

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 70

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Polling Place Review		
Date of Meeting:	20 March 2012		
Report of:	Strategic Director, Resources		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Paul Holloway	Tel: 29-2005
	E-mail:	paul.holloway@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Wards Affected:	East Brighton, Hangleton & Knoll, Hove Park, Goldsmid, St Peter's & North Laine, Wish and Withdean		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 A full review of polling districts and polling places, which comprised a formalised series of measures involving consultation, representations and publishing of information, was carried out in the autumn of 2010. Under the Electoral Administration Act 2006, the Council must carry out such a review at least every four years, and the review was timetabled so that any changes took effect for the City Council elections in May 2011.
- 1.2 Following the City Council elections, issues have arisen about six of the Council's designated polling stations.
- 1.3 East Brighton Ward – the Headteacher of St Mark's CE Primary School, on behalf of pupils, parents and teachers, has requested that the Council seek alternative premises because the closure of the school on polling day is disruptive to the education process.
- 1.4 Hangleton & Knoll Ward – the Headteacher of West Blatchington Primary School, on behalf of pupils, parents and teachers, has requested that the Council seek alternative premises because the closure of the school on polling day is disruptive to the education process. In addition, disabled access to the school is poor, with a flight of steps to the main entrance.

- 1.5 Hove Park and Goldsmid Wards – the Headteacher of Cottesmore St Mary’s RC Primary School, on behalf of pupils, parents and teachers, has requested that the Council seek alternative premises because the closure of the school on polling day is disruptive to the education process.
- 1.6 St Peter’s & North Laine Ward – the Friends Centre, Stroudley Road, is not available for use as a polling station in the next elections.
- 1.7 Wish Ward – the Pavilion, Aldrington Recreation Ground, Saxon Road, is not available for use as a polling station in the next elections.
- 1.8 Withdean Ward – the Headteacher of Balfour Primary School, on behalf of pupils, parents and teachers, has requested that the Council seek alternative premises, because of the impact of the infant and junior schools merging and the disruption to the school.
- 1.9 The Returning Officer’s staff have visited the areas concerned, in order to assess the suitability of alternative premises as polling places. Various options have been considered and it is proposed that:
 - a) the Manor Gym be put forward as a venue to replace St Mark’s CE Primary School
 - b) Hangleton Community Centre be put forward as an option to replace West Blatchington Primary School
 - c) views are sought about the continued use of Cottesmore St Mary’s RC Primary School
 - d) St Bartholomew’s CE Primary School be put forward as an option to replace the Friends Centre
 - e) a portable polling station be put forward as an option to replace the Pavilion, Saxon Road
 - f) Dorothy Stringer High School be put forward as an option to replace Balfour Primary School
- 1.10 At its meeting on 1 February 2011, the Governance Committee approved the recommendation to delegate to the Returning Officer (the Chief Executive), following consultation with the Group Leaders and respective ward councillors, the designation of alternative polling places in the event of any polling place not being available at any particular election.
- 1.11 As there is sufficient time before the next scheduled elections in November 2012, there is an opportunity to carry out a wider consultation on the proposals for these seven wards. It is proposed to undertake this consultation as we have successfully carried out previously in line with the council’s recommended practices.

2. RECOMMENDATION:

- 2.1 That the Governance Committee approves the attached consultation document and the consultation process outlined at section 4.
- 2.2 That, on completion of the consultation exercise referred to above, officers bring a report to the relevant Council committee for the approval of recommendations for alternative polling places in the affected wards.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council has a duty to divide its area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each district for UK Parliamentary elections and other elections. It also has to keep these arrangements under review. .
- 3.2 The principles underlying the Council's approach to polling districts and polling places are:
 - a) To try and identify new polling places in areas where the existing provision is inadequate or inconvenient.
 - b) To ensure, as far as practicable, that any new polling places are accessible to people with disabilities.
 - c) To ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
 - d) To try and minimise disruption to schools.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The consultation period for this review will run from 23 March to 1 June 2012. Public notice of the review will be given, and the consultation document will be sent to ward councillors, Members of Parliament, local political parties, the current polling station contacts and other interested groups or persons, including those who have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 In the main, the polling place review will have a minimal impact in terms of hire costs. However, the cost of a portable polling station in the Wish ward, will be approximately £2,000 and this will be met from within existing resources.

