

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE: Interim Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2024	
REPORT OF: Borough Solicitor	
FOR SUBMISSION TO: Audit and Corporate Governance Committee Council	DATE 5 December 2024 20 January 2025
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT</p> <p>This report sets out the interim review of the polling districts and polling places in Camden following the Elections held in May and July 2024.</p> <p>It confirms the changes to the polling places of some polling districts and the re-merging of polling districts created in 2023 which are no longer required . These are set out at Appendix A.</p> <p>If approved, these changes will be reflected in the publication of the Register of Electors on the 1 February 2025 and will be operative for any elections after this date.</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Jeanette Pegler Elections Manager Jeanette.pegler@camden.gov.uk Camden Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE 020 7974 3006</p>	
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>The Audit and Corporate Governance Committee is asked to recommend the Council to agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) The arrangements for polling districts and polling places as detailed in the report and Appendix A; and ii) That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, following consultation with the relevant ward members, to make any changes if further changes 	

are required before the next review, including decisions on alternative polling places where these need to be found.

Council is asked to:

- i) Agree to adopt the arrangements for polling districts and polling places as detailed in the report and Appendix A; and
- ii) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, following consultation with the relevant ward members, to make any changes if further changes are required before the next review, including decisions on alternative polling places where these need to be found

Signed: 

Date: 27.11.2024

1. 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. This was last completed for Camden on the 30th October 2023.
- 1.3 The results from this statutory consultation were reported to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee at its meeting held on the 8 November 2023 and adopted at the Council meeting held on the 21st November 2023.
- 1.4 Part of the recommendations at that time included to split polling districts IA, LD and TA so that they were coterminous with the previous parliamentary boundaries in case a General election was called before the new parliamentary constituencies came into effect.
- 1.5 Now the Orders for new parliamentary constituencies have been made, and the Parliamentary election has been held on the new constituencies (Hampstead and Highgate and Holborn and St Pancras), these three polling districts can be re-merged together at the next publication of the Register of Electors as they are no longer required.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 Since the conclusion of the statutory review of polling districts and polling places, there have been two elections held which used the polling districts and polling places designated by the Council.
- 2.2 In accordance with the guidance from the Electoral Commission, the number of staff that should be appointed to a polling station is based on the following elector ratio:

Electorate (excluding postal voters)	Recommended number of polling station staff
0 - 1,250	3 <i>(1 Presiding Officer and 2 Poll Clerks)</i>
1,250 - 2,250	4 <i>(1 Presiding Officer and 3 Poll Clerks)</i>

- 2.3 We will continue to keep the electorate figures under review for each polling station, and if necessary, split the polling station if these figures are exceeded. However, consideration should be given that following the introduction of the Voter ID as part of the Election Act 2022, it now takes longer for people to voter

in a polling station. This will potentially cause a queue at some stations, especially if the Presiding Officer is dealing with an issue, or if an elector wants to show their ID in private. The staffing ratio recommended by the Electoral Commission has been increased to deal with this, and we have increased the number of polling station Inspectors available on election day. Queues were experienced at a few polling stations at peak times which were managed with the resources we had but we will continue to monitor the situation at future elections.

- 2.4 Following the conclusion of the previous review, there were some additional changes required to some polling places which were approved by the Chief Executive under delegated powers in consultation with the relevant ward councillors:

Polling District / Ward:	BC / Highgate
Polling Place:	Highgate Library Civic & Cultural Centre, 52 Croftdown Road, Highgate, London, NW5 1EN or premises within the polling district or neighbouring area
Polling Place Used:	Brookfield Primary School, Chester Road, Highgate, N19 5DH
Reason:	As identified in the review, due to refurbishment Highgate Library Civic & Cultural Centre was unable to be used on the 2 May 2024 or the 4 July 2024.
Proposed future polling place:	The works have now been completed and the polling place can revert back to the Highgate Library Civic & Cultural Centre for future elections.

Polling District / Ward:	PD / Kings Cross
Polling Place:	Premises within the polling district or neighbouring area (N1C Centre, Ground Floor, Plimsoll Building, Handyside Street N1C 4BQ)
Polling Place Used:	Abacus Belsize Primary School, 105 Camley Street, Jubilee Waterside Centre, London N1C 4PF
Reason:	As part of the previous statutory review, it was suggested that Abacus Belsize Primary School could potentially be used as a polling station. As part of the consultation, it was suggested that as there was no designated polling place within the polling district, the school could possibly be used. At the time of the review, contact had been

	made with the school, but officers were unable to confirm its suitability. Officers subsequently visited the premises and identified that school was suitable, and it was used for both elections in 2024 and the school were content with the arrangement.
Proposed future polling place:	That the delegated polling place to remain as Abacus Belsize Primary School for future elections.

Polling District / Ward:	QB / Bloomsbury
Polling Place:	RADA Studios, 16 Chenies Street, London, WC1E 7EX
Polling Place used:	University Of London Stewart House, 32 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DN
Reason:	Due to prior bookings, the RADA Studios was unable to facilitate the elections held on the 4 July 2024.
Proposed future polling place:	That the designated polling place remains RADA Studios being preferable to Stewart House.

- 2.5 Ward members were consulted at the time of these changes, and any comments received during the elections have been taken into account.
- 2.6 All of the current designated polling places have been contacted to check that they will be available for future elections and to provisionally book them for the May 2026 Local Elections.
- 2.7 Although no issues have been raised regarding facilities not being available, officers have identified that alternative locations may need to be identified for the following polling places: -

EA – West Hampstead Branch Library

Future zero carbon works are scheduled for the library which means that it may not be available at future elections, so officers will monitor the programme of works and seek an alternative venue if required.

FA – Kingsgate Community Centre

It had already been identified that the Kingsgate Community Centre was now closed for public hire, and although we have continued to use on the elections held in 2024, it was problematic and a more suitable alternative needed to be found.

The Kingsgate Day Service Centre is a facility for older people which is a newly-refurbished building and is fully accessible and would seem to offer a suitable alternative rather than looking as utilising the schools in the area. However, due to the disruption caused to its service users, officers will continue to seek a suitable alternative.

GC – The Acol Bridge Club

This location has been used for some time, however the feedback we have received is that it is not suitable for use as a polling station and an alternative location should be found.

Officers have tried to find an alternative location within the polling district but have not identified a suitable premise which could be used. They will continue to review and also look at the management of the polling station to try and eliminate some of the issues identified on polling day.

- 2.8 Flexibility on the designated polling places is sought for these polling districts where it has been identified that the premises may become unavailable or more suitable locations may be identified before the next statutory review is required.
- 2.9 A delegation is sought to continue to give authority to the Chief Executive, following consultation with the relevant ward members, to make any changes if further changes are required before the next review. This will include decisions on alternative venues where these need to be found.

3. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 The next scheduled elections are for the Local Borough elections in 2026 and these costs would be met by the Council.

4. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

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

5. Environmental Implications

There are no environmental impacts associated with the proposals set out in this report..

6. Appendices

Appendix A – Proposed Polling Districts and Polling Places

REPORT ENDS