

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Council
Date: Wednesday 31st January 2024
Report for: Decision
Report of: Sara Todd, (Acting) Returning Officer, Chief Executive

Report Title

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

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.

Recommendation(s)

The Council is recommended to: -

- (1) Note the outcome of the Local Authority's review of its polling districts and polling places;
- (2) Agree the proposed relocations of polling places as detailed in the report and set out in Appendix A;
- (3) Agree the proposed re-designation of polling districts as detailed in the report and as set out in Appendix B; and
- (4) Delegate authority to the Returning Officer to:
 - 4.1 make further necessary changes to polling places/polling stations that may occur before the elections on 2 May 2024. This includes making changes to any polling place, should it become unavailable, prior to the election – thus allowing the polling place to be changed without full Council approval

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Please see attached appendices:
Appendix A – Polling Districts and Polling Places Proposals
Appendix B – Maps of Wards and Polling Districts
Appendix C – List of Wards and Polling Districts
Appendix D – Consultation Results
- 1.2 To consider the Council's proposals for the statutory review of polling districts and polling places.
- 1.3 Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council has a duty to divide their area into polling districts, to designate polling places for those polling districts, and to keep their electoral arrangements under review.
- 1.4 The Electoral Administration and Registration Act 2013 introduced compulsory timescales for the completion of statutory reviews of parliamentary polling districts and polling, reflecting the requirements as set out in Fixed Term Parliamentary Act 2011. In accordance with the 2013 Act, the Council's next review must be completed between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.
- 1.5 Key definitions:
 - 1.5.1 **Polling District** – A geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary Constituency. All electors within the polling district will attend the same voting place (unless a postal vote is in place)
 - 1.5.2 **Polling Place** – The building or area in which a polling station will be provided by the Acting Returning Officer within the polling district (unless special circumstances mean this is not possible)
 - 1.5.3 **Polling Station** – The room or area within the polling place where the process of voting takes place during an election

2 The Designation of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

- 2.1 The Council is responsible for the designation of polling districts within the borough. In the determination of polling district boundaries, the Council must ensure that all electors in each area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- 2.2 The Council must also designate a polling place for every polling district. This is usually with the boundary of the polling districts unless there are special circumstances e.g. lack of suitable buildings.
- 2.3 The allocation of polling stations within polling places is not a Council function but is instead it is the responsibility of the (Acting) Returning Officer.
- 2.4 In designating polling places, the Council utilises its powers under the Representation of the People Act 1983 when dividing constituencies into polling districts and in dividing wards into polling districts at local government elections.
- 2.5 Polling districts for local government elections are not automatically part of the statutory review. However, the Electoral Commission advises that polling districts for UK parliamentary and local government elections should always be the same. It therefore follows that any review of parliamentary polling arrangements should be conducted simultaneously with one of local government arrangements, and with those

for any other type of election for which provision is made for the designation of polling districts and polling places.

3. The Use of Schools

- 3.1 Although one of the aims of the review is to ensure accessible polling stations for the electorate, which most of the consultees confirmed, there were also suggestions to move away from the use of schools.
- 3.2 Where a suitable alternative to a school can be found without disadvantage to the electorate, the (Acting) Returning Officer will, subject to the building being suitable, take steps to move away from using the school.
- 3.3 The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the associated regulations (The Education (School Day and School Year (England) Regulations 1999 (No 3181)) requires that schools should meet for not less than 380 sessions (190 days) for pupils.
- 3.4 It should be noted that for the purpose of taking the poll in England and Wales, the (Acting) Returning Officer is entitled to use, free of charge, schools maintained or assisted by a local authority as well as those schools that received grants made out of monies provided by Parliament. This includes academies and free schools.
- 3.5 It should also be noted that the use of private premises is not guaranteed, especially at unscheduled elections, and the cost of using private premises as opposed to schools is considerably higher.
- 3.6 Ideally, the Council would have the choice of a range of fully accessible buildings, conveniently located for the electors in the area, however, this is not always the case and there are areas of the borough where schools are the only suitable premises which can accommodate voting.
- 3.7 Electoral Services Officers work with schools to find solutions to enable them to remain open while being used as polling stations. In other cases, alternative premises have been explored and utilised where possible.

4 The Review

- 4.1 Notice of the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places was published on 9th October 2023.
- 4.2 Information regarding the review was published on the Council website and displayed at Trafford Town Hall reception.
- 4.3 As part of the consultation process, the following were individually contacted:
 - Trafford Council Councillors
 - Graham Brady MP – Altrincham and Sale West Constituency
 - Andrew Western MP – Stretford and Urmston Constituency
 - Mike Kane MP – Wythenshawe and Sale East Constituency
 - Joanne Rooney CBE – Acting Returning Officer for Wythenshawe and Sale East Constituency
 - Trafford Planning Department
 - Trafford Partnerships

- 4.4 Electoral Services Officers carried out visits to polling places during the consultation. The purpose of these visits was to assess the suitability of existing arrangements and identify any viable alternative options.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 The first consultation period was held between 9th October – 9th November and the second consultation period commenced on 13th November and concluded on 13th December.
- 5.2 During the consultation period, ward Councillors were consulted on the proposals and two drop-in sessions were held to discuss the options.
- 5.3 Once the consultation periods had ended and the (Acting) Returning Officer's proposals had been made, two briefing sessions were held for Members to consult them on the proposed changes.
- 5.4 21 responses were received across both consultation periods.
- 5.5 8 respondents found their polling station accessible and suitable for use as a polling station.
- 5.6 Representations were made to the (Acting) Returning Officer by some ward Councillors.
- 5.7 A summary of all the responses can be found in Appendix D.

6. Proposals

- 6.1 This report sets out the results of the (Acting) Returning Officer's investigations to propose suitable polling districts and polling places.
- 6.2 Full details of the (Acting) Returning Officer's proposals (all wards) with proposed changes can be found in Appendix A. Polling stations can unexpectedly change and/or become unavailable, especially private premises. Some are still being considered at the moment.
- 6.3 The maps of the proposed changes can be found in Appendix B.
- 6.4 In some areas of the borough polling places/districts needed to be changed.
- 6.5 However, in other areas of the borough as no changes have been recommended and the current arrangements will remain.
- 6.6 It is proposed that the names of the polling districts will change to include the number that represents the constituency at the start of the polling district name rather than the end. For example, ALA1 will become 1ALA.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 After considering representations on the most appropriate polling districts and polling places, the (Acting) Returning Officer's final proposals have been submitted for approval by the Council.

7.3 Should the Council agree the proposals, details of the new polling places will be made available to the public at Trafford Town Hall and on the Council's website.

7.4 The following will also be made available for inspection:

- All correspondence sent to the (Acting) Returning Officer in connection with the review;
- All correspondence sent to any person whom the authority contacted because they had particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for disabled people;
- All representations made by any person in connection with the review;
- Details of the designation of polling districts and polling places within its area as a result of the review; and
- Further information can be found at <https://www.trafford.gov.uk/about-your-council/elections/Polling-districts-and-polling-places-review.aspx>