



# London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

COUNCIL

22 OCTOBER 2014

## STATUTORY REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

Report of the Returning Officer

Open Report

Classification - For Decision  
Key Decision: No

Wards Affected: ALL

Accountable Executive Director: Jane West, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Governance

Report Author: Zoe Wilkins, Electoral Services Manager

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### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To outline the recommendations of the Returning Officer following a review of the current Borough Polling Districts and Polling Places arrangements and to inform the Council of the responses received to the associated consultation exercise.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

**Council is asked:**

- 2.1. To confirm the following existing polling district boundaries with no changes:-

**Addison, Askew, Avonmore & Brook Green, College Park & Old Oak, Fulham Broadway, Fulham Reach, Hammersmith Broadway, Munster, North End, Parsons Green and Walham, Palace Riverside, Ravenscourt Park, Shepherds Bush Green, Town, Wormholt & White City Wards.**

- 2.2. To agree in Sands End Ward that electors in Althea Street, Hamble Street, De Morgan Road (eastern side) and Stephendale Road (southern side to junction with De Morgan Road) be transferred from SEB to SEC polling

district. The boundary to run from De Morgan Road in a straight line to the River Thames.

- 2.3. To approve the use of Parsons Green Club temporary clubhouse as the polling place for Sands End ward (SEA polling district) subject to the Returning Officer being satisfied as to its suitability.
- 2.4. To approve the use of a temporary cabin on the Daisy Lane/Peterborough Road site as the polling place for Sands End (SEA polling district), until such time that the Parsons Green Club temporary clubhouse be available and assessed as suitable for use by the Returning Officer.
- 2.5. To approve Townmead Youth Centre as the new polling place for Sands End ward (SEB polling district).
- 2.6. To approve St Saviours Church Hall, Cobbold Road, as the new polling place for the ASA polling district in Askew ward.

### **3. REASONS FOR DECISION**

- 3.1. Under Section 18A of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended) the Council is required to divide each parliamentary constituency in the area into polling districts, to designate polling places for those polling districts, and to keep these under review. Electors must be given such reasonable and accessible facilities for voting as are practicable. In accordance with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 the Council is required to complete a review by 31 January 2015. The Review did not cover constituency or ward boundaries.

### **4. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 4.1. A 'polling district' is a geographical sub-division of a ward or constituency, and for each polling district there must be designated a 'polling place'. The Council has a duty to divide the borough into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each district. It also has to keep these arrangements under review.
- 4.2. Polling Districts and Polling Places are kept under regular review to ensure that they are suitable for use and accessible for electors who are disabled. As far as possible, they should be convenient within the polling district concerned and located close to where the majority of the electors in the polling district live. They can however be located outside of the polling district if circumstances make that desirable, for example if no accessible polling place can be identified within the district.

## **5. PROPOSAL AND ISSUES**

### **THE REVIEW AND CONSULTATION**

- 5.1. The review was announced by public notice on 14 July 2014. The Returning Officer reported on existing arrangements and proposed changes and this formed the basis for consultation between 2 September 2014 and 1 October 2014. (APPENDIX 1)
- 5.2. The Review was widely publicised across the Borough and details published on the Council's website. Information was available in the Electoral Services Office and sent to all Councillors, Borough MPs, local political parties and to local libraries. 554 Community and Disabled groups were sent the notice for information and display where possible.
- 5.3. All presiding officers were contacted and their comments plus any concerns mentioned in their Polling Station logbooks for the May 2014 election were considered as part of this review.
- 5.4. Submissions to the review were received from electors in Fulham Broadway, the Chelsea and Fulham Member of Parliament commented on Fulham Broadway and Sands End wards and a local Conservative councillor commented on College Park and Old Oak ward, Fulham Broadway ward, Fulham Reach ward, Hammersmith Broadway ward, Sands End ward and Shepherds Bush Green ward. Submissions are available in the background papers to this report.
- 5.5. Except where highlighted below, the comments received from the consultation were in favour of the Returning Officer's proposals, and there were no objections. Comments on the consultation were received from local councillors, and are available in the background papers to this report.
- 5.6. In general, because there have been no significant problems under the current arrangements, and to avoid confusion for voters at the forthcoming General Election, the Returning Officer proposed to keep existing polling arrangements where possible, and to make minimal changes only where circumstances required this.
- 5.7. The report now considers wards with no changes, followed by wards where either the Returning Officer suggested changes or highlighted issues, or alternatives arose from the consultation.

