

Agenda

General Purposes and Arbitration Committee

Thursday, 24 November 2022 at 6.00 pm
In Committee Room 1 - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

1 Apologies for Absence

To receive any apologies for absence.

2 Declarations of Interest

Members to declare any interests in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

3 Review of Polling Places and Polling Stations 2022/23 5 - 34

4 Nominations of Honorary Alderman 35 - 44



Kim Bromley-Derry CBE DL
Managing Director Commissioner

Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Oldbury
West Midlands

Distribution

Councillor Dhallu (Chair)
Councillors Costigan, Dhariwal, S Jones, Millar, Simms and Trumpeter

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk

Information about meetings in Sandwell



If you are attending the meeting and require assistance to access the venue, please contact Democratic Services (democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk).



If the fire alarm sounds, please follow the instructions of the officers present and leave the building by the nearest exit.



Only people invited to speak at a meeting may do so. Everyone at the meeting is expected to be respectful and listen to the discussion.



Agendas with reports with exempt information should be treated as private and confidential. It is your responsibility to ensure that any such reports are kept secure. After the meeting confidential papers should be disposed of in a secure way.



This meeting may be recorded and broadcast on the Internet. If this is the case, it will be confirmed at the meeting and further information will be provided.



You are allowed to use devices for the purposes of recording or reporting during the public session of the meeting. When using your devices they must not disrupt the meeting – please ensure they are set to silent.



Members who cannot attend the meeting should submit apologies by contacting Democratic Services (democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk)



All agenda, reports, minutes for Sandwell Council's meetings, councillor details and more are available from our [website](#)

Report to General Purposes and Arbitration Committee

24 November 2022

Subject:	Review of Polling Places and Polling Stations 2022/23
Director:	Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, Surjit Tour
Contact Officer:	Electoral Services Manager, Tracey Hurst tracey_hurst@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval is given to changes to various polling places and polling stations as set out in the Appendix to this report.
- 1.2 That in connection with 1.1 above, the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to implement the changes.
- 1.3. That if, for any unforeseen reason, there should be a need to change any further polling places or polling stations prior to elections in 2023, authority be delegated to the Returning Officer to authorise any such changes, following consultation with relevant ward members.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 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 to designate polling places which are accessible to disabled electors.




The recommendations contained in this report are the consequence of the latest review.

The recommendations take into account:-

- a) The commitment made at the last review of polling stations in 2021 to seek to further reduce the number of
 - i) schools and;
 - ii) temporary huts, used as polling stations.
- b) The desire to improve voter accessibility to polling stations,
- c) The need to identify an alternative location where an existing polling station is no longer available to use.
- d) Recognition of the on-going need for flexibility in determining the sites of polling stations, particularly given the uncertainties and challenges that events, such as the impact of Covid-19, puts on the planning of elections.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Strong resilient communities
	<p>The recommendations detailed in this report enable voters to engage in the democratic process by being able to vote, in person, at an appropriate polling station, on the day of an election.</p>
	<p>Electors will continue to have the right to apply to vote by post or by proxy, should they wish to do so.</p>

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 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.



- 4.2 The appendix to this report details proposals to relocate a number of polling places to other venues in the respective ward. In total, five wards are affected by these proposals, 19 wards are unaffected.
- 4.3 The RPA 1983 also requires local authorities to, periodically, conduct and complete a review of polling districts and polling places. The next compulsory review of all polling places must be completed between October 2023 and January 2025.

5 Alternative Options

In making the recommendations outlined in this report, officers have, wherever possible, considered a number of alternative sites in each of the affected polling districts and concluded that, for reasons based on availability, location, size and ease of access and cost, the locations detailed in the appendix are the most suitable in each case.

6 Consultation

Proposals for each of the wards affected by this report have been shared with relevant councillors. Their comments have led directly to the specific recommendations contained in the appendix.

7 Implications

<p>Resources:</p>	<p>Costs associated with making the proposed changes to polling places/stations will be met by the Returning Officer's budget.</p> <p>If all of the recommended changes to polling places/stations detailed in this report are approved, it is anticipated that a saving will be achieved as compared with the costs incurred for conducting the poll at the most recent borough-wide elections.</p> <p>These savings will be achieved primarily because of the proposed reduction in the number of temporary huts being used. Each temporary hut costs approximately £1,300 to hire.</p>
--------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------



