

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2007/2008 REPORT NO. **128**

MEETING TITLE AND DATE:

Council 7th November 2007

REPORT OF:

Chief Executive

Agenda – Part: 1

Item: 8

Subject:

**Review of Parliamentary Polling Districts
and Polling Places**

Cabinet Member consulted: N/A

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. To comply with the requirements of the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council is required to sub-divide its area into polling districts for the purposes of parliamentary elections and to designate polling places for each of those districts.
- 1.2. The Council must complete a full review of all polling districts and polling places by the end of 2007.
- 1.3. The Electoral Review Panel has carried out this review, and has agreed a set of recommendations for future electoral arrangements for consideration and adoption by the Council.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. That the Council agrees the outcome of the review carried out by the Electoral Review Panel as summarised in the attached report for the future electoral arrangements in the borough.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The London Borough of Enfield is required to divide its area into polling districts for the purposes of parliamentary elections, and to designate polling places for each of those districts. In doing so, the authority must seek to

ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances, and have regard to the needs of electors who are disabled.

3.2. The following definitions are supplied for information:

- A **polling district** is a geographical sub-division of an electoral area, i.e. a UK Parliamentary constituency, a European Parliamentary electoral region, a ward or an electoral division.
- A **polling place** is a geographical area in which a polling station is located. However, as there is no legal definition of what a polling place is, the geographical area could be defined as tightly as a particular building or as widely as the entire polling district.
- A **polling station** is the actual area where the process of voting takes place, and must be located within the polling place designated for the particular polling district.

3.3. In order to satisfy new requirements introduced into the Representation of the People Act 1983, the authority is required to complete a full review of all polling districts and polling places by the end of 2007. That review commenced on 1 May 2007. The outcome is summarised in the attached report – Appendices 1 and 2.

3.4. At the start of the review, the authority wrote to a number of stakeholders, including all 63 councillors, the 3 Members of Parliament, the London Assembly member for the Enfield and Haringey constituency and local registered political parties, seeking initial comments on the existing arrangements. In addition, the views of Enfield Vision and Enfield Disability Action were sought as being organisations best placed to provide expertise in respect of access to premises and facilities for persons who have different forms of disability. The responses received are set out in Appendix 3.

3.5. On the basis that the Council has had a policy of fully reviewing electoral arrangements after major elections for some time, with the last review having been undertaken following the parliamentary general election in 2005, stakeholders were advised that the general principle underpinning this review was that of minimal change.

3.6. In addition to contacting the various stakeholders referred to in paragraph 3.4 above, the authority consulted the Returning Officer for the Edmonton, Enfield North and Enfield Southgate parliamentary constituencies. The Returning Officer is required to make representations to the authority, and in doing so must include information as to the location of polling stations (existing or proposed) within polling places (existing or proposed).

3.7. The Returning Officer surveyed every site currently designated as a polling place by reference to a checklist adapted from that provided by the Electoral

Commission, and where public buildings such as schools are currently designated, attempted to recommend potential suitable alternatives.

- 3.8. These representations were submitted to the local authority on 26th July 2007, and the various stakeholders either supplied with a copy or advised as to where they could obtain one.
- 3.9. A copy of the full report is available in the Members' Library and the Group offices. As stated in paragraph 3.3, Appendices 1 and 2 provide a summary of this report. At present, there are 106 sites designated as polling places in the borough serving the 112 polling districts.
- 3.10 The Electoral Review Panel met on 12th September and 23rd October to undertake the review.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. Not applicable. The Council is required to undertake this full review, and must consider the Returning Officer's representations and any representations made both by organisations that have expertise in respect of access to premises and facilities for persons who have different forms of disability and other stakeholders when doing so.

5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1. To comply with the Council's responsibilities as set out in the Representation of the People Act 1983.

6. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES AND OTHER DEPARTMENTS

6.1. Financial Implications

The final designation of polling places will ultimately determine whether there will be additional financial implications. However, as the Council must seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances, and have regard to the needs of electors who are disabled, any additional costs incurred will have to be absorbed.

6.2. Legal Implications

The review process is prescribed by the Representation of the People Act 1983, and failure to comply with the requirement to complete this review by the end of 2007 would lead the Council to being in breach of official duty.

6.3. Property Implications

The final designation of polling places will ultimately determine whether there will be property implications. However, the Returning Officer has considered

such implications in his representations, and made appropriate recommendations accordingly.

6.4. Other Directors

No implications have been identified for other Directors.

7. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The designation of appropriate polling districts and polling places will assist the Returning Officer in continuing to deliver high quality electoral services across the borough.

8. ENFIELD FIRST

The designation of appropriate polling districts and polling places will contribute generally and specifically to the Council's objectives.

Background Papers

Representation of the People Act 1983
Returning Officer's Review Report – 26 July 2007