

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Polling Place Review</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>20 September 2011</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Strategic Director, Resources</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Paul Holloway</b>	<b>Tel: 29-2005</b>
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>East Brighton; Withdean</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 A full review of polling districts and polling places, which comprised a formalised series of measures involving consultation, representations and publishing of information, was carried out in the autumn of 2010. Under the Electoral Administration Act 2006, the Council must carry out such a review at least every four years, and the review was timetabled so that any changes took effect for the City Council elections in May 2011.
- 1.2 Following the City Council elections, issues have arisen about two of the Council's designated polling stations.
- 1.3 Withdean Ward - Governors and parents have raised concerns about the use of Westdene Primary School, as the closure of the school on polling day is disruptive to children's education.
- 1.4 East Brighton Ward – The Whitehawk Youth Centre is being demolished, so alternative premises will need to be designated as a polling place.
- 1.5 The Returning Officer's staff have visited the areas concerned, in order to assess the suitability of alternative premises as polling places. Various options have been considered and it is proposed that the Whitehawk Inn Training Centre be put forward as a venue to replace the Whitehawk Youth Centre, and that the Ascension Church Hall and Westdene Library be put forward as options to replace Westdene Primary School.
- 1.6 At its meeting on 1 February 2011, the Governance Committee approved the recommendation to delegate 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.
- 1.7 As there is sufficient time before the next known elections, there is an opportunity to carry out a wider consultation on the proposals for these two wards.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Governance Committee approves the attached consultation document and the consultation process outlined at section 4 of the report.
- 2.2 That the Governance Committee will consider a further report at its meeting on 15 November 2011, to approve recommendations for alternative polling places in the affected wards.

## **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 and other elections. It also has to keep these arrangements under review.
- 3.2 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 or inconvenient.
  - b) To ensure, as far as practicable, that any new 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.
- 3.3 The procedure for conducting a review of polling places is governed by statute. The provisions include a duty on the council to:
  - a) publish a notice of the review
  - b) consult the returning officer for the parliamentary constituency affected
  - c) seek representations from persons with expertise on disabled access
  - d) publish representations made in response to (b) and (c) above
  - e) following the review, publish its decision as to any change of polling place and its reasons for that decision

## **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The consultation period for this review will run from 21 September to 12 October 2011. Public notice of the review will be given, and the consultation document will be sent to ward 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.
- 4.2 Ward councillors have been given prior notice of the consultation.

## 5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

### Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The review of polling districts is not expected to have any financial implications other than a minimal change in hire costs which can be met within the agreed budget.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Anne Silley Date: 18/08/11*

### Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The Governance Committee has power to agree the recommendations at paragraph 2 above in its capacity as a general purposes committee for non-executive functions.

The proposed methodology for conducting a review of the specified polling stations complies with the relevant legislation, namely:

- (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)

*Lawyer Consulted: Oliver Dixon Date: 18/08/11*

### Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 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:

- 5.4 There are no implications.

### Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no implications.

### Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 There are no implications.

### Corporate / Citywide Implications:

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

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Consultation document – review of polling places, autumn 2011

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

None

### **Background Documents**

1. Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places Consultation Paper – 25 October 2010.
2. Electoral Commission Circular EC19/2010 – Review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations.