

Committee(s): Policy and Resources Committee	Date(s): 19 09 2019
Subject: Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places	Public
Report of: Town Clerk	For Decision
Report author: Alex Berry/Charlotte Gordon	

Summary

The Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006) requires the City of London Corporation to undertake a review of the Corporation's polling districts and polling places. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires a review to be carried out between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive), and in accordance with this legislation, the City of London has been conducting a review of its arrangements.

The City of London electoral area is currently geographically divided into four polling districts that are part of the Cities of London & Westminster Parliamentary constituency. The existing City of London Ward boundaries and the polling places used for City Ward elections are not included in the scope of this review.

Having followed the statutory process, this report is to make recommendations to the Committee for the future arrangements for polling stations and polling places in the City to be used at UK Parliamentary elections.

Recommendation(s)

The Committee are asked to agree the recommendations in the (Acting) Returning Officer's Report, which recommends that no change should be made to the boundaries of the polling districts, and that no change should be made to the location of the polling places within the polling districts.

Main Report

Background

1. The Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006) requires the City of London Corporation to undertake a review of the Corporation's polling districts and polling places. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 required a review to be started and completed between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2019 inclusive.
2. In accordance with the statutory requirements contained in Schedule A1 for the Representation of the People Act 1983, the City of London took the following steps:

- Consulted with the (Acting) Returning Officer for the Cities of London and Westminster, Stuart Love, on the existing arrangements and proposals for the report. He asked the Town Clerk to act on his behalf and produce a report on the arrangements in the City of London. The report of the (Acting) Returning Officer was published on 1 July 2019 on the City of London website. The report (Appendix 1) considered issues including polling place access, facilities and location of polling places. It also considered current elector numbers, and residential developments in the City that had received planning permission.
- Published a Notice of Review on 1 July 2019 (Appendix 2). This was published on the City of London website. The notice advised that the (Acting) Returning Officer's report had been published and that registered electors in the Parliamentary Constituency could make representations regarding the existing and proposed arrangements by no later than Monday 5 August 2019.
- Contacted all Members, the constituency MP Mark Field, the GLA constituency representative Unmesh Desai, and local constituency political parties via email regarding publication of the Notice and the (Acting) Returning Officer's report, advising that they could make representations regarding the existing and proposed arrangements by no later than Monday 5 August.
- Contacted Lydia Morley, Access Adviser at the City of London, to review the report and consider any access issues that could cause difficulties for electors

Current Position

3. The City of London electoral area is currently geographically divided into four polling districts. Polling district AL is situated in the Western part of the City and covers the Bread Street, Castle Baynard, Cordwainer, Farringdon Within, Farringdon Without, Queenhithe and Vintry Ward areas. Polling district BL is situated the North of the City and covers the Aldersgate, Bassishaw, Coleman Street and part of the Cripplegate Ward areas. Polling district CL is located in the Eastern side of the City and covers Aldgate, Billingsgate, Bishopsgate, Bridge and Bridge Without, Broad Street, Candlewick, Cornhill, Dowgate, Langbourn, Lime Street, Portsoken, Tower and Walbrook Ward areas. Polling district DL in the North of the City and consists of the Golden Lane Estate in the Cripplegate Ward.
4. Electors in the AL polling district currently vote at St. Bride Foundation, St Bride's Place, off Fleet Street, London, EC4Y 8EQ. The electors of the BL polling district currently vote at St. Giles Cripplegate Church, Barbican, EC2Y 8DA. The electors in the CL polling district currently vote at the Artizan Street Library and Community Centre, 1 Artizan Street, London, E1 7AE. The polling place for the DL polling district is currently the Sir Ralph Parring Centre, Golden Lane Estate, London, EC1Y 0SH.

5. The (Acting) Returning Officer's report recommended that the arrangements in terms of the boundaries of the four polling districts remain unchanged, and that the locations of the polling places across the City of London remain unchanged.
6. As part of the Review, an audit of all the existing polling places was conducted. The audit examined the suitability of the polling places in terms of facilities and access for all voters including disabled voters. The polling places in polling districts CL and DL have good disabled access with flat entrance from the street to the polling station. Access to the polling place in polling district BL, St Giles Cripplegate Church, is via either steps or a ramp leading to the entrance to the polling station, providing good disabled access to the building.
7. The polling place in polling district AL, St. Bride Foundation, has a small stone threshold at the entrance to the building. The Access Advisor has recommended that the raised threshold should not be greater than 15mm high, and any upstands greater than 5mm high should have chamfered or pencil rounded edges, otherwise it may act as a barrier to some voters and a threshold ramp should be provided.
8. The current polling places were most recently used at the European Parliamentary Elections on 23 May 2019. No issues were reported regarding accessibility at any of the polling places.
9. The Electoral Commission recommends that the number of electors allocated to each polling station should not exceed 2,500. Currently, the electorate allocated to each polling station falls well within that limit at each polling station. As part of the review the level of residential development that had been granted planning permission was looked at. While there is due to be some residential development in all four polling districts, this development will not increase the electorate at each polling station to a level higher than the Electoral Commission's recommendation.

Proposals

10. The report of the (Acting) Returning Officer recommended that no changes be made to the boundaries of the four polling districts. No responses were received during the consultation period advising that any of the boundaries should be altered.
11. The report of the (Acting) Returning Officer considered the polling places that are currently used in Parliamentary Elections in the City of London. The locations of the polling places in the polling districts is shown in Appendix 3. One of the principles of the City's approach to review was to retain, as far as possible, the current location of polling places to minimise disruption to the voters. No responses were received during the consultation period to advise that the current polling places were not suitable for use as polling places, or to suggest alternative venues. It would be possible to hire or purchase a threshold ramp for use at St. Bride's Foundation to ensure that there are no accessibility issues.

12. It is therefore proposed that there are no changes to the four polling places used in the City of London, and they continue to be St. Bride Foundation, St. Giles Cripplegate Church, the Artizan Street Library and the Sir Ralph Perring Centre.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

13. None.

Implications

14. There are no financial, legal or other implications associated with the proposals in this report.

Conclusion

15. A review into the polling districts and polling places of the City of London has been carried out in accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006).

16. During the review, an audit of the current polling places was carried out, which identified no issues that would prevent the Corporation from continuing to use the current polling places for future elections.

17. The review also looked at residential developments that had been granted planning permission in the four polling districts to ensure that the amount of electors allocated to each polling place would remain within the recommended limit of 2,500 electors recommended by the Electoral Commission. The (Acting) Returning Officer's Report concluded that the levels of development would not increase the number of electors attending each polling station to the level recommended by the Electoral Commission.

18. Members are therefore asked to agree the recommendations in the (Acting) Returning Officer's Report, which recommends that no change is required to the boundaries of the polling districts, and that no change is required to the location of the polling places within the polling districts.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – (Acting) Returning Officer's Report
- Appendix 2 – Polling District Review Notice
- Appendix 3 – Map of Polling Districts and Polling places

Alex Berry

Electoral Services and City Occupiers Survey Manager
T: 020 7332 1430 / E: alex.berry@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Charlotte Gordon

Deputy Electoral Services Manager
T: 020 7332 3497 / E: charlotte.gordon@cityoflondon.gov.uk