	The saving excludes the “one-off” cost of notifying all households in the affected districts of a change of station.
Legal and Governance:	Please see Section 4 above
Risk:	<p>As a result of the recommendations contained in this report, by enabling a school to remain open, the risk to pupils’ education will be reduced.</p> <p>As was the situation in elections since 2021, the new, proposed venues will be managed and made as safe and Covid-secure as possible.</p> <p>To minimise risk of electors going to the incorrect (i.e. “old”) Polling Station, mitigations will be put in place. These are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each household affected will receive a letter explaining the change and the details of their “new” polling station • Poll cards will specify details of the elector’s new polling station and highlight that there has been a change to the location. • The council’s website will be updated to reflect the changes. • Details of changes will be included in an article in the Spring 2023 edition of the Sandwell Herald.
Equality:	<p>Details of the proposed recommendations have been shared, through Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations, with disability groups in the Borough.</p> <p>No objections to the recommendations have been received to date, but if any comments are received after this report has been produced, these observations will be shared verbally with Committee members.</p>



	An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.
Health and Wellbeing:	The recommendations contained within this report enable voters, to be able to vote, at a polling station, in person in the forthcoming elections, should they wish to do so.
Social Value:	Not applicable
Climate Change:	The recommendations detailed in this report continue to ensure that, as far as is possible, polling stations are located in the district they serve, and thus avoid the need for electors to travel excessive distances. Voters not wishing to visit a polling station may apply for a postal or proxy vote.

8. Appendices

Proposed changes to polling places and polling stations 2022/23.

9. Background Papers

- 9.1. Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations – published by the Electoral Commission.
- 9.2. Do I need to undertake a Polling District review to change polling places for local elections in 2021? – published by the Association of Electoral Administrators
- 9.3. Letter from the Department for Education and the Cabinet office dated 11th February 2021 entitled “Use of school buildings for polls.”



This page is intentionally left blank

**PROPOSED CHANGES TO
POLLING STATIONS AND POLLING PLACES
2022/23**

BRISTNALL

The Bristnall ward has a total of eight polling districts. For the elections held in May 2022, voters living in these districts used one of six different polling places, as follows:--

- BRA and BRB districts; (inside) Langley Swimming Centre
- BRC: Temporary hut on the Langley Swimming Centre car park
- BRD and BRH: Our Lady & St Hubert's RC Primary School
- BRE: Hurst Road Community Centre
- BRF: George Road Community Centre
- BRG: Barlow Homes Community Centre

Following a review, it is proposed:

- To relocate the station for voters living in the BRD district from Our Lady & St Hubert's RC Primary School to Hurst Road Community Centre.
For the significant majority of voters in BRD, this should make a more straightforward and closer journey to get to their polling place. Because of the increase in the number of voters allocated to Hurst Road Community Centre this polling place will, in future, house two polling stations instead of one.
- To relocate electors who live in the BRA district from Langley Swimming Centre to Our Lady & St. Hubert's school.

- To relocate the polling station for electors living in the BRC district from a Temporary hut on Langley Swimming Centre car park to a polling station inside the Centre - and thereby avoiding having to use an unpopular and expensive temporary hut.

Therefore, if these proposals are approved, the polling stations and the districts they serve would become :-

- BRA and BRH: Our Lady & St Hubert's RC Primary School
- BRB and BRC (inside) Langley Swimming Centre
- BRD Hurst Road Community Centre
- BRE Hurst Road Community Centre
- BRF: George Road Community Centre
 - (i.e. no proposed change)
- BRG: Barlow Homes Community Centre (i.e. no proposed change)

Under these proposals, there would still be the same six polling places in the ward, no need to use a temporary hut and no need to use a building that hasn't previously been used as a polling station.

Where there is a change to an elector's polling station, the change will be communicated to each household in the relevant district by letter. The change will also be highlighted on each individual elector's poll card, on the council's internet site prior to the next election and in the Spring edition of the Sandwell Herald.

Following consultation with ward members, one councillor was supportive of these proposals and the remaining two raised no objections.

Recommendations:

The polling place/station for BRA transfers from (inside Langley Swimming Centre) to Our Lady & St Hubert's Primary School, Moat Road, Oldbury.

The polling place/station for BRC transfers from a temporary hut on the car park of Langley Swimming Centre to (inside) Langley Swimming Centre.

The polling place for BRD transfers from Our Lady & St Hubert's Primary School, Moat Road, Oldbury to Hurst Road Community Centre, Hurst Road, Smethwick.

*

HATELEY HEATH

**Current polling station for the HHB district:
Hall Green Primary School, Westminster Road, West Bromwich**

Shortly before the May 2022 elections, Electoral Services were notified of the closure of Moorlands Methodist Church in Hydes Road and, therefore, of the loss of the venue used as the polling station for HHB district.

