

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
COUNCIL – 21 FEBRUARY 2018  
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND ACTING RETURNING OFFICER

INTERIM REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

**1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 For electoral purposes, the Council is required to divide each parliamentary constituency in the area into polling districts for parliamentary elections and to designate polling places for each of those polling districts. Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006, all Polling Districts, Places and Stations should be reviewed on a regular basis.
- 1.2 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of the review of polling arrangements and it is required that the next review must be started and completed between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive) and every five years thereafter.
- 1.3 This report informs the Council that there have been no responses received to the new interim proposals, which are detailed in the Appendix to this report, on the proposed changes to the current arrangements.

**2. Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 That the Council notes i) the one response received to the consultation; ii) that as a full review of electoral arrangements for the Borough is to be conducted from October 2018, it is recommended that the interim proposals detailed in the Appendix to this report be implemented and adopted until the electoral review as referred to in 1.2 above is considered.

**3. Financial Implication(s)**

- 3.1 There would be additional costs for the newly created polling stations together with attendant staffing where applicable (although the majority of changes would not result in further costing and with two stations there would be a saving in having reduced staff).

**4. Link to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 I can confirm that the subject of this report is linked to the Council's Corporate Priority. "Our Council – ensure fair and open access to our services for all members of our diverse community".

**5. Legal Implication(s)**

- 5.1 Reviews of Polling Places, Polling Districts and Polling Stations are carried out under the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.

## **6. Climate Change Implication(s)**

6.1 None specifically as a result of this report.

## **7. Risk Management Implication**

7.1 There are no risk management implications arising directly as a result of this report. Risk assessments are carried out for all polling places and polling stations on a regular basis to ensure that they are safe and fit for purpose.

## **8. Explanation**

8.1 Each local authority in Great Britain is responsible for reviewing polling districts and polling places in its area on a regular basis.

8.2 Responsibility for deciding how many polling stations are required for each polling place lies with the Acting Returning Officer who must allocate electors to the polling stations in such a manner that is most convenient.

8.3 The last review of polling districts, places and stations in Welwyn Hatfield was agreed at Council on 24 November 2014.

8.4 Public notice of the current interim review was given on 4 January 2018 at which representations were invited from key stakeholders, interested groups and organisations or individuals on the appropriateness of the polling places and any other comments on the scheme in general. The deadline for submission of comments was 2 February 2018.

8.5 There has been one response to the consultation:

### **8.6 Christchurch Baptist and Saint Francis of Assisi Church**

The suggestion is that these two polling stations are replaced with two other polling stations nearer to the south of the ward to avoid electors in the south having to walk 20 minutes to the polling station. The two proposed replacement polling stations – Marsden Green Christian Spiritualist Church and Handside Hall will be investigated fully and as to viability and availability and the effect this would have on all electors in this area when it comes to the full review the beginning October 2018.

### **Panshanger – Money Hole Park Football Club**

It is suggested that electors residing in Bushey/Great Gannett area were incensed in having to walk either a 20 or 24 minute walk to vote. This has been addressed in the current proposal.

Following the boundary review, these electors were transferred from Howlands Ward to Panshanger Ward. The polling station currently allocated to these electors is Panshanger Football Club, which is difficult for some electors to visit as there is quite a distance from where they live in relation to the polling station. These electors voted at Ludwick Family Club for the County and Parliamentary elections, but this venue is not suitable for a borough ward election, as it could confuse voters having two different

ward candidate information at the same polling station. A closer polling station may well increase voter participation.

## **9. Equality and Diversity**

- 9.1 One of the key reasons for carrying out an interim review of the polling places and polling stations is to ensure that they continue to be convenient to all electors and are accessible for disabled persons.
- 9.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

## **10. Background Papers**

- 10.1 Reviews of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations – Guidance from the Electoral Commission  
Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013  
Electoral Administration Act 2006  
The Review of Polling District and Polling Places (Parliamentary elections) regulations 2006

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