### **Wards with no changes**

- 5.8. The Returning Officer proposed no changes to polling arrangements and no alternatives were suggested during consultation, in the following wards:

**Addison, Avonmore & Brook Green, Munster, North End, Parsons Green and Walham, Palace Riverside, Ravenscourt Park, Town, Wormholt & White City**

- 5.9. The Returning Officer recommends the existing polling arrangements continue in these wards.

### **Askew Ward**

- 5.10. The Returning Officer proposed no changes for this ward.
- 5.11. At consultation, a proposal was received from St Saviours Church that their church hall, on Cobbold Road, be considered as a polling place, replacing the current polling place in Wendell Park Primary School (ASA polling district).
- 5.12. Officers have visited the hall, which has recently been refurbished and now has a permanent ramp to facilitate access to the hall for wheelchair users. Officers found that the hall was of adequate size, with good facilities, and is easily located. The hall is directly opposite the Wendell Park School. It is centrally located in the polling district, so voters will have no significant change to the distance they need travel to their polling station.
- 5.13. The Returning Officer prefers not to use schools where suitable alternatives are available, and as the church hall is suitable, she therefore recommends using the church hall.

### **College Park & Old Oak Ward**

- 5.14. A submission was received during the review that the polling place for the CPF polling district of College Park and Old Oak ward should be the White City Community Centre, currently the polling place for the WWB polling district of Wormholt and White City ward.
- 5.15. The proposal argued that voters in CPF should vote in WWB because, with only 296 voters registered and only 78 actually voting in May, costs would be reduced whilst not significantly risking a reduced turnout. It was also argued that electors in CPF polling district concerned considered themselves part of the White City Estate, and that the distance for voters travelling from CPF to WWB was reasonable.
- 5.16. In general, the Returning Officer believes the guidelines set out by the Electoral Commission are sound, and recommends working within them where practical. While this does not mean that the Council cannot use cross-boundary polling places, the Returning Officer does not consider it ideal in most circumstances. The guidelines for this review stated that ideally no

polling place should be shared by two wards, and this submission was not therefore further considered at the review.

- 5.17. At consultation, a further submission was made regarding this proposal, asking that the Returning Officer consider it again, citing as a precedent the example of the polling place at New King's School, which is successfully used as polling place for two wards, namely Parsons Green & Walham and Town wards. (PGA and TWA polling districts respectively).
- 5.18. The TWA/PGA polling place sits just north of the polling district boundary between PGA and TWA, and is centrally located within the area covered by the two polling districts. The facilities available to electors and staff at the school are considerably superior to those available at the church that was previously used as a polling place in PGA. Costs were also reduced as there was no longer a fee paid to hire the church building.
- 5.19. In contrast, the CPF/WWB polling district boundary is considerably to the east of the White City Community Centre. The community centre is not central to the two polling districts, nor does it offer significantly better facilities than the polling place in CPF. The use of the WWB community centre would not, therefore, improve access to their polling station for the voters in CPF.
- 5.20. Transferring voters from the polling place in CPF to WWB would save the venue hire fee for CPF. However, savings in staffing or stationery and equipment costs would be minimal as the Returning Officer would still need to provide two polling stations within the venue.
- 5.21. The Returning Officer is mindful of the need to avoid unnecessary expenditure and to regularly evaluate the necessity of providing polling places for smaller polling districts. As a place serving a district of less than 300 electors, the Returning Officer accepts that CPF merits such evaluation.
- 5.22. However, the Returning Officer wishes to minimise disruption to voters for the General Election in May 2015, so does not recommend changing the polling arrangements this year.
- 5.23. The Returning Officer will review this arrangement next year, when General Election levels of turnout can be taken into consideration, and further, more focussed consultation can take place with electors, elected representatives and other interested parties about future arrangements for this district.
- 5.24. The Returning Officer recommends no change to the polling arrangements for CPF polling district at this time.

