

Subject: Polling District and Polling Place Review
Date of Meeting: 1 February 2011
Report of: Strategic Director, Resources
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Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report deals with a review of the polling districts and polling places provided for elections that take place within the City of Brighton & Hove. 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 second full review therefore needs to be completed by the end of 2011.
- 1.2 A public consultation was launched on 25 October and ended on 31 December 2010, inviting views on the current pattern of polling districts and polling places. This report addresses the issues raised in the responses and makes recommendations for revised polling arrangements to be implemented as from 1 March 2011.
- 1.3 The principles underlying the council's approach to polling districts and polling places are:
 - (a) To retain the current network of polling places and polling districts as far as possible, to minimise disruption to voters.
 - (b) To try and identify new polling places in areas where the existing provision is inadequate.
 - (c) To ensure, as far as practicable, that polling places are accessible to people with disabilities.
 - (d) To ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
 - (e) To try and minimise disruption to schools.

2. RECOMMENDATION:

- 2.1 That the Governance Committee approves the following:
 - (i) That the proposals for polling districts and places be as outlined in Appendix 1 to this report and any further suggested amendments that may be proposed. In particular that:

- (a) the polling station for CV, Moulsecoomb & Bevendean Ward, be changed from Bevendean Primary School to the Church Hall, Norwich Drive.
 - (b) that Hertford Infant School be retained as the polling station for GZ, Hollingdean & Stanmer Ward, in the absence of any support for changing this polling station.
 - (c) that the polling arrangements within Patcham Ward remain unchanged, following a wider consultation.
 - (d) that the temporary building (portacabin) be retained as the polling station for JW, Preston Park Ward, in the absence of any support for changing this polling station.
 - (e) that the Friends Centre, Brighton Junction, Stroudley Road, be designated as the polling station for KS, St Peter's & North Laine Ward, as an alternative to St Bartholomew's CE Primary School.
 - (f) that the Aldrington Recreation Ground Pavilion, Wish Road, be retained as the polling station for SX, Wish Ward, in the absence of alternatives.
- (ii) That the Electoral Services Manager, on behalf of the Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer, be authorised to take the measures, as required by law, to bring the changes into effect.
 - (iii) That in the event that any recommendations cannot be implemented in time for the City Council elections on 5 May 2011, any outstanding issues be resolved by the publication of the electoral register on 1 December 2011.
 - (iv) That the Committee delegates to the Returning Officer (the Chief Executive), following consultation with the Group Leaders and respective ward councillors, the designation of alternative polling places in the event of any polling place not being available at any particular election.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 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 also 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 second full review therefore needs to be completed by the end of 2011. It has been decided that as there will be whole City Council elections in May 2011, that the review should take place by the early part of the year.

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.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 The consultation period for this review ran for 10 weeks from 25 October to 31 December 2011. 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 Kemptown, Brighton Pavilion and Hove constituencies was entitled to make representations.

4.2 The consultation paper, together with maps of each ward showing the polling district boundaries, can still be viewed on the Council's website at <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1235114>.

4.3 The consultation paper was also sent to councillors, Members of Parliament, local political parties, the current polling station contacts and other interested groups or persons, including those who have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.

4.4 Few suggestions for change have been received, and the responses to the consultation are summarised in Appendix 2.

Appeal to the Electoral Commission

4.5 Although the Electoral Commission has no role in the review process itself, it can consider comments if people do not think that the review has met the reasonable requirements of electors or taken sufficient account of the needs of disabled electors.

4.6 The following people can make representations to the Electoral Commission:

- 30 or more registered electors
- any person who made comments during the review
- any non-elector who the Commission feels has sufficient interest in the accessibility of disabled persons

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

5.1 The review of polling districts will mean a minimal change in hire costs. Electoral Services have included all hire costs within their budget for 2011/12.

Finance Officer Consulted: Mike Bentley

Date: 12/01/11

Legal Implications:

5.2 The legislative framework for reviews of polling districts and places consists of:

- (i) sections 18A to 18 E and Schedule A1 of the Representation of the People Act 1983, as inserted by section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006; and
- (ii) The Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006 (SI 2006/2965)

5.3 All stages of the review completed thus far comply with the requirements of this legislation.

5.4 In agreeing the recommendations at paragraph 2 above, the Committee would be acting in its authorised capacity of exercising a non-executive function not delegated to another committee or sub-committee of the council.

Lawyer Consulted:

Oliver Dixon

Date: 06/01/11

Equalities Implications:

5.5 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.

Sustainability Implications:

5.6 There are no implications.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

5.7 There are no implications.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

5.8 There are no implications.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.9 The recommendations are in line with council priorities, specifically for open and effective city leadership.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Polling station scheme and Returning Officer's recommendations
2. Summary of comments received during the consultation period

Documents In Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

1. Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places Consultation Paper – 25 October 2010.
2. Consultation responses – file held by Electoral Services
3. Presiding Officer feedback – post 6 May 2010 General Election
4. Polling station customer satisfaction survey – 6 May 2010
5. Electoral Commission Circular EC19/2010 – Review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

