

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All
<b>REPORT TITLE:</b> Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2023	
<b>REPORT OF:</b> Borough Solicitor	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO:</b> Audit and Corporate Governance Committee Council	<b>DATE</b> 8 November 2023 20 November 2023
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b></p> <p>This report sets out the results of the five yearly review of polling districts and polling places in Camden, as required by the Representation of the People Act 1983. It proposes changes to the boundaries for some polling districts which are set out at Appendix B.</p> <p>If approved, these changes will be reflected in the republication of the Register of Electors on the 1 December 2023 and will be operative for any elections after this date.</p> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b> No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Jeanette Pegler Elections Manager <a href="mailto:Jeanette.pegler@camden.gov.uk">Jeanette.pegler@camden.gov.uk</a> Camden Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE 020 7974 3006</p>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p> <p>The Audit and Corporate Governance Committee is asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) To note the comments received as part of the consultation and the recommendations from the Returning Officer included at Appendix A.</li> <li>ii) To recommend to the Council that the arrangements for polling districts and polling places as detailed in the report and Appendix B be adopted.</li> <li>iii) To recommend to the Council that the Electoral Registration Officer is authorised to take the necessary measures as soon as possible to give effect to parliamentary constituency changes, ensuring that the register</li> </ul>	

- reflects existing and new constituencies, until the new boundaries are fully in force.
- iv) Recommend the Council to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the relevant ward members, to make any changes following the conclusion of the review if further changes are required.

Council is asked to:

- i) To note the comments received as part of the consultation and the recommendations from the Returning Officer included at Appendix A.
- ii) Agree to adopt the arrangements for polling districts and polling places as detailed in the report and Appendix B;
- iii) Authorise the Electoral Registration Officer to take the necessary measures as soon as possible to give effect to parliamentary constituency changes, ensuring that the register reflects existing and new constituencies, until the boundaries are fully in force.
- iv) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the relevant ward members, to make any changes following the conclusion of the review if further changes are required.

Signed:

Date:

## **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 The Electoral Administration Act 2006, as amended, introduced a duty on all local authorities in Great Britain to review their polling districts and polling places at least once every five years.
- 1.3 Under section 18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983, the next compulsory review must be undertaken within a 16-month window between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025. The review for Camden commenced on the 2 October 2023 and will conclude on the 30 October 2023.
- 1.4 The intention of the legislation was that reviews would be completed by the January before a UK Parliamentary General election. However, since the repeal of the Fixed Term Parliaments Act 2011, there is no longer any certainty as to when the next general election will be.
- 1.5 The Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022 means:
  - the UK Parliament can be dissolved by the King on request of the Prime Minister, at any time within the 5 years of the life of the Parliament;
  - the next general election must take place before Tuesday 28 January 2025, but it could happen at any point before then;
  - there is no longer a link between the timing of the compulsory polling district and places review falling in a 16-month period ending 3 months before a scheduled general election.
- 1.6 In addition, the Boundary Commission for England has undertaken a review of parliamentary constituency boundaries and has now published its final recommendations, and Orders for the new parliamentary constituency boundaries will be made by the 1 November 2023.
- 1.7 Once the Orders for new parliamentary constituencies have been made, the new boundaries will be used for the next general election. Camden would then have two Constituencies for the next General Election (Hampstead and Highgate and Holborn and St Pancras).
- 1.8 If a parliamentary by-election was to be called, it would be run on existing boundaries. Some changes are therefore needed to the current polling districts following the local boundary changes in 2022 which do not account for the current parliamentary constituencies. This will require three polling districts (IA, LD and TA) to be split as shown in Appendix C.

## **2. Review Process**

2.1 The review was conducted as follows: -

- (i) published public notice of intention to hold a review.
- (ii) consulted the (Acting) Returning Officer for every parliamentary constituency which is wholly or partly in its area.
- (iii) consulted on existing polling districts with interested parties, i.e. Councillors, MPs, representatives of political parties and members of the public, and published their comments.
- (iv) published all representations made by an (Acting) Returning Officer within 30 days of receipt by posting a copy of them at the local authority's office and on its website.
- (v) sought representations from organisations that had a particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.

### **3. Proposal**

The review was open for comments until 30 October 2023. From the ten comments received, seven were in support of the current arrangements. The remaining three comments/suggestions have been considered for the purposes of the recommendations which are included at Appendix B.

As requested by the Returning Officer, three new polling districts have been created by splitting IA, LD and TA to allow for the current parliamentary constituencies boundaries.

Officers also identified that minor amendments were required to the polling districts for 11 properties in two wards (Fortune Green and Gospel Oak) so that the electors were voting at the same polling place as the other properties on the road.

Two comments were received suggesting that a polling place within the PD polling district should be found, and that this could be the Abacus Belsize Primary School. Although contact has been made with the school, no confirmation has been received that it can be used, therefore officers will continue to explore this possibility following the conclusion of the review and report accordingly.

Flexibility on the designated polling place is also sought for three polling districts where it has been identified that the premises may become unavailable due to refurbishment or development before the next statutory review is required.

The suggested new polling district in South Hampstead has not been proposed as there was insufficient evidence supporting the change.

A delegation is sought to give authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the relevant ward members, to make any changes following the conclusion of the review if further changes are required. This will include decisions on alternative venues where these need to be found.

#### **4. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services**

- 4.1 The costs of polling station hire are met by the Government for national elections, the Greater London Authority (GLA) for London Mayor/GLA elections and by the Council for Local Elections.
- 4.2 In the first instances these costs are incurred by the Council and then claims are submitted for payment. Accounting processes need to be adhered to avoid pressures on local budgets.

#### **5. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

This is a report of the Borough Solicitor and there are no further legal comments.

#### **6. Environmental Implications**

No environmental impacts.

#### **7. Appendices**

Appendix A – Comments from the (Acting) Returning Officer and summary of comments received during the consultation

Appendix B – Proposed Polling Districts and Polling Places

Appendix C – Map of proposed polling districts

**REPORT ENDS**