### **Fulham Broadway**

- 5.25. Submissions were received concerning the use of the Community Hall on the Clem Attlee Estate as a polling place for the FBA polling district of Fulham Broadway Ward. Concerns were raised about the accessibility and visibility of the Community Hall, particularly for those electors approaching from the

western side of the polling district. Some submissions also raised concerns about perceived risk from other members of the public in the area surrounding the polling place.

- 5.26. Two alternative buildings were suggested, namely the Church of St Thomas of Canterbury's Hall, on Rylston Road, and St Thomas of Canterbury School on Estcourt Road.
- 5.27. The Returning Officer prefers not to use schools, unless there is no suitable alternative, in order to avoid disruption for pupils and parents/guardians. As there is an alternative venue, namely the community hall in Clem Attlee Court, the school was therefore not further considered.
- 5.28. Officers visited FBA polling district to assess the visibility of the Clem Attlee Community Hall, and the likely suitability of the St Thomas' Church Hall. They found that although the Clem Attlee Community Hall can be seen from Rylston Road, although it was slightly obscured, and the Returning Officer will therefore provide extra signage to help electors identify the building.
- 5.29. On external inspection, the St Thomas of Canterbury's Church hall site appeared to be well located and worthy of further investigation as an alternative venue. However, on contacting the parish secretary, officers were informed that the church hall had no toilet facilities. Furthermore, officers were aware that, as this is a well-attended and busy church, the entrance to the hall was quite likely to be obscured by vehicles if services were taking place during polling day. The Returning Officer therefore proposed no changes to the provision of polling places in this district.
- 5.30. During consultation, the Returning Officer was asked to re-consider the use of this building, and further explore the facilities that might be available at the site. Officers therefore contacted the parish administrator to discuss the possibility of hiring the venue further. The parish administrator explained that, in addition to the hall not having any toilet facilities, it is not currently in a good state of repair, having suffered a fairly serious leak during the summer. While the hall is still hired on a very limited basis by a small number of regular users, the parish administrator did not believe the hall was suitable for use by the general public in its current condition.
- 5.31. The Returning Officer believes that the location of this potential venue is a good one, central to the polling district, and easily located. However, it is not considered suitable for use as a polling place in its present condition. Officers will maintain contact with the church about the condition of the hall to aid in any further review of the polling arrangements in this ward.
- 5.32. The Returning Officer proposes no change to polling arrangements at this time. More signage will be provided to help electors find the current polling place. The Presiding Officer at the polling station will be asked to carry out checks around the premises during polling day and to report any concerns regarding possible intimidating behaviour occurring around the station to the

Returning Officer. This is usual practice at all polling stations, but the Presiding Officer will be asked to be extra vigilant given the concerns raised.

