

Subject:	Full Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2019		
Date of Meeting:	10 October 2019		
Report of:	Executive Lead for Strategy, Governance & Law (Monitoring Officer)		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Michael Appleford	Tel: 01273 291997
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Ward(s) affected:	(All Wards);		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 This report deals with the statutory review of all polling places and polling districts within the City of Brighton & Hove. The council is required to keep all polling districts and polling places under review and undertake a full review at certain statutory intervals.
- 1.2 A consultation on proposed changes started on 23 August and ended on 13 September 2019. Respondents were invited to provide alternative venues for polling places. This report addresses the issues raised in the responses and makes recommendations for revised polling arrangements to be implemented.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee approves polling district boundaries outlined in Appendix 1 including changes to the following polling districts:
- a) AT and AU districts merged to form a new AU/KRCA district.
 - b) EU and EX districts merged to form a new EX/KQPD district.
 - c) Boundaries for GX/PHSE, GY/PHSF and GZ/PHSG districts redrawn.
 - d) HZ district split amongst the surrounding districts.
 - e) KT and KZ districts merged to form a new KZ/PKT district.
 - f) Boundaries for NV/HGOA, NY/HGOD and NZ/HGOE districts redrawn.
- 2.2 That the Committee approves the recording of polling districts using a Parliamentary Constituency, Ward, Polling District Reference format as outlined in Appendix 1.
- 2.3 That the Committee approves the polling place schedule outlined in Appendix 1 including changes to the following venues:
- a) The polling place for EU&E/KQPD as Brighton Youth Centre.
 - b) The polling place for GY/PHSF as City Gate @ The Dip, 119d Hollingdean Terrace.
 - c) The polling place for HT/PPAA as St Thomas More Church Hall.

- d) The polling place for KT &KZ/PSPB as Brighthelm Church & Community Centre.
 - e) The polling place for LZ/PRED as Brighton Town Hall.
 - f) The polling place for NV/HGOA as Ajex Hall.
 - g) The polling place for NY/HGOD and OZ/HHPD as Hove Rugby Club Pavilion.
 - h) The polling place for NZ/HGOE as Possibility Place.
 - i) The polling place for QZ/HNPE as Hill Park School (formerly Hillside).
 - j) The polling place for RX/HSPD as St Nicholas Parish Centre
- 2.4 That the Executive Lead – Strategy Governance and Law, acting following consultation with the Council’s Returning Officer, be authorised to take measures, as required by law, to bring the changes indicated in para 2.1 – 2.3; with the authority to make these changes at a time that best fits with any election timetable.
- 2.5 That the Committee delegates to the Returning Officer, following consultation with the Group Leaders and respective ward councillors, authority to designate one or more alternative polling places in the event of any polling place not being available at any elections taking place prior to the end of 2020 and before the next full or partial review of polling places

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, the council has a duty to divide its area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each district for UK Parliamentary elections. It also has to keep these arrangements under review. The arrangements made for parliamentary elections are used at other elections.
- 3.2 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a duty on all local authorities in Great Britain to review their polling districts and polling places at least once every four years. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 amended this duty, requiring all local authorities to carry out and complete reviews of polling districts and places in the period of 16 months beginning with 1st October 2018 and then every five years after that.
- 3.3 The existing Brighton & Hove City Council ward boundaries, and the parliamentary constituency boundaries, are not part of this review, although they will be reviewed periodically in future by the relevant Boundary Committee or Commission.
- 3.4 The principles underlying the council’s approach to polling districts and polling places are:
- a) To try and identify new polling places in areas where the existing provision is inadequate.
 - b) To ensure, as far as practicable, that polling places are accessible to people with disabilities.
 - c) To ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
 - d) To try and minimise disruption to schools.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The (Acting) Returning Officer and their staff reviewed all polling places, liaising with the venue agents to confirm future availability and suitable disabled access. Comments on the current venues were also requested from polling staff and the relevant ward members. Where a polling place was now deemed unsuitable an alternative was sought and visits undertaken to these premises.
- 4.2 The (Acting) Returning Officer and their staff also paid close attention to the use of schools and sought to replace those that could not remain predominantly open on polling day. In the case of Downs Infants School, the Electoral Services Manager developed a process with the head teacher and governors that would allow the school to remain open whilst operating as a polling place. It is hoped that all schools that remain in the polling place scheme will remain open when operating as a polling place.
- 4.3 During the public consultation process, outlined further in point 5.1, proposals were put forward by a group of respondents in regards to the use of Downs Infant School and Coombe Road Primary School. In both cases these were deemed unsuitable by the (Acting) Returning Officer and further detail is provided in Appendix 2.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The consultation period for this review ran from 23 August to 13 September 2019. Public notice of the review was given, and information about the review made available on the council's website and on the council's consultation portal. Any elector in the Brighton Kempdown, Brighton Pavilion and Hove constituencies was entitled to make representations.
- 5.2 The consultation paper, together with maps of each ward showing the polling district boundaries, can still be viewed on the council's website at: <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/council-and-democracy/voting-and-elections/review-polling-districts-and-polling-places>
- 5.3 Ward Councillors, Members of Parliament, local political parties and other interested groups or persons were also consulted.
- 5.4 Some further suggestions for change were received in response to the consultation. These are summarised in Appendix 2 along with an analysis of the respondents' agreement or disagreement with the proposals.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Council is required to designate polling districts and suitable polling places for electors to cast their vote at and satisfy the (Acting) Returning Officer's requirements. The proposed changes provide more than satisfactory arrangements. Approval of these changes will allow the (Acting) Returning Officer to continue their preparations for the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May 2020 and any further unscheduled polls.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The proposed changes outlined in sections 2.1-2.3 of the report, and other costs including officer time in arranging the changes, are expected to stay within existing resource levels.

Finance Officer Consulted: Peter Francis

Date: 20/09/19

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 Under sections 18A to 18E of the Representation of the People Act 1983 as amended by the Electoral Registration Act 2006, local councils are required to keep the designation of polling places as well as polling districts under review. In doing so they must act so as to give all electors in their area such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- 7.3 The Policy & Resources Committee is the Council body with delegated authority to exercise the Council's functions in relation to electoral matters.

Lawyer Consulted:

Victoria Simpson

Date: 24/09/19

Equalities Implications:

- 7.4 The council is required to have due regard to its public sector equality duties (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) in the exercise of all its functions. Advancing equality of opportunity by enabling all of the electorate to vote is a clear imperative. As a result, the council must ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practical, every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to people who are disabled.
- 7.5 The (Acting) Returning Officer and their staff actively seek suitable venues. However, in some cases a polling place may not have step free access. In these situations, the (Acting) Returning Officer will provide the polling place with a ramp or will work with the venue to find an alternative measure. This occurred in 2018 at St Patrick's Riverside where a new platform lift was installed to ensure the polling place was accessible.
- 7.6 Possibility People, a local charity set up to support and involve disabled people in issues affecting their lives, were provided the consultation document for their comment.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.7 There are no implications

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.8 There are no other significant implications

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Full Review of Brighton & Hove Polling Districts and Places Consultation Paper and (Acting) Returning Officer Comment
2. Responses to the Full Review of Brighton & Hove Polling Districts and Places Consultation Paper and (Acting) Returning Officer Comment

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. Full Review of Brighton & Hove Polling Districts and Places Consultation Paper and (Acting) Returning Officer Comment

Background Documents

1. Electoral Commission – Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations Guidance:
https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/word_doc/Polling-district-review-guidance.doc

