



London Borough of Enfield

Report Title	Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places
Report to:	General Purposes Committee
Date of Meeting:	Wednesday 25 October 2023
Cabinet Member:	N/A
Directors:	Ian Davis
Report Author:	Lee-Marie Matthews
Ward(s) affected:	Arnos Grove Enfield Lock Lower Edmonton New Southgate Ridgeway Enfield Town Grange Park
Key Decision Number	N/A
Classification:	N/A
Reason for exemption	N/A

1. Purpose of Report

To seek the approval of the panel to the list of proposed new polling buildings/locations to be designated as polling stations.

Recommendations

- I. That the panel agrees the list of proposed changes to the polling places for any elections held in year 2023/2024.
- II. That the Electoral Registration Officer is authorised to take the necessary measures as soon as possible to give effect to parliamentary constituency changes, ensuring that the register reflects existing and new constituencies, until the boundaries are fully in force

2. Background

The Elections Act, which received Royal Assent in April 2022, makes a range of changes. The Act introduces several significant changes which will apply at the following election types:

- a. UK Parliamentary Elections in Great Britain
- b. Local elections in England – including mayoral elections
- c. Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales

There are several new measures introduced by the Election Act relating to polling stations, which is to:

- a. Improve accessibility and support for voters with disabilities
- b. To provide a private area for residents with face coverings to reveal their identity for ID checks.

The following definitions may be helpful when reading the report and Appendices.

- “Polling districts” are geographical electoral areas into which wards, and constituencies may be sub-divided.
- “Polling places” are the buildings or areas designated by the council where electors in a polling district go to vote in person.
- “Polling stations” are the number of issuing desks in the building or area that is the designated polling place.

The Electoral Administration Act 2006, as amended, introduced a duty on all local authorities in Great Britain to review their polling districts and polling places at least once every five years.

Under section 18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983, the next compulsory review must be undertaken within a 16-month window between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.

The intention of the legislation was reviews would be completed by the January before a UK parliamentary general election. However, since the repeal of the Fixed Term Parliaments Act 2011, there is no longer any certainty as to when the next general election will be.

The Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022 means:

- the UK Parliament can be dissolved by the King on request of the Prime Minister, at any time within the 5 years of the life of the Parliament
- the next general election must take place before Tuesday 28 January 2025, but it could happen at any point before then

- there is no longer a link between the timing of the compulsory polling district and places review falling in a 16-month period ending 3 months before a scheduled general election.

In addition, the Boundary Commission for England has now published its final recommendations, and Orders for the new parliamentary constituency boundaries will be made by 1 November 2023.

Once the Orders for new parliamentary constituencies have been made, the new boundaries will be used for the next general election. If a parliamentary by election is called in the meantime, it would be run on existing boundaries.

These issues mean it is important that the polling district and places review is carried out as early as possible, so that Enfield Council has agreed polling districts and places to be used for the next parliamentary election and has a polling scheme in place which reflects the new constituencies.

3. Review Process

Legal requirements

The process for a polling district and places review is set out in Schedule A1, Representation of the People Act 1983.

The Council must:

- publish a notice of the holding of a review
- consult the (Acting) Returning Officer ((A)RO) for every parliamentary constituency which is wholly or partly in its area
- publish all representations made by an (A)RO within 30 days of receipt by posting a copy of them at the local authority's office and in at least one conspicuous place in their area and, if the authority maintains a website, by placing a copy on the authority's website
- seek representations from such persons as it thinks have expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability. Such persons must have an opportunity to make representations and to comment on the representations made by the (A)RO(s).

On completion of the review, the council must give reasons for its decisions and publish:

- all correspondence sent to an (A)RO in connection with the review
- all correspondence sent to any person whom the authority thinks has particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability
- all representations made by any person in connection with the review
- the minutes of any meeting held by the council to consider any revision to the designation of polling districts or polling places within its area as a result of the review
- details of the designation of polling districts and polling places within the local authority area as a result of the review
- details of the places where the results of the review have been published

4. Implementing parliamentary boundary changes

The Boundary Commission for England recently undertook a review of parliamentary constituency boundaries. They have published their final

recommendations, and Orders for the new parliamentary constituency boundaries will be made by 1 November 2023.