Finance Officer Consulted: Mike Bentley

Date: 01/03/12

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The legislative framework for reviews of polling districts and places consists of:
(i) sections 18A to 18 E and Schedule A1 of the Representation of the People Act 1983; and
(ii) The Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006 (SI 2006/2965).

Under the council's existing constitution, the Governance Committee has power to exercise functions relating to electoral matters. Under the council's new committee system of governance expected to come into effect from Annual Council 2012, these functions would – under existing proposals – be transferred to a newly established Policy & Resources Committee. The definitive governance structure and scheme of delegation to committees will not be confirmed until Full Council passes a resolution to that effect on 26 April 2012.

Lawyer Consulted: Oliver Dixon

Date: 2 March 2012

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The Council must ensure that so far as is reasonable and practical every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to people who are disabled.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 There are no implications.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no implications.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

5.6 There are no implications.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.7 The recommendations are in line with council priorities, specifically for open and effective city leadership.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Consultation document – review of polling places, spring 2012

Documents In Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

1. Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places Consultation Paper – 25 October 2010.
2. Electoral Commission Circular EC19/2010 – Review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

Appendix 1

Partial Review of Polling Districts and
Polling Places

East Brighton, Hangleton & Knoll, Hove
Park, Goldsmid, St Peter's & North Laine,
Wish and Withdean Wards of
Brighton & Hove City Council

Consultation Document

Consultation Period runs from 23 March to 1 June 2012

1. Background to the Review

Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, the council has a duty to divide its area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each district for UK Parliamentary elections. It also has to keep these arrangements under review. The arrangements made for parliamentary elections are also used at other elections.

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a duty on all local authorities in Great Britain to review their polling districts and polling places at least once every four years. A full review including wide consultation was carried out in autumn 2010, and changes took effect for the City Council elections in May 2011.

Following the City Council elections, issues arose about two of the council's designated polling stations and a partial review was carried out in autumn 2011. Further issues have now arisen about six more polling stations, and a partial review is therefore now necessary in the wards of East Brighton, Hangleton & Knoll, Hove Park, Goldsmid, St Peter's & North Laine, Wish and Withdean.

2. Definitions

"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.

The polling place should in normal circumstances be situated within the polling district for which it is designated, but in some circumstances, for example where no suitable polling place can be found, then the polling place may be designated outside the polling district.

"Polling stations" are the number of issuing desks in the building that is the designated polling place, which generally range from one to three. The Returning Officer determines the number of polling stations depending on the electorate at a particular election. Wherever possible there should be no more than 2,500 electors allotted to a polling station.

3. The Review Process

The Returning Officer's proposals have been included in this consultation paper.

The council invites comments on the proposals. Public notice about the consultation will be given. The consultation paper will be sent to councillors, Members of Parliament, local political parties, and any other interested groups or persons, including those who have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.

4. The Review Timetable

The timetable for the review is set out below:

Consultation document to be circulated	Friday 23 March 2012
Closing date for representations	Friday 1 June 2012
Final proposals published via Agenda papers and website	Monday 9 July 2012
Council's Governance Committee meeting – approval of polling place changes	Tuesday 17 July 2012
Completion of review and publication of revised electoral register	1 September 2012
Police and Crime Commissioner elections	Thursday 15 November 2012

5. The Proposals

This document sets out details of current polling district and polling places for the five wards in question, and details of issues and any proposed changes.

The principles behind these proposals are:

- a) To try and identify new polling places in areas where the existing provision is inadequate or inconvenient.
- b) To ensure, as far as practicable, that any new polling places are accessible to people with disabilities.

c) To ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.

d) To try and minimise disruption to schools.

