

Meeting:	Licensing & General Purposes Committee
Date:	23 June 2008
Subject:	Review of Polling Districts and Polling Stations
Responsible Officer:	Director of Legal and Governance - Hugh Peart
Portfolio Holder:	Leader encompassing Strategy, Partnership and Finance - Councillor David Ashton
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Proposed Wards for Review

## **SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This report sets out the proposal for selected review of Harrow's polling districts and polling stations.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Committee is requested agree:

- (a) To re-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) That the Review Working Group should include a member of Liberal Democrat group;
- (d) That the Review Working Group should include a representative from Harrow Association of Disabled People;
- (e) The terms of reference of the Review Working Group.

## **SECTION 2 - REPORT**

### Background

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 placed a new duty on the local authority to review the polling districts and places within its area. The first review was required to be undertaken by 31 December 2007 and thereafter every four years.

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 view of those responsibilities, this Committee agreed to establish a Review Working Group to undertake the review.

In October 2007, Council approved the recommendations (a) in relation to the individual polling districts, and (b) that future reviews would be carried out each year in respect of selected parts of the Borough.

This report sets out the proposals for the first such review.

### The Review Process

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;

The local constituency political parties and independent candidates will also be invited to make representations.

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

The first review was undertaken by a cross-party Review Working Group of the authority, which included a Liberal Democrat representative and a representative from Harrow Association of Disabled People who advised on access to premises and facilities available for persons with different forms of disability.

It is proposed that the Review Working Group should be re-established with the same membership, of three Conservative and two Labour Members from this Committee, a representative from the Liberal Democrat and Harrow Association of Disabled People.

#### Wards to be considered by the Review Group

It is proposed that the Review Working Group conduct a view of the Polling Districts set out at Appendix 1.

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

#### Proposed Timetable for Review

- |                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| (1) 10 July 2008           | Notice of review published   |
| (2) 8 August 2008          | Deadline for submissions   |
| (3) September/October 2008 | Meeting(s) of Working Group to consider representations                    |
| (4) November 2008          | Report from Review Working Group to Licensing & General Purposes Committee |

This Committee is also asked to agree the previously approved terms of reference for the Review Working Group:

## 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 will be met from within the current electoral services budget.

This report reflects the legislative requirement to undertake the review.

There are no risks associated with this report.

## SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

Name: Sheela Thakrar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: 11 June 2008		
Name: Helen White	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date: 9 June 2008		

## 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.

Reports 7 June and 27 June 2007  
Council Minutes – 18 October 2008

**IF APPROPRIATE, does the report include the following considerations?**

1.	Consultation	Will be undertaken
2.	Corporate Priorities	N/A