Following consideration of alternative venues, and ward member consultation, it was agreed to re-locate this polling station to the venue used for the neighbouring, HHD district at Hall Green Primary School in Westminster Road. It was agreed to review this arrangement after the May 2022 elections.

At the conclusion of the elections, no issues were reported and therefore it is proposed that this change, becomes a permanent alteration. Ward members have been consulted and were supportive of this proposal.

**Current polling station for the HHG district:
Hargate Primary School, Hargate Lane, West Bromwich**

In the 2021 polling place/station review, members were advised there was a concerted effort to, wherever possible, reduce the number of schools used as polling stations and so avoid disrupting children's education with school closures caused by their premises being used for voting.

However, one school that the Council had no alternative but to keep using as a Polling Station was Hargate Primary School in Tantany Lane. A possible alternative to the school within the HHG district, West Bromwich Baptist Church, also in Tantany Lane, was, at the time of the review, closed for refurbishment.

Since that time, however, the church has re-opened and, following a recent visit by a member of the Electoral Services team, was considered a suitable venue to be a polling station in the future. The church has good access for people with mobility difficulties and its own dedicated car park - the entrance to which is approximately 100 yards from the car park entrance to Hargate Primary School.

It was felt that, if agreed, this proposal will also address some of the concerns raised by the Presiding Officer working at the school at the last election, such as poor lighting on the long path leading to the station.

However, following recent consultation with ward members, strong objections to the proposals were reported, predominantly on the grounds of car parking and, as a consequence this proposal is therefore not being recommended at the present time.

It is expected that, so as to address the concerns of the Presiding Officer at the last election, the difficulties can be resolved by re-locating the polling station from one room in the school, to another.

Recommendation:

The temporary transfer of the polling place/station for the HHB district from Moorlands Methodist Church to Hall Green Primary School, Westminster Road, West Bromwich, becomes a permanent alteration.

*

OLDBURY

**Current polling station for the OLB district:
Tipton Road Methodist Church, Tipton Road, Tividale.**

The Electoral Services team have recently been informed of the closure of Tipton Road Methodist Church, i.e. the location of the polling station for the OLB district.

Consideration of possible suitable alternative venues led to another church located within the district being contacted; but they replied that there were unable to help us because of issues concerning the Church Trust's deeds and their constitution.

The alternative proposal is therefore, to use the Shri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple, located in the neighbouring OLC district. This venue was first used as a polling station for the elections in May 2022, and currently acts as such for the OLC and OLE districts.

By relocating the station for the OLB district there as well, means it would become the polling place with the largest number of electors allocated to it within the Borough.

However, given a) the size of the hall used as the polling station and b) the ample car parking facilities available, it is felt to be sufficiently large to be able to cater for the increased number of people visiting it on election day.

Nevertheless, given the size of the electorate, the use of the temple as a venue for the three polling districts, will be reviewed following the local

elections in May 2023 to assess whether it is suitable to act as a polling place for other elections in the future when traditionally, a larger turn-out would be expected.

The temple is 0.8 miles/a 17-minute walk from the furthest point away in the OLB district.

**Current polling station for the OLD district:
Christ Church C of E Primary School, Albert Street, Oldbury**

Members will be aware of the request made by the Department for Education and the Cabinet Office to Returning Officers in February 2021, to minimise any further disruption to pupils' education by avoiding using schools as polling stations, where it is practically possible to do so.

A potentially suitable alternative venue for the polling station at Christ Church C of E Primary School was identified as being Christ Church in Birmingham Street. Although this alternative venue was identified prior to the May 2022 elections, issues regarding the church's ownership made it unwise to have pursued that option at the time.

Now, however, issues concerning its ownership have been resolved and the building, formerly known as Christ Church, has now re-opened as Kingdom Life Apostolic Chapel and, following a visit by a member of staff from Electoral Services, the venue was found to be a suitable venue to host a polling station.

As members may also be aware, prior to the 2019 elections and for many years previously, the building housing the Chapel was formerly used as a polling station. However, because of the issues concerning its ownership, the polling station was relocated to the nearby school.

This proposal is therefore, in effect, to revert to the original polling place for the OLD district.

Ward members have been consulted on both of these proposals and have communicated their supportive.

Recommendations:

The polling place/station for the OLB District transfer from Tipton Road Methodist Church to the Shri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple.

The polling place/station for the OLD district transfers from Christ Church C of E Primary School to Kingdom Life Apostolic Chapel, Birmingham Street, Oldbury.