Once the Orders for new parliamentary constituencies have been made, the new boundaries will be used for the next general election.

If a parliamentary by election is called in the meantime, it would be run on existing boundaries.

This means the Register of Electors needs to be able to reflect both the existing and new constituencies.

Work can be done to prepare the register in the background before then, so that once the Order for the new parliamentary constituencies is made, the register can be re-arranged or adapted as necessary to give effect to the Order. This would allow any snap general election in November 2023 to be run on the new constituencies.

This can be achieved by creating future administrative areas within the Election Management system. The Head of Electoral Services, on behalf of the Electoral Registration Officer, will liaise with the software supplier to implement this. This work is now concluded and is pending the publication of the 1 December 2023 Electoral Registers.

It is recommended that the Electoral Registration Officer is authorised to take the necessary measures as soon as possible to give effect to parliamentary constituency changes, ensuring that the register reflects existing and new constituencies, until the boundaries are fully in force.

5. Preliminary Review

Electoral Services has already completed a preliminary review on the current polling districts and polling places in Enfield to assess their suitability.

This involves:

- Compiling details of current polling places with a summary of their suitability
- Checking the continued availability of polling places
- Reviewing feedback from stakeholders at previous elections
- Identifying potential alternative buildings where appropriate
- Ensuring that polling places can support the requirements of the Elections Act, for example with sufficient space to undertake Voter ID checks, and to accommodate equipment to assist disabled voters
- Seeking advice and guidance from local disability groups and local authority experts around accessibility
- Preparing council proposals and drafting (A)RO comments, including explanations for “no changes”

At the end of the risk assessment, we have identified six changes to the current polling places and no changes to the current polling districts. The panel is invited

to consider the following recommendations in respect of the designation of specific polling stations listed

6. ARO Recommendation

The Acting Returning Officers (ARO) review of polling districts did not identify any areas that require amendment. However, the risk assessment review identified several changes to the current polling scheme. The reasons for these changes including recommending alternative venues to use as a polling venue is set out below. The risk assessment report summary can also be viewed in **Appendix (A)**.

ARNOS GROVE

The ARO recommend that we use **Our Lady of Lourdes Church** as a polling station to replace the current polling station **Bowes Road Library**, which is currently serving two polling districts (AGDY and NSBY). After the May 2022 elections, feedback from polling staff and the assigned Polling Station Inspector was that this venue is too small to accommodate and serve to two polling districts. With the additional requirement required under the Election Act 2022, we looked at alternative venues within the AGDY area. The risk review of the area identified **Our Lady of Lourdes Church** to serve residents in polling district AGDY. This new venue is large enough to comfortably accommodate additional Voter ID equipment as well as the venue being DDA compliant. Please note that **Bowes Road Library** will continue to serve residents in NSBY polling district only.

Polling District	Polling Station	2022 Electorate In Person Voters
AGDY	Bowes Road Library	788
NSBY	Bowes Road Library	437
Proposed new changes		
AGDY	Our Lady of Lourdes Church	788
NSBY	Bowes Road Library	437

ENFIELD LOCK

Prior to the start of the risk assessment, the ARO initially received a request from a member of the public and from Feryal Clark MP to seek an additional polling station in polling district ELEX, due to the high voter electorate already assigned to **Prince of Wales School**.

Polling District	Polling Station	2022 Electorate In Person Voters
ELEX	Prince of Wales School	2144
Proposed new changes		
ELEX PP41	Prince of Wales School	1194 approx
ELEX PP42	Portacabin (Wetlands)	950 approx

After reviewing the voter electorate figures for ELEX, the ARO recommends adding an additional polling station within this polling district. This will reduce the pressure to polling staff administering the poll from Prince of Wales School and prevent residents from Aldridge Avenue, Arnold Avenue, Somerset Road and Ordnance

Road to cross over Mollison Avenue highway to vote at Prince of Wales School. Adding a new temporary polling building, this will give residents easier access to a polling station. Please refer to **Appendix (B)**.

