

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Council
Date: 12 November 2014
Report for: Decision
Report of: Chief Executive

Report Title

Polling District and Polling Places Review

Summary

The report sets out proposals to enable the Council to comply with its statutory duty to review all Parliamentary polling districts and polling places and to review all local government polling districts and polling places at the same time.

Recommendations

- 1. That the Final Review Proposals for polling districts and polling places, as set out in Appendix 2 to this report, be approved by Council.**
- 2. That responsibility for the on-going review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations between the four yearly reviews be delegated to the Electoral Registration Officer in consultation with the Group Leaders.**

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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Extension:

Background Papers:

The background papers to this report are published documents. A summary of comments received as part of this process are included or referred to in this report

1. Background

Polling District and Places Review

- 1.1 Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council has a duty local authorities to review to divide their area into polling districts, to designate polling places for those polling districts, and to keep their electoral arrangements under review.
- 1.2 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a duty for local authorities to review all polling districts and polling places every four years. The Council's first review was carried out in autumn 2007, and a subsequent review took place autumn 2011. Any amendments that are necessary are carried out on an annual basis.
- 1.3 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 included a provision altering the timing of statutory reviews of polling districts and places. This means that all local authorities now have to complete a statutory review of their polling districts and polling places between 1 October 2013 and 31 January 2015. Subsequent reviews must be every five years within a sixteen month period beginning with 1 October 2018.
- 1.4 As a result of legislative changes and the transition to Individual Electoral Registration, the next Register will be published on 1 December 2014. Any changes resulting from this review of polling districts and places will take effect from the publication of that register and will be used for the 2015 elections.
- 1.5 The responsibility for designating polling districts rests with the Council. In drawing up polling district boundaries the Council must ensure that all electors in the area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. The Council must also designate a polling place for every polling district. It is expected that this should usually be within the boundary of the polling district.
- 1.6 In designating polling places, the Council 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 they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.
- 1.7 The polling station is the actual place where the voting takes place i.e. the room or area where electors cast their vote. The Returning Officer is responsible for designating the polling station which must be within the polling place agreed by the Council.
- 1.8 In drawing up recommendations for polling stations the Returning Officer has followed the guidance of the Electoral Commission in respect of arrangements for voters.

Review Recommendations

- 1.9 The following steps have been completed by the Council in conducting the review:
- The Council announced that a review was to take place.
 - The Council consulted the Returning Officer responsible for constituencies within the borough and asked them to make representations on existing and proposed polling arrangements.
 - The Council published the Returning Officer's proposals and invited comments.
 - Comments were sought from people who have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.
 - Comments were sought from the Head of Planning to understand the potential impact on Polling Districts of population increase.
 - Representations were invited from elected representatives and political parties.
 - Any elector was able to representations either online or in writing.
 - All representations and comments have been considered prior to the recommendations being submitted to council for approval.
- 1.10 The Review commenced on the 1 October 2013. Interested persons or organisations had until Friday 8 November 2013 to put forward comments and suggestions.
- 1.11 As a result of this process, most of the arrangements were felt to satisfactory. However, the Returning Officer proposed a small number of changes to polling districts and polling stations. The proposals were published on 18 November and further comments were requested by the 12 December 2013. These proposals can be found on the Council's website at <http://www.trafford.gov.uk/about-your-council/elections/polling-district-and-polling-places-review.aspx>
- 1.12 Comments received as part of this second round of consultation are set out at Appendix 1. These were considered and recommendations are set out below. Most of the arrangements will remain unchanged and are set out in appendix 2. In summary the following changes are proposed:

Ward	Changes Proposed and Comments
St Marys	Use the Avenue Methodist Church as the polling station for polling district 1SMB instead of Woodheys Primary School. This venue has been assessed for suitability, accessibility and convenience and meets with the required standards. Amendments to polling district by re-distributing 12 streets from 1SMA into 1SMB
Brooklands	Use The Life Centre as the polling station in 3BLA. This venue has been assessed for suitability, accessibility and convenience and meets with the required standards.

Flixton	We will revert back to the Flixton Centre following the use of the school in 2014 elections.
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We are also looking at arrangements in Ashton Upon Mersey Ward and these will be finalised by the Electoral Registration Officer in consultation with the Group Leaders.

The following wards were highlighted for potential changes in the proposals issued in November 2013 but are not recommended for changes.

Ward	Comments
Broadheath	<p>The normal polling station for 1BHF is the mobile polling station at St Andrews Avenue/Bridge Grove. However, Willows Primary School was used for the PCC election. We have reverted back to the mobile unit as this is more convenient for voters.</p> <p>Proposals about new polling districts in Broadheath were considered as part of the review but no changes are proposed at this stage following detailed analysis of footfall and alternative venues. This will be kept under review.</p>
Hale Barns	The consultation proposed using All Saints Meeting Room for 1HBA. However, no immediate changes are proposed following representations about access due to building works. It is recommended that this is kept under review.
Stretford	It was suggested that we review some of the arrangements in the ward. However, following further consideration, no changes are proposed and current arrangements are satisfactory.

