

Draft Report of: (Acting) Returning Officer

SUBJECT: Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

1. Synopsis

1.1 This report and appendix set out proposed changes to polling districts and polling places following a consultation process carried out in accordance with the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

1.2 These changes will take effect with the publication of the revised Register of Electors on 1 December 2019 for all elections.

2. Recommendations

2.1 To agree to the changes set out in this report at 3.5-3.11 and Appendix 1 in relation to St Margarets and North Twickenham Ward, South Twickenham Ward, Fulwell & Hampton Hill Ward, Ham, Petersham & Richmond Riverside Ward, East Sheen Ward, Mortlake & Barnes Common Ward and Kew Ward

2.2 To note that a further review of all polling districts will need to be made following the Electoral Review outcome by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

3. Background

Introduction

3.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK parliamentary polling districts and polling places. A compulsory review must be started and completed between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 inclusive. Subsequent compulsory reviews must be started and completed within the period of 16 months that starts on 1 October of every fifth year after 1 October 2018. However, interim reviews may be carried out if needed. Following each election officers review the running of the election and specifically look at any issues that have arisen in relation to polling places or polling districts.

3.2 This report seeks approval to the proposed changes set out in the report and Appendix 1 which shall have affect from publication of the revised Register of Electors on 1 December 2019 for a period of 4 years. However, it is recognised that following the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's Electoral Review of Richmond (which is due to publish its final recommendations in February 2020) that a further review will need to take place well before the next compulsory review is required. The steps required for a review have been undertaken, including the publication of these proposals and consultation on them.

3.3 Section 18B (4) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 states that in conducting a review of polling places the authority must:

- seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
- seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.
- must be within the area of the district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area either wholly or partly outside of the polling district.

3.4 Electorate figures are as at 1 August 2019.

PROPOSED CHANGES

3.5 St Margarets and North Twickenham Ward

3.51 A change of Polling Place for Polling District DB from The Winchester Room at The Turks Head to St Margarets Catholic Church Hall is recommended due to the non-availability of the previous venue. This was used successfully at the European Parliamentary Elections on 23 May 2019. See Appendix 1 for further details.

3.6 South Twickenham Ward

3.61 A change of Polling Place for Polling District EA from St Catherines School to Church of St James is recommended. This was used successfully at the European Parliamentary Elections on 23 May 2019. See Appendix 1 for further details.

3.7 Fulwell & Hampton Hill Ward

3.71 A change of Polling Place for Polling District HA from St Marys & St Peters C of E School to St Francis De Sales is recommended. A change in HB from St James Church Hall to Greenwood Community Centre is also recommended. These were used for both polling districts successfully at the European Parliamentary Elections on 23 May 2019. See Appendix 1 for further details.

3.8 Ham, Petersham & Richmond Riverside Ward

3.81 A change of Polling Place for Polling District NA from Russell School Nursery to Caravan near Russell School Nursery. This was used successfully at the European Parliamentary Elections on 23 May 2019. See Appendix 1 for further details.

3.9 East Sheen Ward

3.91 A change of Polling Place for Polling District OA from Sheen Mount School to East Sheen Baptist Church Hall. This was used successfully at the European Parliamentary Elections on 23 May 2019. See Appendix 1 for further details.

3.10 Mortlake & Barnes Common Ward

3.10.1 A change of Polling Place for Polling District PA from East Sheen Primary School to The Pavillion. This was used successfully at the European Parliamentary Elections on 23 May 2019. See Appendix 1 for further details.

3.11 Kew Ward

3.11.1 A change of Polling Place for Polling District QA from Queens C of E School to St Annes Church Hall. This was used successfully at the European Parliamentary Elections on 23 May 2019. See Appendix 1 for further details.

3.12 Recommended that all other wards remain unchanged.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial implications:

The costs of the polling districts and polling places review will be met from within existing budgets.

4.2 Legal Implications:

4.2.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 section 18D requires that local authorities designate the polling places within their Parliamentary constituencies. Under Representation of the People Act 1983, Returning Officers have the right to use certain public buildings (including schools that receive public funds) for use as polling stations at elections.

4.2.2 Section 18B (4) of the RPA 1983 states that in conducting a review of polling places the authority must:

- seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
- seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.
- must be within the area of the district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area either wholly or partly outside of the polling district.

4.3 Resident Impact Assessment:

4.3.1 Electoral Services considered a review of all possible polling places and used a suitability and access checklist. One checklist has been completed for each existing poll place and all proposed new polling places.

4.3.2 All polling staff receive equalities training as part of the induction for working on the election.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1 The Electoral Registration & Administration Act 2013 requires all authorities to keep polling districts and polling places in its area under review.

5.2 Representations have been sought from political groups and the report takes into account informal conversations held with members and party agents.

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Summary of the review - Returning Officers Report

Background papers: None.

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