*

ST PAUL'S

**Current polling station for SPC district:
Temporary hut in Woodland Drive.**

One of the objectives of this year's polling station review was to consider reducing the number of temporary huts used as places for electors to go to vote. This was because, not only are huts expensive to hire, but also because they are prone to anti-social behaviour in the days immediately before/after voting day, are unpopular with local residents and staff alike and may not be as easy to access for some voters with mobility problems as compared with a permanent building.

One hut that has been used as a polling station in recent years has served the SPC district, situated in Woodland Drive, Smethwick - near to New Hope Christian Centre.

In seeking to identify a suitable alternative venue, Electoral Services has contacted the Christian Centre to see if they would be willing to allow their premises being used as a polling station.

This centre has previously used as a polling station a number of years ago, but the Station had to be moved elsewhere after the centre decided not to allow the premises to be used in this way.

Now, however, they have agreed that the Centre can, once again, be used as a polling station and, following a visit from a member of staff from the Electoral Services team, it was again found to be a suitable venue.

There are no proposals to change any of the other polling stations in the St Paul's Ward.

Ward members have been consulted on this proposal and have not raised any objections.

Recommendation:

The polling place for the SPC district is transferred from a temporary hut in Woodland Drive to the New Hope Christian Centre, Woodland Drive, Smethwick B66 1JF.

*

SMETHWICK

**Current polling station for the SMC district:
Holy Trinity Church, Church Hill Street, Smethwick.**

Members will recall that, prior to the outbreak of Covid in 2020, the long-standing polling station for the SMC district was the Community Room at Smethwick Fire Station in Stony Lane. Because of Covid, use of the room as a Community facility was suspended by the Fire Service and, as a consequence, we were unable to continue to use it as a polling station. It was therefore agreed that the polling station for the SMC district should be merged with that of the neighbouring SMD district at Holy Trinity Church in Church Hill Street.

Whilst this venue proved to be able to cope with serving two districts of the Smethwick ward, some voters living in SMC complained about the extra distance they were having to travel to their polling station and of the fact they were required to travel up a hill to get to the church.

Following a return to pre-Covid times, the Fire Service have now relaxed the restrictions on the use of the Community Room and are willing to allow it to be used as a polling station again.

Although perfectly adequate before Covid, in the intervening years, disabled access/egress to/from the Community Room has been improved further.

It is therefore proposed that the polling station for SMC reverts to the Community Room at Smethwick Fire Station (access from Green Street) for electors living in the SMC district, whilst Holy Trinity Church resumes to being used solely for electors living in the SMD district.

**Current station for the SMH district:
Temporary hut at the junction of Thimblemill Road and Hales Lane,
Smethwick**

As members will no doubt recall, prior to the 2019 elections, the polling station for this district was in St Marks Church but, following its closure and there being no other suitable building available within the district, it moved to a temporary hut, situated nearby at the junction of Thimblemill Road and Hales Lane.

However, part of the original church building has now re-opened as New Beginnings Community and, following a recent visit by a member of the Electoral Services team, was found to be a suitable venue to host a polling station.

This proposal is therefore to move the polling station back inside (part of the original) St Marks Church building and, in doing so, avoid the significant costs associated with hiring a temporary hut and improve the voting experience for both electors and staff alike.

Ward members have been consulted on both of these proposals and have expressed their support.

Recommendations:

The polling place for the SMC district transfers from Holy Trinity Church, Church Hill Street to Smethwick Fire Station, Stony Lane, Smethwick (access from Green Street)

The polling place for the SMH transfers from a temporary hut situated at the junction of Thimblemill Road and Hales Lane to New Beginnings Community at St Marks Church, Thimblemill Road, Smethwick.

*

There are no proposals to make changes to any Polling Stations in the following Wards:

**Abbey
Blackheath
Charlemont with Grove Vale
Cradley Heath and Old Hill
Friar Park
Great Barr with Yew Tree
Great Bridge
Greets Green and Lyng
Langley
Newton**

**Old Warley
Princes End
Rowley
Soho and Victoria
Tipton Green
Tividale
Wednesbury North
Wednesbury South
West Bromwich Central**

Equality Impact Assessment Template

Please complete this template using the [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance document](#)

Version 4: January 2019

Title of proposal (include forward plan reference if available)	Review of polling places and polling stations 2022/2023
Directorate and Service Area	Directorate of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Name and title of Lead Officer completing this EIA	Electoral Services Manager, Tracey Hurst
Contact Details	tracey_hurst@sandwell.gov.uk
Names and titles of other officers involved in completing this EIA	Zoe Armstrong, Deputy Electoral Services Manager Zoe_armstrong@sandwell.gov.uk
Partners involved with the EIA where jointly completed	None
Date EIA completed	November 2022
Date EIA signed off or agreed by Director or Executive Director	10 November 2022
Name of Director or Executive Director signing off EIA	Surjit Tour
Date EIA considered by Cabinet Member	November 2022

**1. The purpose of the proposal or decision required
(Please provide as much information as possible)**

Section 18B of the Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983 states the authority must designate, and keep under review, polling places for the polling districts in its area. The Council is also required, to designate polling places which are accessible to disabled electors, so far as is reasonable and practicable.

