


General Purposes and Arbitration Committee

29 October 2018

Subject:	Changes to Polling Stations to be used for the Local Election 2 May 2019
Director:	Director - Monitoring Officer - Surjit Tour
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer(s):	Tracey Hurst Electoral Services Manager. tracey_hurst@sandwell.gov.uk

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

1. Considers and agrees the proposed changes to polling place/stations in the Newton and Langley Wards as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.
2. Notes that the Council is required to undertake a compulsory review of all polling districts and polling places and stations within the borough between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive).

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report sets out proposed changes to two polling places/stations in the Newton and Langley wards as the current station(s) is no longer suitable or requires further work to address concerns raised.
- 1.2 To inform the Committee of the need to carry out a review of all existing polling places, stations and polling districts in line with statutory requirements.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR SANDWELL'S VISION

- 2.1 Ambition 10 - Sandwell now has a national reputation for getting things done, where all local partners are focused on what really matters in people's lives and communities.
- 2.2 The proposals and planned compulsory wider review of polling districts, places and stations helps ensure that the electorate can effectively engage in democracy arrangements and influence the future direction of the Council.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Section 18B of the Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983 states the authority must designate the polling places for the polling districts in its area. Each polling district must have a polling place and it is the duty of the council to designate polling places and keep them under review. The council is required, so far as is reasonable and practicable designate polling places which are accessible to disabled electors.
- 3.2 Paragraph 25 of Schedule 1 to the RPA 1983 states that the Returning Officer must provide a sufficient number of polling stations, shall allocate electors to those polling stations, and those polling stations shall be in the polling place for that district.
- 3.3 Representations have been received in relation to the suitability/availability of two existing polling stations in the Langley and Newton Ward.
- 3.4 Appendix 1 sets out the details of the two polling stations considered unsuitable/unavailable, along with the issues raised, alternative options and recommendations.

THE CURRENT POSITION

Polling Places/Stations for Newton and Langley Wards

- 4.1 Appendix 1 details the proposed changes to Polling Stations in Newton and Langley ward.
- 4.2 Officers are currently carrying out an assessment of the proposed alternative Polling Places/Stations and an update on their suitability and other relevant issues and factors will be provided at the Committee.

Statutory Review of Polling Stations

- 4.3 Section 18C(1) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) local authorities must carry out and complete a review of polling districts and polling places in the period specified by section 18C(2)(a) of the RPA 1983.
- 4.4 All local authorities must review their UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places at least once every four years.
- 4.5 The next compulsory review must be started and completed between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive).

5 **CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)**

- 5.1 Relevant Ward Councillors have been consulted in relation to the alternative polling stations/places detailed in Appendix 1.
- 5.2 As part of the statutory polling station review commencing in May 2019 consultations will take place between all of the relevant stakeholders in relation to the existing provision of polling stations as per the statutory requirements of the Schedule A1 steps as detailed in Appendix 4.

6 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 6.1 Alternative options to the existing provision of polling stations are detailed in Appendix 1

7 **STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The financial implications have been set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

8 **LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

- 8.1 Section 18B of the RPA Act 1983 states the authority must designate the polling places for the polling districts in its area. Paragraph 25 of Schedule 1 to the RPA 1983 states that the Returning Officer must provide a sufficient number of polling stations, shall allocate electors to those polling stations, and those polling stations shall be in the polling place for that district.
- 8.2 A building should not be designated that does not have access for the disabled if another suitable building is available in the polling district. However, a building would not be a more suitable polling place if it were so far removed from most of the electors in the polling district.

- 8.3 Section 18C(1) (RPA 1983) states that local authorities must carry out and complete a review of polling districts and polling places in the period specified by section 18C(2)(a) of the RPA 1983. Paragraph 25(1) of Schedule 1 to the RPA 1983 states that the Returning Officer must provide sufficient numbers of polling stations and allot electors to those polling stations. The next compulsory review must be started and complete between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive). The review will undertake all the legislative steps set out in Schedule A1 to the RPA 1983 as detailed in Appendix 4.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 The Review included use of the Electoral Commissions Evaluation Checklist which addresses equality and diversity issues relevant to Polling Districts, Places and Stations. Accessibility for members of minority or disadvantaged groups is a key issue in the selection of suitable Polling Stations.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 The proposals are in line with data protection regulations.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 The Council is under a statutory duty to ensure a polling place exists in each of its polling districts.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

- 12.1 Not applicable

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

- 13.1 Not applicable

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

- 14.1 Not applicable

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 15.1 A verbal update will be presented to the Committee following further investigations to alternative sites and accommodation.

- 15.2 The recommendations will help ensure that elections and referenda held within the borough are conducted effectively.
- 15.3 The planned actions also ensure that the Council complies with its statutory obligations as outlined in the report.

16 **APPENDICES:**

Appendix 1 - Changes to Polling Stations for the Local Elections 2 May 2019.

Appendix 2 – Map of Newton ward highlighting the proposed changes

Appendix 3 – Map of Langley ward highlighting the proposed changes

Appendix 4 - Formal review process (Schedule A1 steps)

Surjit Tour
Director – Monitoring Officer