### **Fulham Reach**

- 5.33. A proposal was submitted to the review to transfer Beryl Road and St Dunstan's Road, together with the eastern side of Fulham Palace Road currently in FRA polling district to FRB. (357 electors)
- 5.34. The same submission also proposed that the polling place in FRD be moved from Twynholm Baptist Church to Tasso Road Baptist Church. Unfortunately, officers have still not been able to make any contact with the church, despite numerous attempts, including making personal visits, phoning the advertised number and writing to the church. Officers will continue to attempt to contact church administrators, and the Electoral Registration Officer's canvassing staff will also be asked to call at the church over the coming few weeks, but until such time as contact is made, the venue cannot be assessed for its suitability as a polling place, nor hired for that purpose.
- 5.35. A second proposal to use St Augustine's RC Primary School was not considered as the Council avoids the use of schools as polling places if at all possible. Additionally the school was previously considered for use as a polling place as part of the 2007 review, but was considered to be less favourably situated than the Twynholm Baptist Church.
- 5.36. In the light of the above, the Returning Officer has concluded that the polling place for FRD should remain at Twynholm Baptist Church.
- 5.37. The Returning Officer had proposed moving electors in Tasso Road, Spencer Mews and part of Greyhound Road from FRB to FRD. However, at consultation it has been noted that if the polling place were to remain at Twynholm Baptist church, then voters in these roads would have a more inconvenient and illogical journey (travelling north, then back south to reach the polling station, instead of simply travelling north as at present). The Returning Officer therefore withdraws the recommendation that these electors be transferred to FRD at present.
- 5.38. Without a balancing transfer of electors from FRB to FRD, the proposal to move electors from Beryl Road, St Dunstan's Road and Fulham Palace Road from FRA to FRB would increase the disparity between FRB polling districts and the other districts in this ward. Concerns have also been raised about the ability of the polling station in FRB (Matthews Hall) to accommodate the increased electorate. The Returning Officer therefore withdraws the recommendation that these electors be transferred to FRB at present.
- 5.39. An alternative solution to move Fulham Reach polling district boundaries to make a three polling district ward was also submitted at the review. This was

considered but rejected as overly disruptive for electors prior to a General Election, and would breach the Electoral Commissions guidelines that there should be 2000 – 2500 electors per polling district.

- 5.40. This submission also suggested that electors in FRC be allocated to the FRA polling place in Melcombe School. The Returning Officer initially did not consider the use of a shared polling place as this is counter to the guidelines that polling places should be in the polling district that they serve.
- 5.41. The Returning Officer was asked to re-consider this submission, and the successful use of a shared polling place in TWA/PGA was cited as a precedent. As discussed above, the polling place for TWA/PGA is centrally located within the two polling districts, is very nearly on the boundary between them, and the alternative polling place in PGA is not considered very suitable by the Returning Officer.
- 5.42. That is not the situation in FRA/FRC, where there are viable polling places available in both districts. Neither of these polling places could be considered central to the combined area. Furthermore, the Returning Officer believes the number of electors in FRC (2087) merits a polling place being provided to accommodate them within their own area if practical.
- 5.43. The Returning Officer believes that the current polling place of Bishop Creighton House is reasonably central to the FRC polling district, and that to transfer electors to a new polling place at Melcombe Primary School prior to a General Election would be unduly disruptive to voters who are used to the current arrangements.
- 5.44. Given the developments taking place in the ward, the current disparity of electorates between polling districts, concerns about the size of the electorate using Matthews Hall, and the need to investigate the use of Tasso Road Baptist Church further, the Returning Officer will review the arrangements for this ward again next year.
- 5.45. The Returning Officer recommends no alterations to polling arrangements in this ward at this time.

### **Hammersmith Broadway**

- 5.46. A submission was received at the review, proposing several alternative arrangements for HBC polling district, as the Macbeth Centre was felt to be poorly situated. The alternative venues proposed were Hammersmith Tube Station, Sacred Heart High School, and the Lyric Theatre.
- 5.47. Officers contacted the management of the Hammersmith Broadway Shopping centre. The Hammersmith Broadway Shopping centre informed Electoral Services that there are no rooms available for hire of a suitable size or location within the building.



- 5.48. The proposal to use the Sacred Heart High School was considered unsuitable because the Returning Officer prefers not to use of schools as polling places if alternative venues are available.
- 5.49. The proposal to use rooms at the Lyric Theatre in Lyric Square was investigated by officers, who contacted the theatre's management. The major renovation work taking place in the theatre is expected to be completed in 2015. The Returning Officer will enquire about the availability of suitable rooms when renovation has concluded.
- 5.50. The Returning Officer proposes that no changes are made to arrangements in this ward at this time.