The recommendations contained in the report are the consequence of the latest review.

The recommendations take into account:

- a) The commitment made at the last review of polling stations in 2021 to seek to further reduce the number of
 - i) schools and
 - ii) temporary huts, used as polling stations.
- b) The desire to improve voter accessibility to polling stations.
- c) The need to identify an alternative location where an existing polling station is no longer available to use.
- d) Recognition of the on-going need for flexibility in determining the sites of polling stations, particularly given the uncertainties and challenges that events, such as the impact of Covid-19 puts on the planning of elections.

2. Evidence used/considered

Guidance has been taken from various documents, i.e.

Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations – published by the Electoral Commission.

Do I need to undertake a Polling District review to change polling places for local elections in 2021? – published by the Association of Electoral Administrators.

3. Consultation

Consultation has taken place with relevant Ward members, internal officers and, through the Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), Disability Organisations in Sandwell, (such as Ideal for All, Options for Life, Sandwell Visually Impaired and Sandwell Deaf Association) and Age UK Sandwell.

At the time of producing this EIA, no comments had been received from disability organisations, but any received prior to Committee, will be shared verbally.

There were a number of comments received from ward members regarding the proposals. Each of these comments were considered and, where appropriate, changes were made to the content of the report and to the formulation of recommendations.

4. Assess likely impact - Please give an outline of the overall impact if possible.

The impact of these proposals will be that some electors will vote, in forthcoming elections, at a different polling station to the one they may have used previously.

Electors who apply to vote by the appropriate deadline by other means, i.e. by post or by proxy, will still be able to do so.

The recommendations contained in this report continues the position, in Sandwell, which sees no stations inaccessible to voters.

Whilst having to go to a different polling station will mean that some electors will have further to travel, there will be others for whom their new polling station will be closer to their homes.

For one specific proposal, the impact on making these changes on children's education will mean that there is less likelihood of it being adversely interrupted owing to the school's closure, and this will be of particular benefit for children with one or more protected characteristic.

Guidance issued by the Electoral Commission - and provided for all polling station staff in Sandwell - deals with a series of equality issues - including how to provide equal access to voters with disabilities, including those who are blind or partially-sighted.

Please complete the table below at 4a to identify the likely impact on specific protected characteristics

4a. Use the table to show:

- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a negative impact on any of the equality strands (protected characteristics), that is it could disadvantage them or if there is no impact, please note the evidence and/or reasons for this.
- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a positive impact on any of the groups or contribute to promoting equality, equal opportunities or improving relationships within equality characteristics.

