

**Report for: Licensing and General
Purposes Committee**

Date of Meeting:	Thursday 2 September 2021
Subject:	Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places
Responsible Officer:	Hugh Peart – Director of Legal & Governance Services
Exempt:	No
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	Appendix A – Map of Current Ward Arrangements Appendix B – Map of Future Ward Arrangements Appendix C – Number of Councillors to be elected per Ward Appendix D – Recommendations of the Polling District Review Working Group Appendix E – Specific Details of Proposals for Each Polling District Appendix F – Equality Impact Assessment (To Follow)

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

In accordance with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 the Council is required to undertake a review of its polling districts and polling places. A Working Group was established to undertake this review and the recommendations of the Working Group are attached at Appendix D.

Recommendations (To Full Council):

- (a) To approve the recommendations of the Working Group in relation to the individual polling districts and polling places for all future elections with effect from May 2022 to May 2027; and
- (b) any further changes in venue within a polling district be agreed by the Returning Officer in consultation with ward members.

Section 2 – Report

In accordance with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act (The Act), a Working Group and its terms of reference, and membership was established and agreed by this Committee on 6 February 2019 to initially review and confirm that the arrangements in place at the time were still suitable. These arrangements were subsequently agreed by this Committee on 16 January 2020. The current ward arrangements are attached as Appendix A to this report.

The Working Group comprised of Councillors Keith Ferry (Chair), Jeff Anderson, Jerry Miles, Christopher Baxter and Richard Almond. Mr David Ashton was a co-opted Member of the Working Group.

Whilst The Act requires the Council to undertake a review every 5 years, in 2018/19, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) reviewed proposals for new ward arrangements in Harrow which included reviewing the number of wards, their boundaries and the number of councillors per ward. As a result of this review the number of Councillors to be elected at the Local Elections in May 2022 is reducing from 63 to 55. The number of wards is increasing from 21 to 22 with a mixture of two-member and three-member wards. This was reported to the Committee at its meeting on 6 February 2019. Appendices B and C provide a map of the new ward boundaries and the number of Councillors to be elected for each new ward.

As a result of this, a further review of the polling districts is required before the changes are implemented in time for the Local Elections to be held on Thursday 5 May 2022.

At its meeting on 16 January 2020, this Committee instructed the Working Group to undertake a full review of the polling districts and polling places in Harrow in light of the ward boundary changes implemented by the LGBCE.

The Working Group held a number of meetings throughout 2020 and 2021 to consider new polling district and polling place arrangements. In conducting its work, it established the following criteria in developing their proposals as follows:

- Where possible to use current polling districts as a major part of the new districts and / or natural boundaries;
- All Polling Stations should be accessible or adaptations made where necessary;
- Insofar as it is possible, the polling station should be situated in the polling district;
- Based on EC guidance to ideally have no more than 2,500 electors per polling station.

Proposals on new Polling Districts and Polling Places were developed by the Working Group working closely alongside Council officers. The Working Group identified a number of new potential venues as polling stations and officers were requested to obtain venues agreement to use as polling station. These new venues have subsequently agreed to being used as polling stations for future elections in Harrow. The results are summarised in Appendix D to this report and the number of polling stations in Harrow will increase from 120 to 130.

The proposals developed were subject to a public consultation which commenced on 14 June 2021 and ended on 23 July 2021. The notice of the review was published on the Council's website and sent to all Members of Council, Members of Parliament for Harrow East, Harrow West and Ruislip Northwood and Pinner Constituencies, the Member of the London Assembly for Brent and Harrow, current polling stations and the Electoral Registration Officer for Hillingdon (in relation to the current areas within Harrow forming part of the Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner Constituency).