### **Sands End**

- 5.51. The Returning Officer proposed to use the Parsons Green Club temporary club house as a polling place for SEA polling district. The polling place was previously located in the club house building, but this was unavailable in the 2014 elections due to building works. A temporary cabin was installed at the Daisy Lane/Peterborough Road junction, where polling places had been located in the past.
- 5.52. The Returning Officer has been informed by the Parsons Green Club that a temporary club house is to be erected, providing similar facilities of similar dimensions to the previous, permanent, building. The club anticipates that it will be available for the elections in May 2015.
- 5.53. The Returning Officer recommends that the polling place for SEA polling district be the temporary clubhouse at the Parsons Green Club, subject to its completion and the Returning Officer being satisfied as to its suitability, with the temporary station at the junction of Daisy Lane/Peterborough Road to be the polling place in the meantime.
- 5.54. Submissions were received during the review suggesting that the boundaries between SEB and SEC polling district be reviewed, to alleviate the disparity between the sizes of those polling districts, and to take account of the new developments taking place in them. Townmead Youth Centre was also suggested as a suitable polling place for the SEC polling district.
- 5.55. The Returning Officer subsequently proposed that the boundaries be altered to reduce the size of SEB polling district, and that electors in Althea Street, Hamble Street, the eastern side of De Morgan Road and part of Stephendale Road be transferred to SEC polling district. The new boundary would run from De Morgan Road in a straight line to the River Thames, but kept under review as new housing and other developments are planned and built.
- 5.56. Officers visited The Townmead Youth Centre, which was found to be of adequate size, with reasonable facilities. It has a ramped entrance, although subject to further assessment it may prove desirable to install handrails alongside the ramp and/or stairwell entrances.

- 5.57. The Returning Officer considers the Townmead Youth Centre to be a suitable alternative to the current polling place in Langford Primary School. The building offers reasonable facilities, is centrally located in the polling district, and sits on a main road on which it is very visible. It would also avoid the disruption to the pupils at Langford Primary School, which has previously been used as the polling place.
- 5.58. The Returning Officer recommends that the Townmead Youth Centre be the polling place for the SEB polling district, and that the boundary between SEC and SEB polling districts be re-aligned as described in paragraph 5.55 above.
- 5.59. A proposal was also made to use land near the Imperial Wharf Railway station for a temporary cabin to be used as a polling place for SED, instead of the Wharf Rooms on Imperial Road, because it was felt that the Wharf Rooms were difficult to find, due to it being located on a side road, and not on the route that many electors would naturally take towards Imperial Wharf station.
- 5.60. Officers contacted the management of the land concerned. They were reluctant to allow the use of a temporary cabin on this site, as they already allow the Council to use the Wharf Rooms free of charge. Temporary cabins are very expensive to hire and disabled access can be difficult, so the Returning Officer prefers not to use them if viable premises are otherwise available.
- 5.61. The Returning Officer recommends no change to the polling place in SED at this time. Extra signage will be provided to direct electors to the Wharf Rooms, and updated maps will be provided on poll cards to make the location more apparent to electors.

### **Shepherds Bush Green**

- 5.62. A submission was received proposing that electors in SBD polling district, be transferred to the SBC polling place in the Village Hall in Bulwer Street. The polling place for SBD polling district is currently the Edward Woods Community Centre. It was argued that electors in SBD were now able to access the polling station in SBC as the footbridge across the A3220 has been completed, and also that reducing the number of polling places in the ward would help reduce costs.
- 5.63. This submission was initially turned down, because it did not meet the guidelines that each polling place should be in its own polling district.
- 5.64. However, at consultation, the Returning Officer was asked to reconsider this proposal. The arrangement in PGA/TWA was cited as an example of a polling place successfully hosting more than one polling station, and availability of the footbridge, and the consequent improvement to access to the polling place at the Village Hall was re-iterated.