Protected Characteristic	Positive Impact ✓	Negative Impact ✓	No Impact ✓	Reason and evidence (Provide details of specific groups affected even for no impact and where negative impact has been identified what mitigating actions can we take?)
Age			✓	<p>The recommendations contained in the report apply to all persons on the electoral register in Sandwell, irrespective of their age.</p> <p>The recommendations also enable electors to go, in person, to their allocated polling station to vote, should they wish to do so. For electors who choose to vote in this way, their new station will be accessible.</p> <p>Clearly, whilst moving to a different polling station will mean that some electors will have further to travel, there will be others for whom the new polling station will be closer to their homes and therefore, more convenient.</p> <p>More generally for elderly voters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Polling staff will be trained to assist elderly voters.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Polling stations are generally accessible for elderly voters. Where necessary reasonable adjustments are made which would apply regardless of the election cycle. o Aids are available at polling stations to help electors cast their vote, including a large print sample ballot paper, and a tactile voting device to help if voters have a visual impairment. o There are also procedures in place should an elector have difficulty in gaining access to a polling station, e.g. a wheelchair user seeking to access a temporary hut. In these circumstances the Presiding Officer will take the “voting“ process to the elector outside. <p>Electors who do not wish, or are unable to go, in person, to a polling station, will be able to vote either by registering for a postal or for a proxy vote. When applying for an absent vote, electors can request a “signature waiver “- this means that they do not need to provide a signature due to having an illness or disability that prevents them from providing one.</p> <p>The option to vote by post or by proxy will be highlighted in letters sent to all households affected by a change in polling station, in an article in the Spring 2023 edition of the Sandwell Herald, and on Poll Cards distributed prior to the next scheduled elections on 4 May 2023.</p> <p>The article in the Sandwell Herald will also detail all polling station changes, as will the elections pages on the council website.</p> <p>Overall, therefore, there will no impact.</p>
--	--	--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p>Disability</p>			<p>✓</p>	<p>The recommendations contained in the report apply to all persons on the electoral register in Sandwell, irrespective of whether or not they have a disability.</p> <p>The recommendations also enable electors to go, in person to their allocated polling station to vote, should they wish to do so. For electors who choose to vote in this way, their new station will be accessible.</p> <p>Clearly, whilst moving to a different polling station will mean that some electors will have further to travel, there will be others for whom the new polling station will be closer to their homes and therefore, more convenient.</p> <p>More generally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Polling staff will be trained to assist any disabled voters who go to polling stations to vote. o Polling stations are generally accessible for disabled voters. Where necessary reasonable adjustments are made which would apply regardless of the election cycle. o There are also procedures in place should an elector have difficulty in gaining access to a polling station, e.g. a wheelchair user seeking to access a temporary hut. In these circumstances the Presiding Officer will take the “voting“ process to the elector outside. <p>Aids are available at polling stations to help electors cast their vote, including a large print sample ballot paper, and a tactile voting device to help if voters have a visual impairment.</p> <p>Electors who do not wish, or are unable to go, in person, to a polling station, will be able to vote either by registering for a postal or for a proxy vote. When applying for an absent vote, electors can request a “signature waiver “ - this means that they do not</p>
--------------------------	--	--	----------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

				<p>need to provide a signature due to having an illness or disability that prevents them from providing one.</p> <p>The option to vote in either of these ways will be highlighted in letters sent to all households affected by a change in polling station, in an article in the Spring 2023 edition of the Sandwell Herald, and on Poll Cards distributed prior to the next scheduled elections on 4 May 2023.</p> <p>The article in the Sandwell Herald will also detail all polling station changes, as will an updated Council website.</p> <p>Overall, therefore, there will no impact.</p>
Gender reassignment			✓	<p>The recommendations contained in the report apply to all persons on the electoral register in Sandwell, irrespective of whether or not they have a re-assigned gender.</p> <p>This characteristic has no bearing on the recommendations being proposed.</p> <p>In general terms the training for polling staff will include gender reassignment and the need for awareness and discretion if there appears to be a difference between the gender of the voter or the name which a voter gives and details on the register.</p> <p>Overall, therefore, there will be no impact.</p>
Marriage and civil partnership			✓	<p>The recommendations contained in the report apply to all persons on the electoral register in Sandwell, irrespective of their marital or civil partnership status.</p> <p>This characteristic has no bearing on the recommendations being proposed.</p> <p>Overall, therefore, there will be no impact.</p>

<p>Pregnancy and maternity</p>			<p>✓</p>	<p>The recommendations contained in the report apply to all persons on the electoral register in Sandwell, irrespective of their pregnancy or maternity status.</p> <p>The recommendations also enable electors to go, in person to their allocated polling station to vote, should they wish to do so. For electors who choose to vote in this way, their new station will be accessible.</p> <p>Clearly, whilst moving to a different polling station will mean that some electors will have further to travel, there will be others for whom the new polling station will be closer to their homes and therefore, more convenient.</p> <p>Electors who do not wish, or are unable to go, in person, to a polling station, will be able to vote either by registering for a postal or for a proxy vote. The option to vote in either of these ways will be highlighted in letters sent to all households affected by a change in polling station, in an article in the Spring 2023 edition of the Sandwell Herald, and on Poll Cards distributed prior to the next scheduled elections on 4 May 2023.</p> <p>Overall, therefore, there will no impact.</p>
<p>Race</p>			<p>✓</p>	<p>The recommendations contained in the report apply to all persons on the electoral register in Sandwell, irrespective of their race.</p> <p>Research by the Electoral Commission suggests that those with an ethnicity other than white were less likely to know when local elections were taking place. The research also indicates that the minority communities may not be participating due to confusion about eligibility, residency requirements and perceived language barriers. Mitigation is provided by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Electoral Services signpost the Electoral Commission website where voters can download registration forms in 25 languages. o Electoral Services also use local radio to communicate key messages to all residents in different languages.