Representations were received from 47 responders. The comments can be summarised as follows:

- 31 responses were received objecting to the use of Aylward Primary School as a polling station for Canons Polling District 2 with the majority proposing the use of William of York Roman Catholic Church Hall as an alternative venue;
- 9 responses agreeing with the proposals;
- 1 response asking for Priory Way and Manor Road to be removed from the list of streets for Headstone Polling District 1;
- 1 response querying the purpose of the review;
- 1 response asking for Learner Drive and Newton Close to be moved from Roxbourne Polling District 3 into Polling District 2, for ease of accessibility to the polling station;
- 1 response asking if a bigger room can be used within Whitmore High School as the polling station;

- 1 response asking if Blackwell Hall can be used as the polling station for the entire Harrow Weald Ward;
- 1 response asking that Wealdstone North Polling District 1 should include The Meadow Way, Church Lane and The Bye Way and that these electors should vote at the Sri Lankan Muslim Cultural Centre of Harrow and electors in Harrow Weald Polling District 4 should vote at the Whitefriars Children's Centre Delivery Site.

Officers have considered the comments received and responses are as follows:

- Due to the number of objections raised, it be agreed that the William of York Roman Catholic Church be used as a Polling Station for Canons Polling District 2 instead of Aylward Primary School;
- The removal of Priory Way and Manor Road from Headstone Polling District 1 be agreed as there are no residential properties that fall into this Polling District;
- The review is required as the Council need to revise its polling district and polling places arrangements as a result of the LGBCE review into Harrow's ward arrangements;
- The proposal to move Learner Driver and Newton Close into Roxbourne Polling District 2 be agreed;
- The Returning Officer will continue to liaise with Whitmore High School on securing a bigger room to use as a Polling Station;
- Harrow Weald Ward is sub-divided into Polling Districts. Blackwell Hall falls within one of these polling districts but other polling stations are also required for the others to ensure that polling stations are accessible to all electors.

The Working Group considered the representations made as part of the consultation and the Returning Officer's response to these. The Working Group's final recommendations are summarised in Appendix D for recommendation to Full Council for approval.

Legal Implications

Under s.18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council has a legal duty to undertake a review of polling districts and places every five years. This requirement was introduced in accordance with the provisions Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, with the first review having taken place in November 2014. Each review must be completed within 16 months of 1 October every five years, starting with 1 October 2013.

Financial Implications

No funding is available from Central Government to undertake the review. Therefore, all costs associated with the review and its implementation must be contained within the current Electoral Services budget.

Risk Management Implications

Risks included on corporate or directorate risk register? **No**

Separate risk register in place? **No**

The relevant risks contained in the register are attached/summarised below.
n/a

The following key risks should be taken into account when agreeing the recommendations in this report:

Risk Description	Mitigations	RAG Status
<p>If appropriate polling districts have not been developed, this would result in:</p> <p>(a) Failure to comply with statutory requirements;</p> <p>(b) Preventing electors engaging in the electoral process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Polling Districts developed through a cross-party working group utilising local knowledge, knowledge of current arrangements with assistance from officers.▪ Support from the Council's GIS team in mapping proposed polling districts.	Green
<p>If appropriate polling stations have not been identified, this could prevent electors from engaging in the electoral process due to accessibility issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Polling Stations proposed through a cross-party working group utilising local knowledge, knowledge of current arrangements with assistance from officers.▪ All existing polling stations contacted as part of review and confirmation received that they are happy to continue to be used for future elections in Harrow.	Green

Risk Description	Mitigations	RAG Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All new proposed polling stations contacted and visited by officers, with confirmation received that they are happy to be used for future elections in Harrow 	

Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed and no potential disproportionate impact has been identified. This is Appendix F to this report.

Council Priorities

The accessibility of polling stations enabling all eligible residents to engage in the democratic process contributes to the creating an inclusive and vibrant Harrow, a strong and resourceful community sector, able to come together to deal with local issues. This helps to achieve all of the Council's Corporate Priorities

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Statutory Officer: Sharon Daniels

Signed on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Date: 6 August 2021

Statutory Officer: Chris Cuckney

Signed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 9 August 2021

Chief Officer: Charlie Stewart

Signed by the Corporate Director

Date: 10 August 2021

Mandatory Checks

NO, as it impacts on all Wards

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Elaine McEachron, Democratic, Electoral and Registration Services Manager

Background Papers:

Notice of Review
Polling District Review Ward Proposals

If appropriate, does the report include the following considerations?

- | | |
|-----------------|-----|
| 1. Consultation | YES |
| 2. Priorities | YES |