6. Making comments

Any elector may make representations. Representations must be received by **Friday 1 June 2012**, and should be addressed to:

Electoral Services
Brighton & Hove City Council
FREEPOST BR 2003
Town Hall
Brighton
BN1 1ZW

or emailed to: electors@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Polling station scheme and Returning Officer's Proposals

Electorates as at 1 February 2012

East Brighton Ward, Kemptown Constituency

Polling District	Electorate	Existing Polling Place	Number of polling stations
DS	1256	Valley Social Centre, Whitehawk Way	1
DT	1024	Valley Social Centre, Whitehawk Way	1
DU	1980	Whitehawk Inn, Whitehawk Road	1
DV	1525	St Mark's CE Primary School, Manor Road	1
DW	1149	TS Nautilus, 39a Chesham Road	1
DX	1872	Kemp Town Crypt Community Centre, St George's Road	1
DY	490	Craven Vale Resource Centre, Craven Road	1
DZ	646	Bristol Estate Community Centre, Donald Hall Road	1

The Headteacher of St Mark's CE Primary School, Manor Road, has raised concerns about the use of the school as a polling station, because of the disruption caused to the school timetable and children's education.

Although the Returning Officer is entitled to use schools as polling stations¹, it is reasonable to look for alternative premises if they object to being used.

The Returning Officer's staff have visited the Manor Gym, Manor Road, and consider this to be a suitable venue for polling. It is in the same road next to St Mark's CE Primary School. It is also close to local conveniences and public transport. Access to the Gym is very good, and there are suitable facilities for voters.

Q1 Do you approve of the Manor Gym being used as a polling station for DV polling district?

Q2 Are there any other alternatives that the Council should consider?

¹ Rule 22, Election Rules, Schedule 1, Representation of the People Act 1983

Hangleton & Knoll Ward, Hove Constituency

Polling District	Electorate	Existing Polling Place	Number of polling stations
PU	2173	St Richard's Community Centre, Egmont Road	1
PV	1673	Oasis Christian Fellowship Hall, Hangleton Way	1
PW	1732	St Helen's Church Hall, Hangleton Way	1
PX	1689	West Blatchington Infant School, Hangleton Way	1
PY	1325	West Blatchington Windmill North Barn, Holmes Avenue	1
PZ	2129	Hounsom Memorial Church Hall, Nevill Avenue	1

The Headteacher of West Blatchington Infant School, has raised concerns about the use of the school as a polling station, because of the disruption caused to the school timetable and children's education.

Although the Returning Officer is entitled to use schools as polling stations², it is reasonable to look for alternative premises if they object to being used.

The Returning Officer's staff have visited Hangleton Community Centre, Harmsworth Crescent, and consider this to be a suitable venue for polling. It is not far from the school. It is also close to local conveniences and public transport. Access to the Community Centre is very good, and there are suitable facilities for voters.

Q3 Do you approve of Hangleton Community Centre being used as a polling station for PX polling district?

Q4 Are there any other alternatives that the Council should consider?

² Rule 22, Election Rules, Schedule 1, Representation of the People Act 1983

Hove Park and Goldsmid Wards, Hove Constituency

Polling District	Electorate	Existing Polling Place	Number of polling stations
OX	3652	Hove Park Upper School, Nevill Road	2
OY	1863	St Peter's Church Hall, Hangleton Road	1
OZ	2336	Cottesmore St Mary's RC Primary School, The Upper Drive	1
NV	3784	Somerhill Junior School, Somerhill Road	2
NW	2011	All Saints Church Hall, Eaton Road	1
NX	2016	Vallance Community Centre, Sackville Road	1
NY	1714	Cottesmore St Mary's RC Primary School, The Upper Drive	1
NZ	1553	Avondale Centre, Montefiore Road	1

The Headteacher of Cottesmore St Mary's RC Primary School, has raised concerns about the use of the school as a polling station, because of the disruption caused to the school timetable and children's education.

Although the Returning Officer is entitled to use schools as polling stations³, it is reasonable to look for alternative premises if they object to being used.

The Returning Officer's staff have approached a range of alternative premises, which are either unavailable or not suitable, including Mowden (Lancing College Preparatory) School, Cardinal Newman Catholic School, the Pavilion and Avenue Tennis Club, and Brighton & Hove School for Girls.