				Overall, therefore, there will no impact.
Religion or belief			✓	<p>The recommendations contained in the report apply to all persons on the electoral register in Sandwell, irrespective of their religion or beliefs.</p> <p>This characteristic has no bearing on the recommendations being proposed.</p> <p>In general terms, in future, female Muslims who wear a niqab (a face veil worn by some Muslim women) will need to remove it for the purpose of checking their identification (ID). A separate room or screened off part of the polling station will be available for this. A female will be appointed to each polling station so that ID checks can be carried out by a female, if requested.</p> <p>Electors who do not wish to go, in person, to a polling station, will be able to vote either by registering for a postal or for a proxy vote. The option to vote in either of these ways will be highlighted in letters sent to all households affected by a change in polling station, in an article in the Spring 2023 edition of the Sandwell Herald, and on poll cards distributed prior to the next scheduled elections on 4 May 2023.</p> <p>Overall, therefore, there will no impact.</p>
Sex			✓	<p>The recommendations contained in the report apply to all persons on the electoral register in Sandwell, irrespective of their gender.</p> <p>This characteristic has no bearing on the recommendations being proposed.</p> <p>In general terms, in future, female Muslims who wear a niqab (a face veil worn by some Muslim women) will need to remove it for the purpose of checking their identification (ID). A separate room or screened off part of the polling station will be available for this. A female will be appointed to each polling station so that ID checks can be carried out by a female if requested.</p>

				<p>Electors who do not wish to go, in person, to a polling station, will be able to vote either by registering for a postal or for a proxy vote. The option to vote in either of these ways will be highlighted in letters sent to all households affected by a change in polling station, in an article in the Spring 2023 edition of the Sandwell Herald, and on poll cards distributed prior to the next scheduled elections on 4 May 2023.</p> <p>Overall, therefore, there will no impact.</p>
Sexual orientation			✓	<p>The recommendations contained in the report apply to all persons on the electoral register in Sandwell, irrespective of their sexual orientation.</p> <p>This characteristic has no bearing on the recommendations being proposed.</p> <p>Overall, therefore, there will no impact.</p>
Other				

Does this EIA require a full impact assessment? Yes No

If there are no adverse impacts or any issues of concern or you can adequately explain or justify them, then you do not need to go any further. You have completed the screening stage. You must, however, complete sections 7 and 9 and publish the EIA as it stands.

If you have answered yes to the above, please complete the questions below referring to the guidance document.

5. What actions can be taken to mitigate any adverse impacts?

Not applicable

6. As a result of the EIA what decision or actions are being proposed in relation to the original proposals?

Individuals who may be impacted by the proposals are those who may find it difficult to physically go to or access a polling station, whether due to age, disability or pregnancy. The Equality Impact Assessment sets out the measures taken to reduce the impact on these groups by making polling stations accessible and also promoting alternative ways of voting such as by post or by proxy. Assessment and understanding of accessibility, as required by the Electoral Commission Guidance on Polling Districts and Polling Places reviews, have been embedded in the review from the beginning of the project.

7. Monitoring arrangements

Information received from electors, from polling station staff, electoral services staff and elected members before, during and after election day will help ensure that, going forward, polling stations continue to be accessible for all voters, including for those with mobility difficulties.

8. Action planning - You may wish to use the action plan template below

--

9. Publish the EIA

Where can I get additional information, advice and guidance?

In the first instance, please consult the accompanying guide “Equality Impact Assessment Guidance”

Practical advice, guidance and support

Help and advice on undertaking an EIA or receiving training related to equalities legislation and EIAs is available to **all managers** across the council from officers within Service Improvement. The officers within Service Improvement will also provide overview quality assurance checks on completed EIA documents.

Please contact: equalities_team@sandwell.gov.uk

Report to General Purposes and Arbitration Committee

24 November 2022

Subject:	Nominations for Honorary Alderwoman
Director:	Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer – Surjit Tour
Contact Officer:	Suky Suthi-Nagra Suky_suthinagra@sandwell.gov.uk


1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Committee considers recommending that Council confer the title of Honorary Alderwoman on Dr Ann Jaron.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is invited to indicate whether or not it would wish to confirm the title on any person or persons. If the Committee wishes to nominate a suitable person it is recommended that an extraordinary meeting of Council is held on 12 April 2022, prior to the ordinary meeting of Council. The Council will consider this Committee's recommendations and, if appropriate, pass the necessary statutory resolutions required by Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Nominations for Honorary Alderman/Alderwomen are an endorsement of the aspirations, talent and achievements of local people.</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------