- 5.65. As discussed above, the station at New King's School is centrally located between the two polling districts concerned. This is not the case with the polling place at Village Hall, which is some distance east of the boundary between the two polling districts. Electors' access to their polling place would therefore not be improved by merging the two districts. Neither is there any difficulty with the suitability of facilities at the Edward Woods Community Centre.
- 5.66. The polling place in SBD serves just over 1100 electors. Should the polling place for this polling district be moved to the Village Hall in SBC, the venue would be serving 2900 electors. Extra issuing tables and staff would need to be provided in Village Hall for these electors, so although some savings could be made in venue and staffing costs, they would not be substantial.
- 5.67. While the footbridge provides access to the SBC side of the boundary for voters in SBD, the electors are still some considerable distance from the polling place in Village Hall.
- 5.68. The submission to the review suggested a more central polling place be provided to a merged SBC/SBD polling district by using a temporary cabin near Shepherds Bush station. Temporary cabins are expensive and access for disabled electors can be difficult, so the Returning Officer prefers to avoid using them. In this case, it would negate the savings made by reducing the number of polling places, especially as the cabin would have to be larger and thus more costly than others used in the borough, due to the size of the electorate in the merged district.
- 5.69. The Returning Officer believes that the location of the polling place in SBD is well situated for the electors it serves, and to change polling places at this time would cause unnecessary disruption to voters for the forthcoming General Election. However, the Returning Officer is conscious of the need to evaluate the costs of arranging polling places for smaller polling districts, and as with CPF, will review this arrangement again next year.
- 5.70. The Returning Officer does not recommend change to the voting arrangements in Shepherds Bush Green Ward at this time.

## **6. OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

- 6.1 The options considered and the analysis of options are set out in section 5 above.

## **7. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. Legislation concerning the conduct of polling district and polling places reviews requires that the consultation must seek comments from people who have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.

- 7.2. No comments have been received from such groups. However, it should be noted that all polling stations are kept under review and if necessary temporary ramps, extra lighting and other equipment is put in place for each election.
- 7.3. Every effort is made to ensure that polling stations are fully accessible to all potential electors. Additional ramps, improved lighting, temporary floor coverings and special signage are among the requirements at individual polling places. Unfortunately not all venues are easily accessible by large motorised mobility scooters. All Presiding Officers are fully briefed on the measures that they might need to take to facilitate access to the democratic process.
- 7.4. Information on the accessibility of polling stations will continue to be highlighted in voter guides and on poll cards.

## **8. CONSULTATION**

- 8.1. The details of the consultation undertaken are set out in the body of the report.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. The legislative requirements of this review are outlined in the report.
- 9.2. Implications verified by: Tasnim Shawkat, Bi-Borough Director of Law, 020 8753 2700

## **10. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. Additional publicity and revised poll card maps are required for all polling station changes. All electors affected by the proposed re-alignment of polling district boundaries or changes to their polling place will be notified of the change and given details of their new polling station with their 2015 confirmation letter in February 2015. Any additional costs will be met from within existing budgets.
- 10.2. Implications verified by: Jane West, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Governance, 020 8753 1900

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000**  
**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Description of Background Papers</b>	<b>Name/Ext of holder of file/copy</b>	<b>Department/ Location</b>
1.	Representation of the People Act 1983. Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013	Zoe Wilkins Acting Electoral Services Manager  ext 2640	FCS Electoral Services Room 28, Hammersmith Town Hall
2.	Review of polling district and polling places – background information and the Returning Officer’s proposals.	Zoe Wilkins Acting Electoral Services Manager  ext 2640	FCS Electoral Services Room 28, Hammersmith Town Hall
3	Electoral arrangements review file and working papers.	Zoe Wilkins Acting Electoral Services Manager  ext 2640	FCS Electoral Services Room 28, Hammersmith Town Hall
Responsible officer: Zoe Wilkins, Electoral Services, ext 2640 <a href="mailto:zoe.wilkins@lbhf.gov.uk">zoe.wilkins@lbhf.gov.uk</a>			

**LIST OF APPENDICES:**

Appendix 1 - Review of polling districts and polling places 2014 - Background information and the Returning Officer’s proposals.