One possible option is Hove Rugby Club. There is disabled access via a temporary ramp, and there are reasonable facilities for voters. However, the privacy of voters could be compromised at this venue, and access across the recreation ground could be of concern, especially after dark. It is therefore proposed that Cottesmore St Mary's RC Primary School be retained as the polling station for the OZ and NY polling districts.

Q5 Do you agree that Cottesmore St Mary's RC Primary School should be retained as the polling station for the OZ and NY polling districts?

Q6 Are there any other alternatives that the Council should consider?

³ Rule 22, Election Rules, Schedule 1, Representation of the People Act 1983

St Peter's & North Laine Ward, Pavilion Constituency

Polling District	Electorate	Existing Polling Place	Number of polling stations
KS	842	Friends Centre, Brighton Junction, Stroudley Road	1
KT	1970	St Paul's CE School, St Nicholas Road	1
KU	1607	West Hill Hall, Compton Avenue	1
KV	2177	Calvary Evangelical Church Hall, 72 Viaduct Road	1
KW	937	Downs Infant School, Ditchling Road	1
KX	3079	Wagner Memorial (St Martin's) Hall, Lewes Road	2
KY	1145	Brighton & Hove Foyer, Pelham Street	1
KZ	1550	Brighthelm Church and Community Centre, North Road	1

The polling district KS was created in 2008, to cater for the new development and increased population. The polling place used for this district was St Bartholomew's CE Primary School, Ann Street.

On 1 February 2011, the council designated the Friends Centre, Brighton Junction, Stroudley Road, as the polling place for KS, as an alternative to St Bartholomew's CE Primary School.

The Friends Centre is not available for the elections on 15 November 2012. As the voters in the district are already familiar with St Bartholomew's School, it is recommended that the school be reinstated as the polling place for KS.

Q7 Do you agree that St Bartholomew's CE Primary School should be re-designated as the polling station for the KS polling district?

Q8 Are there any other alternatives that the Council should consider?

Wish Ward, Hove Constituency

Polling District	Electorate	Existing Polling Place	Number of polling stations
SV	2048	St Leonard's Church Hall, Glebe Villas	1
SW	1389	Aldrington Recreation Ground Pavilion, Saxon Road	1
SX	1369	Aldrington Recreation Ground Pavilion, Wish Road	1
SY	1396	Children's Centre, West Hove Infant School	1
SZ	782	Sanders House Communal Room, Ingram Crescent West	1

The Pavilion at Aldrington Recreation Ground, Saxon Road, is not available for use as a polling station because it has been leased to a private playgroup.

Alternative premises have not been found. Subject to a site visit by the portacabin company, it is recommended that a portable polling station be sited on the recreation ground near the pavilion.

Q9 Do you approve of a portable polling station being used as a polling station for the SW polling district?

Q10 Are there any other alternatives that the Council should consider?

Withdean Ward, Pavilion Constituency

Polling District	Electorate	Existing Polling Place	Number of polling stations
IU	2193	Church of the Good Shepherd Hall, Dyke Road	1
IV	1953	Minor Club House, Withdean Sports Complex	1
IW	1872	The Ascension Church Hall, Westdene	1
IX	1422	Varndean College, Surrenden Road	1
IY	989	Balfour Junior School, Balfour Road	1
IZ	2155	Knogle Hall, Knogle Road	1

The Headteacher of Balfour Primary School has raised concerns about the use of the school as a polling station, because of the impact of the infant and junior schools merging and the disruption to the school.

The Returning Officer's staff have looked at a range of alternative premises, and there appear to be two viable options which would be suitable in terms of accessibility and facilities for voters.

It is possible that Varndean College, which is already used as a polling station for IX polling district, could also serve the IY polling district. However, there could be an issue for voters having to travel further to vote, and there could be significant congestion.

A more suitable option would be Dorothy Stringer High School, which is very close to Balfour Junior School. Access to the High School is very good, and there are suitable facilities for voters. The High School is happy to accommodate a polling station, and after assessing the risks would be minded to close the school, and build election day into their school timetable as a teacher training day.

Q11 Do you approve of Dorothy Stringer High School being used as a polling station for IY polling district?

Q12 Are there any other alternatives that the Council should consider?