Davyhulme East

- 1.13 As part of the consultation on arrangements, it was suggested that we should review the three existing polling districts in Davyhulme East. There was a suggestion that some electors in 2DEA were discouraged from voting due to the location of the polling station. Attempts were therefore made to see whether an alternative solution could be found which would be reasonable and accessible to voters in that area.
- 1.14 The post consultation proposals set out an option to create an additional polling district in Davyhulme East (2DED) comprising 683 properties and to use a new polling building in Urmston Masonic Hall, Westbourne Road, Urmston.
- 1.15 A report on the proposals was submitted to the Electoral Working Group comprising of Councillors Michael Young, Andrew Western and Bowker who were invited to submit any comments on the proposals. It was highlighted that the arrangements for Davyhulme East should be re-visited as the proposals did not provide an adequate solution for the ward as the proposed location is just outside the Ward and would result in additional costs.

1.16 Officers have reviewed the alternative options in the area and there are four options :

- Continue with the current arrangements in the area and review them following the next election in 2015.
- Adjust the polling district boundaries to even out the number of electors between 2DEA and 2DEB and which retains current stations rather than create a new one. Based on current projections this would result in the following:
 - 2DEA (Davyhulme Primary School) – 2936 (from 4324)
 - 2DEB (Christ church Hall) – 2973 (from 1633)
 - 2DEC (Our Lady and the English Martyrs Parish Centre) – 1721 (unchanged)

This creates a more equal number of voters at each station but retains the current stations.

- Create an additional polling district in Davyhulme East (2DED) comprising and use a new polling building in Urmston Masonic Hall, Westbourne Road, Urmston. However, whilst this venue has been assessed for accessibility, convenience and meets with the required standards, it is outside the Ward Boundary and therefore does not meet the Electoral Commission guidelines that it should usually be within the boundary of the polling district it serves.
- Create an additional polling district in Davyhulme East (2DED) and use a Mobile Station at the junction of Cavendish Road and Granville Road, Urmston. The approach that we have adopted in recent years has been to move away from using mobile stations where possible as they are expensive and not ideal from an elector or candidate perspective. The location, whilst having adequate space to locate a station, is in a highly residential area without parking facilities and may cause difficulties in terms of traffic and road safety in the area.

1.17 Officers have also carried out further work using information from the 2014 elections and a survey of electors in 2DED in order to establish whether there was any evidence to support the view that electors in that area were in any way disadvantaged due to the current arrangements. That work has established that:

- Turnout in 2014 for the Davyhulme East Ward was just below the median (12th of 21) for all Wards in the area at 39.8%. A review of voting in the 2DED option area did not highlight any different patterns of voting to other parts of the ward. Around one third of electors have a postal vote and of the remainder, around one third voted.
- The streets with the lowest levels of polling station turnout in the 2DED option area were identified and Officers assessed the travel time from their home to the polling station. The range of walk times to the current station at Davyhulme Primary School was between 6 and 11 minutes and 2 or 3 minutes by car. This is not unusual or excessive.

- A survey form was delivered to each house in the 2DED area and they were given the option of a pre-paid envelope, on-line survey, phone response or email. 152 households responded. The survey responses showed that
 - 86.2% of respondents had voted at the last election
 - 49% of whom had voted in person and 51% has used a postal vote.
 - 87.1% of respondents know the location of their polling station
 - 87.8% feel that it is a convenient location.
 - 6.5% suggested that they would be more inclined to vote if there was a polling station nearer to their home.
 - Of the 21 people who did not vote in the past election, 2 said that the location of the station was too far. Others were ill, away or had forgotten.
- There is no record of any complaints about the location of the polling station or its accessibility.

1.18 The review of polling activity, walk distances, survey findings and previous comments has not identified any issues which would suggest that this polling station is not reasonably sited or accessible. There is no evidence to suggest that electors in that area are discouraged from voting due to the location of the polling station. It would therefore appear that there is no significant reason to change the current arrangements. However the situation will be kept under review and will be considered in consultation with the Group Leaders following the 2015 elections.

1.19 In addition there will be further campaigns in the run up to the election to boost the number of electors registered with postal votes which would enable persons who would prefer not to use a particular polling station to register to vote by post.

Register of Electors

1.20 The revised Register of Electors 2014 will be amended to reflect the new polling districts following the annual canvass. The register based on the revised electoral arrangements will be published on 1 December 2014, implemented for any elections that follow this.

1.21 The Electoral Registration Officer will monitor the actual elector increases on a yearly basis following the conclusion of the annual canvass.

Implications:

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	These proposals indirectly link to all of the corporate priorities in that they seek to ensure that the electors of Trafford are able to vote.
Financial	There are no financial implications directly associated with this report.
Legal	The main body of this report details the provisions of relevant the Electoral Administration Acts in relation to polling district reviews.
Equality & Diversity	The proposals before Members have been assessed having regard to equality and diversity requirements. The Council's Equality and Diversity Manager has been consulted and is

	satisfied with that the proposals meet the Council's obligations in this regard.
Sustainability Implications	There are no sustainability implications directly associated with this report.
Staffing/ E-Government/ Asset Management	There are no staffing, e-government or asset management implications directly associated with this report.
Risk Management	There are no risks directly associated with this report.
Health and Safety	Issues of the health and safety of electors and polling station staff have been considered as part of this report.