LOWER EDMONTON

The ARO recommend using **Westbourne Hall** to serve polling district LECZ because at the next scheduled elections in May 2024, the polling day falls on a religious week, where the current polling station **St Demetrious Church Hall** will not be able to accommodate us for hire on polling day.

NEW SOUTHGATE

The ARO recommend using **Bounds Green Bowls & Tennis Club** to replace **Bowes Primary School**. After the May 2022 elections, the school expressed their request to not be used for future elections, due to students missing a day of school. Currently this school is forced to shut on polling day.

RIDGEWAY

The ARO recommend using **The Jolly Farmers Public House** as a replacement for the **portacabin building** to be inserted (**between Bitcote Road and Foxmead Close**). This is due to the high cost associated with hiring portacabins. Portacabins are extremely expensive, and we currently hire 15 portacabins.

As part of our yearly review of polling stations, I will be reviewing hire charges, particularly the hire of portacabins, with the view to cost save by seeking alternative polling buildings to replace portacabins where suitable.

GRANGE PARK AND ENFIELD TOWN

The ARO recommend using Enfield Baptist Church as a replacement for Our lady of Mount Carmel and St George R.C Church. This is due to receiving notification from the current venue that the venue will be undergoing refurbishment works during the election period at the next scheduled election. Enfield Baptist church was identified, and risk assessed as a replacement venue, which is within a 5-minute walking distance from the current venue. This venue fulfils all the criteria set out in this report and provides two rooms to host a polling station. This is essential has this venue will be serving two polling districts in two different parliamentary constituencies which are Enfield Town and Grange Park.

Polling District	Recommended Polling Station	Parliamentary Constituency
GPAY	Enfield Baptist Church	Enfield Southgate
TWEX,TWHY	Enfield Baptist Church	Enfield North

SOUTHBURY

The ARO recommend that due to the unavailability of **Charles Baggage House car park area**, the alternative temporary location identified is **Enfield Playing Fields Car Park**. The ARO recommends that additional signage, security, and

Marshals be allocated to this site. If you refer to **Appendix A** page 47 (PP86), the map shows a yellow box to indicate the exact location of the alternative site.

7. Financial Implications

This review has incurred expenditure, which totals to the following amount:

Campaign/Description	Designer	Cost	Status
Polling District and Polling places - poster, social media, clear channel, ads, PPT, email banner, e-newsletter header, intranet desktop	Enza	£354.00	Complete
Printing	Internal Print	£30.00 approx	Complete
	Total:	£384.00	

This has been recharged to Electoral Services CS0149.

This has been forwarded to the Finance Impact team for review. No comments have been received.

8. Legal Implications

The report sets out the basis upon which recommendations may be made by the General Purposes Committee for implementation by the Returning Officer. The Council and the Returning Officer have legal obligations within an existing statutory framework to implement changes introduced by the Elections Act 2022. The recommendation in this report will help ensure that the Council and the Returning Officer continue to meet those obligations. The legislation governing the review of Polling Districts and Places are as follows:

- Representation of the People Act s.18A, 18C and Schedule A1
- Elections Act 2022
- Electoral Administration Act 2006

This has been reviewed by the Legal Impact team with no comments.

9. Equalities Implications

The 1st draft of the equalities impact assessment has been completed and reviewed by the Equality Impact team. Please refer to Appendix (D). There will be additional information to add to this assessment once the consultation period comes to an end on the 22 October. The EQIA report will be signed off once the supplementary information is added to the report on the 23 October.

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Appendices

- Appendix (A) – Polling Districts and Polling Places Recommendation including ward maps
- Appendix (B) – Map of additional new temporary polling building.
- Appendix (C) – Proposed Polling Scheme 2023
- Appendix (D) - EQIA

Departmental reference number, if relevant: CE 23/005