

London Borough of Enfield

General Purposes Committee

Meeting Date: 4 August 2021

Subject: Polling District and Polling Place Review
Cabinet Member: Not applicable
Chief Executive: Ian Davis
Key Decision: Not Applicable

Purpose of Report

1. To consider a programme of work for the preliminary and formal polling district and polling place review.

Proposal(s)

2. The Committee is asked to:
 - note the two stages of the polling district and polling place review: preliminary and formal reviews;
 - note the approach taken for the preliminary review and to agree the approach to be taken for the formal review;
 - note the intention for the arrangements made for Parliamentary elections are also to be used at other elections and referenda;
 - approve the proposed timetable for the formal review (paragraph 16), and;
 - delegate authority to the Director of Law and Governance in consultation with the Chair of the General Purposes Committee to make any minor amendments necessary to facilitate the management of the review.

Reason for Proposal(s)

3. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) Order for the London Borough of Enfield Electoral Review created new ward boundaries effective from May 2022. A polling district and polling place review is required to reflect the new boundaries at the revision of the electoral register on 1 December 2021. Appendix A shows the new ward boundaries and 2021 polling districts and polling places.

Relevance to the Council Plan

4. The alteration of polling districts to be implemented in the borough will not impact on the new Enfield Council Plan 2020-2022.

Background

5. The statutory responsibility for reviewing UK Parliamentary polling districts and places rests with each relevant local authority in Great Britain for so much of any constituency as is situated in its area.
6. The responsibility to provide recommendations to Full Council on electoral arrangements in the borough relating to the designation of polling districts and polling places lies with the General Purposes Committee.
7. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 amended the Representation of the People Act 1983 to require the Council to undertake regular reviews of both polling districts and polling places within its area. The differences between a district, place and station are as follows:
 - A polling district is a geographical sub-division of an electoral area, (an electoral area being a UK Parliamentary constituency, a European Parliamentary electoral region, a parish, parish ward or an electoral division).
 - A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the Returning Officer. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district.
 - A polling station is room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the local authority, polling stations are chosen by the relevant Returning Officer for the election. The Returning Officer for the particular election must provide a sufficient number of polling stations and allocate the electors to those polling stations in such manner as he or she thinks the most convenient.
8. The purpose of such a review is to ensure that all electors have reasonably practicable facilities for voting and that polling places are reasonably accessible to electors who are disabled.
9. The Act requires the Council to publish notice of a Polling District and Polling Place review and to consult both the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) for Parliamentary elections and persons whom the Council considers have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have disabilities. In addition, anyone may comment on the review.

Main Considerations for the Council

10. In relation to the 1 July to 1 December 2021 period, the Acting Returning Officer considered the following:

- Annual canvass June to December 2021
- Revised electoral register scheduled to be published on 1 December 2021
- By elections during the review period
- Scheduling approval of the proposals
- Proposals to be submitted to Full Council in good time for approval prior to publication.
- Awareness of current parliamentary constituency boundaries.

Preliminary review

11. A local authority should undertake a preliminary review of the current polling districts and polling places with a view to establishing their suitability and identify any potential alternatives where required. This may be done before the start of the specified review period. There is no requirement to change any of the polling districts and polling places if they are suitable, but any 'no change' decision must be fully justified as part of the overall proposals.

12. The following data and information was used to assist with the preliminary review:

- Population density heat maps
- Data provided to the LGBCE detailing proposed areas of new development, the approximate number of dwellings and expected population numbers for those areas.
- Road traffic maps highlighting levels of congestion
- List of School Streets and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs)
- Public transport accessibility data
- Details of current polling places and an indication as to their overall suitability for purpose
- Presiding Officer/Polling Station Inspector comments from May 2021 GLA election
- Surveys completed as part of the 2019 polling place review
- Ward profile information including levels of deprivation, ethnicity and disability data.

13. All ward councillors were invited to drop-in sessions during the period 28 June to 7 July, to offer information and local knowledge to aid the Acting Returning Officer when considering proposals for both polling districts and polling places.

Formal review process

14. The Electoral Commission's guidance is attached at Appendix B which provides more detailed requirements on the Formal Review Process (para 4.5) and Considering Accessibility Issues (para 4.6).

15. In accordance with the guidance, when carrying out the review, local authorities must:

- publish a notice of the holding of a review
- consult the ARO for every parliamentary constituency which is wholly or partly in its area
- publish all representations made by an ARO 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 particular 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 AROs.
- on completion of a review, give reasons for its decisions and publish:
 - all correspondence sent to an (Acting) Returning Officer 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.

16. Proposed Review timetable:

Month	Activity
May to Jul 2021	Gather and analyse evidence (electorate forecasts, demographics, engage with elected members)
4 Aug 2021	Report to the Committee on the programme of work for the preliminary and formal review
5 Aug 2021	Publish a notice of the holding of the review
5 Aug 2021	Publish ARO representation
5 Aug - 20 Sep	Public consultation period

2021	
August 2021	Consultation materials forwarded for comment to key stakeholders including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability and Carers groups • Community groups • Elected representatives
14 Oct 2021	General Purpose Committee to consider representations and make recommendations
17 Nov 2021	Council to consider recommendations from General Purpose Committee
Nov 2021	Amend the electoral software to reflect new polling scheme
1 Dec 2021	Publish revised register with new polling districts

Safeguarding Implications

17. None

Public Health Implications

18. None

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

19. Local authorities have a duty to review the accessibility of all polling places to disabled voters and ensure that every polling place, and prospective polling place, for which it is responsible is accessible to disabled voters 'so far as is reasonable and practicable'. The Electoral Commission guidance (Appendix B) provides further information on considering accessibility issues.
20. In addition to writing to those groups or individuals with expertise in access issues within the Enfield area, the Disability Working Group will be invited to respond to the ARO's representations during the public consultation phase.
21. An ongoing Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix C) is being developed alongside the review in order to assess its impact on each protected characteristic.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

22. None

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

23. Reputational risk for the Council and Returning Officer if the review was not completed prior to the LB Enfield election to be held in May 2022.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

24. None

Financial Implications

25. A one-off allocation of £150k from contingent items has been agreed to fund the polling district and polling place review.

Legal Implications (Jeremy Chambers)

26. All relevant legal matters are addressed in the body of the report.

Workforce Implications

27. Additional one-off resources have been allocated to the Director of Law and Governance to undertake this project.

Property Implications

28. None

Other Implications

29. None

Options Considered

30. None

Conclusions

31. The LGBCE Order for the London Borough of Enfield Electoral Review requires the realignment of the polling districts through a Polling District and Polling Place Review in preparation for the May 2022 elections. Compliance

with the Electoral Commission guidance minimises the risk of appeal of the Council's decision.

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Date of report: 4 August 2021

Appendices

Appendix A: Current and future ward boundaries map

Appendix B: Electoral Commission, Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

Appendix C: EqIA – Polling District and Polling Place Review 2021

Background Papers

The following documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

Electoral Commission, Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations