changed from a building that was inside the polling district that was no longer available. A search continues for a suitable building inside the polling district.
2. Polling Place 14 (Oaktree Community Centre) – This polling place covers two polling districts and is centrally located for both of them.
3. Polling Place 20 (Stoke Newington Town Hall) – This is on the opposite side of a road less than 5 metres from the boundary of the Polling District.
4. Polling Place 21 (Hawksley Community Hall) – This is in the neighbouring Polling District and a search continues for a suitable building inside the Polling District.
5. Polling Place 28 (St Michael’s Church) - This is on the opposite side of a road less than 5 metres from the boundary of the Polling District, and avoids using a school a short distance away that is in the Polling District.
6. Polling Place 41 (Rhodes Estate Community Hall) - This is in the neighbouring Polling District and a search continues for a suitable building inside the Polling District.
7. Polling Place 43 (Chats Palace Arts Centre) – The Polling Districts that this Polling Place serves are very small and there is currently no suitable building within the Polling District.

8. Polling Place 45 (Navarino Mansions Community Hall) - This is just outside the boundary of the Polling District, and avoids using a school a short distance away that is in the Polling District.
9. Polling Place 59 (Comet Nursery) – This is in the neighbouring Polling District and a search continues for a suitable building inside the Polling District.
10. Polling Place 67 (Fellowes Court Community Centre) – This is in the neighbouring Polling District and a search continues for a suitable building inside the Polling District.
11. Polling Place 72 (Pitcairn Hall Community Hall) – This is on the opposite side of a road less than 5 metres from the boundary of the Polling District.
12. Polling Place 73 (New Kingshold Community Centre) – This is a triple station due to a current lack of available buildings in HSSB. A search continues for a suitable building inside the Polling District.

In a borough such as Hackney, Polling Districts are relatively small and thus travel times quite short to stations that are outside the Polling District. Whilst I am looking to reduce the number that are outside, accessible and suitable buildings are not always readily available and the current arrangements do, in my opinion, provide the best available facilities for voting.

There have been no issues with access or usability of the current polling stations since the changes made for the election in May 2018 and in preparing this response I have reviewed the comments made by Polling Station Inspectors as well as the Presiding Officer's log books for the May 2018 election, as well as comments received on the election day itself regarding the polling stations and facilities.

I use the Electoral Commission guidance supplemented by local knowledge to locate polling stations and this has proved to be effective. A number of the

current polling buildings have the space and capacity to be single, double or even triple polling stations and this is useful in planning for the different types of elections and referenda, as well as dealing with regeneration, new building and projected population change in the borough.