4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 In order to recognise eminent or notable service rendered to the Borough by former Councillors, in 1997, the Council introduced a scheme for the enrolment of Honorary Alderman of the Borough. This scheme was amended in 2008 to reduce the required number of years' service to twelve and in 2013 to reflect Section 29 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 to the effect that any reference to Honorary Alderman should be followed by the insertion of Honorary Alderman/Alderwomen.
- 4.2 The Local Government Act 1972 gave authority to the Council to confer the honour to elected members who had given eminent service to the Borough. Local Authorities define the operation of the scheme within their Council areas.
- 4.3 The Committee is requested to consider a nomination by Councillor Nicky Hinchliff, to award a honorary title to Dr Ann Jaron.
- 4.4 Former councillor Dr Ann Jaron served on Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council for 25 years, she had been a Cabinet Member for Social Care for a number of years and had also served as Mayor of Sandwell for the Municipal Year 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.
- 4.5 In accordance with the scheme of enrolment, Dr Ann Jaron has indicated her willingness to accept the nomination for enrolment as Honorary Alderwomen.
- 4.6 If the Committee is minded to support the nomination, the Committee's recommendation will be submitted for consideration at an Extraordinary Council meeting, immediately prior to the ordinary meeting of Full Council, scheduled to be held on the same day.

5 Implications

Resources:	Local Authorities are empowered to incur reasonable expenditure on the provision of an address or casket on the conferment of the title of Honorary Alderman or Honorary Alderwoman.
-------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------



	It is the practice of this Authority to present a Badge of Office and a commemorative scroll to the Aldermen and Alderwomen, the cost of which is met from the civic ceremonial budget.
Legal and Governance:	The authority to confer the title of Honorary Alderman and the power to incur expenditure is contained within Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, as now amended by Section 29 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.
Risk:	There are no risk implications arising directly from this report.
Equality:	There are no equality implications arising directly from this report.
Health and Wellbeing:	There are no health and wellbeing implications arising directly from this report.
Social Value	Nominations for Honorary Alderman/Alderwomen are an endorsement of the aspirations, talent and achievements of local people.

6 Appendices

Nomination Form



This page is intentionally left blank

Nomination Form

I, Councillor Nicky Hinchliff wish to nominate the following person to be considered for the status of Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman of the Borough for Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.

Nominee Ann Jaron

I am aware that the following criteria is applied to the achievements of the nominee.

The Nominee has:-

[Please delete as appropriate]

- i) has rendered a minimum of **12** years service as a Member of the Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council;

and/or

- ii) has rendered eminent or notable service to the Borough of Sandwell by serving as a Chairperson of a major Council Committee or holding one or more senior positions on the Council or in any political group.

I believe the nominee has met the criteria in the following way(s):-

<p>Ann Jaron served her community as a Councillor for Abbey Ward for 25 years. During that time, she was a well-known and well-loved member of the community and to many a household name. She was first elected in 1996 and was made Chair of the Health Forum a new multi-agency body that submitted bids for Health Action Zone money and set up many projects, a notable legacy is the Salop Drive Allotments. She was on the planning committee for 12 years and chaired it for 10 years. She served two years as a Cabinet member for Social care from 2010 to 2012. She was also Chair of Smethwick</p>

It shall be competent for the Council in any particular case to withdraw the title of "Honorary Alderman" and the attached rights and privileges on the recommendation of the General Purposes Committee. Such withdrawal of the title shall be by resolution of the Council, passed by not less than two-thirds of the Members voting thereon at a meeting of the Council, specially convened for the purpose by the Mayor. On the passing of such resolution, the Chief Executive shall delete the name of the person concerned from the Roll of Honorary Alderman and advise that person accordingly.

Nomination Criteria

The following will be taken into account when consideration is given to granting an individual Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman.

A person shall be deemed to be eligible for consideration to be nominated to the position of Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman if he or she:-


- i) has rendered a minimum of **12** years service as a Member of the Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council;

and/or

- ii) has rendered eminent or notable service to the Borough of Sandwell by serving as a Chairperson of a major Council Committee or holding one or more senior positions on the Council or in any political group.

N.B. In the case of qualification (i) previous service before 1st April 1974 with a constituent authority will be taken into account.

Town. She served as Mayor for her last 2 years in office, her time was extended due to the pandemic. During those unprecedented times she pushed for online Council meetings and chaired the first Full Council meeting on Teams with 100% attendance. She is a credit to her ward and Sandwell and as an Alderman would continue bring respect to our borough.

Signed:  (NICKY HINCHUFF)

Dated: 4.6.22.

Nomination supported by:



Bob Piper.
N

Date: 5/6/22

Please return this form to the Chief Executive

