

Meeting:	Licensing & General Purposes Committee
Date:	7 June 2007
Subject:	Review of Polling Districts and Polling Stations
Responsible Officer:	Hugh Peart – Director of Legal & Governance Services
Portfolio Holder:	Leader
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	None

SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report sets out the proposal for review of Harrow's polling districts and polling stations in accordance with recent legislation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is requested to:

- (a) Agree to establish an informal Review Working Group to undertake the review of the polling districts and polling stations in Harrow;
- (b) To nominate 5 of its members (3 conservative, 2 labour) to the Review Working Group;
- (c) To agree that the Review Working Group should include a member of Liberal Democrat group and to invite nominations;
- (d) To agree that the Review Working Group should include a representative from Harrow Association of Disabled People and to invite nominations;
- (e) To agree the terms of reference of the Review Working Group.

SECTION 2 - REPORT

Background

Harrow is currently divided into 21 wards. Those 21 wards have been divided into 76 polling districts, and polling stations are designated within polling places in each polling district. In Harrow, the entire polling district is designated as the polling place.

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 places a new duty on the local authority to review the polling districts and places within its area. Harrow must carry out a review of the polling district and stations in its area by 31 December 2007 and thereafter every four years.

The Review

In order to comply with the legislation this review must be undertaken and completed by 31 December 2007. However, the Electoral Register is published on the 1 December, and the proposal is to undertake and complete the review before this date.

The purpose of the review is to ensure that:

- (1) All electors have reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and that
- (2) So far as is reasonable and practicable that the polling places are accessible to all electors (including disabled persons) having regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.

In undertaking the review:

- (1) A notice of the holding of the review must be published;
- (2) The authority must consult the Returning Officer for every parliamentary election held in a constituency that is wholly or partly within its area;
- (3) The Returning Officer must make representations to the authority as to the location of existing and proposed polling stations within existing and proposed polling places;
- (4) The Returning Officer's representations must be published 30 days after receipt;
- (5) The authority must seek representations and comments on the Returning Officer's representations from:
 - (a) Persons with expertise in relation to access to premises and facilities for persons with different forms of disability; and

- (b) Any elector;
- (6) On completion of the review the authority must:
 - (a) Give reasons for its decisions in the review; and
 - (b) Publish such information.

Members are asked to note that although not provided for in the legislation it is considered good practice allow the local constituency political parties and independent candidates to also make representations on the review and to comment on the Returning Officer's representations.

This Committee has the following responsibilities:

“To keep under review and to determine the arrangement for the holding of elections and any referendums within the Borough and to initiate or respond to any proposal to the change of ward, constituency or Borough boundaries”

In order to ensure that all political groups can participate in the review, it is proposed that it should be undertaken by a cross-party Review Working Group of the authority.

The membership of this Committee does not include a Liberal Democrat representative. It is therefore proposed that a nominated member of the Liberal Democrat group should be invited to be a member of the Review Working Group.

In addition it is also proposed that a representative from Harrow Association of Disabled People should also be invited to be a member of the Review Working Group to advise on access to premises and facilities available for persons with different forms of disability.

In the circumstances, it is proposed that this Committee agree to establish a Review Working Group to undertake the review. This group would operate in the same way as the Constitution Review Working Group with a membership of 6, 3-2-1, and a representative from Harrow Association of Disabled People. The Review Working Group would have no decision-making powers.

The conclusions of the Review Working Group would be reported to this Committee for approval.

Proposed Timetable

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|------------------|---|
| (1) 29 June 2007 | Notice of review published |
| (2) 27 July 2007 | Deadline for submissions |
| (3) August 2007 | Meeting(s) of Working Group to consider representations |

(4) 10 September 2007 Report from Review Working Group to Licensing & General Purposes Committee

This Committee is also asked to consider and agree the terms of reference for the Review Working Group as follows:

Proposed Terms of Reference

Review of Polling Districts and Places Working Group:

- (1) To consult the Returning Officer for every parliamentary election held in a constituency, which is wholly, or partly in its area on the facilities for voting and the accessibility of polling places to all electors (including disabled persons);
- (2) To consider representations made by the Returning Officer as to the location of existing and proposed polling stations, within the existing and proposed polling places;
- (3) To consider all representations made on the review and any comments received on the Returning Officer's representations; and
- (4) To make recommendations on the proposed review to the Licensing and General Purposes Committee.

No funding is available from Central Government to undertake the review. Therefore, all costs associated with the review must be met from within the current electoral services budget.

This report reflects the legislative requirement to undertake the review.

SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

Name: Myfanwy Barrett	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chief Financial Officer
Date: 25 May 2007		
Name: Hugh Peart	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Monitoring Officer
Date: 25 May 2007		

SECTION 4 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact: Elaine McEachron, Assistant Corporate Governance Lawyer,
Tel: 020 8420 9414

Background Papers: List **only non-exempt** documents relied on to a material extent in preparing the report. (eg previous reports) Where possible also include electronic link.

None

IF APPROPRIATE, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	Will be undertaken
2.	Corporate Priorities	N/A
3.	Manifesto Pledge Reference Number	N/A