

CORPORATE COMMITTEE 27 JANUARY 2022

Report title: Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2021/22

Wards: All wards

Portfolio: Cabinet Members for Finance and Performance: Councillor Andrew Wilson

Report Authorised by: Andrew Travers, Chief Executive and (Acting) Returning Officer

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Report summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) statutory review of Lambeth's electoral arrangements concluded in September 2021. This review recommended an increase in the number of electoral wards in the borough from 21 to 25, each served by two or three councillors.

The LGBCE's recommendations have now been laid before Parliament and are due to pass into law in January 2022. They will come into force at Lambeth's Council elections in May 2022.

As a result of these recommended changes, the Council was required to undertake a comprehensive review of its polling districts and polling places. This has been conducted in accordance with section 18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013).

Public consultation on the initial proposals is complete and resulted in a number of changes to the initial proposals. This report sets out the key information and recommendations from the review for the Final Scheme for use at future local and national elections.

Finance summary

The costs averaged £233,000 for 135 polling stations at the last two borough-wide elections in Lambeth in 2019 and 2021. This was on average £1,726 per polling station.

Under the recommended scheme, the total number of polling stations increases by 7, to 142, due to the increase in electoral wards from 21 to 25.

The total costs associated with polling stations is therefore expected to increase by approximately £12,000 to £245,000 at each election, assuming costs remain at £1,726 per polling station. This increase will be met from current Electoral Services budgets.

Recommendations

1. To agree proposed polling district boundaries and polling places for each of the 25 new wards.
2. To adopt the polling districts and polling places scheme, as set out in Appendix A, in full.

1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) have completed their comprehensive review of Lambeth's electoral arrangements and published final recommendations for the number of electoral wards, ward boundaries and numbers of councillors on 14 September 2021.
- 1.2 These recommendations are subject to final approval by Parliament, expected in January 2022, although this is a formality. The 25 new wards will therefore come into effect at the next council elections, 5 May 2022.
- 1.3 Implementation of the new ward boundaries required a statutory review of Lambeth's polling districts and polling places. As existing polling district boundaries do not align with the new wards, polling districts needed to be reviewed in detail and significant revisions needed to be made.
- 1.4 Lambeth currently has:
 - 21 Electoral Wards
 - 95 Polling Districts
 - 90 Polling Places (venues)
 - 135 Polling Stations (singles, doubles, triples, & quadruples)
- 1.5 The initial proposals and final recommendations are based on the following considerations and guidelines as set by the Electoral Commission:
 - Consideration of the number of electors allocated to a polling station
 - Suitability of polling places for use as polling stations, a station should have a maximum of 2,500 voters
 - All voters to have a relatively equal access to a polling station
 - All polling places to be accessible for disabled voters
 - Future changes to population
- 1.6 In addition to the guidelines set out by the Electoral Commission, Lambeth Council Electoral Services set out the following additional criteria:
 - Each polling place should be within 10 minutes walking distance for allocated voters as far as possible.
 - No polling station should have less than 1,000 electors allocated to it unless exceptional circumstances apply.
- 1.7 The Electoral Commission uses specific terminology:
 - **Polling District** – 'A geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency for the purposes of a UK Parliamentary election.'
 - **Polling Place** – 'The building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer.'
 - **Polling Station** – 'The room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the local authority, polling stations are chosen by the relevant Returning Officer for the election.'

1.8 The recommendations from this review are being presented to Corporate Committee as the responsible committee for discharging Council functions relating to elections.

2. PROPOSALS AND REASONS

2.1 For the 25 new electoral wards, Lambeth proposes:

- 113 Polling Districts
- 102 Polling Places
- 142 Polling Stations (single & double stations only)

2.2 Of the 102 polling places, 74 venues have previously been used in previous elections and 28 are new venues.

2.3 The review began with a pre-consultation exercise in September 2021. The Council wrote to key stakeholders, including residents, councillors, election agents, political parties, polling place contacts, election staff and disability organisations, requesting views and alternative suggestions. Formal consultation then took place between 29 October and 20 November 2021.

2.4 45 representations were received during formal consultation which resulted in a number of changes to the proposals and are detailed in Appendix B.

2.5 Of the 25 wards, no representations were received for: Clapham Common & Abbeville, Clapham East, Kennington, Myatt's Fields, Stockwell East, Stockwell West & Larkhall, Streatham St Leonard's, and Vauxhall.

2.6 A borough-wide representation was submitted by Councillor from Knight's Hill Ward, Jackie Meldrum, asking for Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) to be considered when selecting polling places. However, given the aim of providing polling places within 10 minutes walking distance, voters would not generally be expected to drive to their polling station. It was also observed that adding LTNs to the selection criteria could preclude the use of otherwise suitable venues. LTNs were not, therefore, considered for this review.

2.7 The following representations were taken into account for the final scheme recommendations and are covered in greater detail in the Final Scheme Report (Appendix A):

2.8 Brixton Acre Lane Ward

Sudbourne Primary School (Polling District BAL4)

- Councillor Martin Tiedemann asked that Sudbourne Primary School is not used and suggested using Lambeth's Civic Centre or Corpus Christi Church Hall instead.

Suggested Action: Corpus Christi Church Hall was investigated and is suitable for a double station. It is therefore recommended for use going forward.

2.9 Brixton North Ward

St John's Angell Town C.E. Primary School (Polling District BNT4)

- Helen Hayes MP strongly supports using St John's Angell Town C.E. Primary School as a polling place for this polling district.

Grove Adventure Playground/Marcus Lipton Youth Centre (Polling District BNT5)

- Helen Hayes MP supported using Loughborough Primary School instead of the initially proposed Grove Adventure Playground due to its previous use and visibility.

Suggested Action: Further investigation highlighted that Marcus Lipton Youth Centre was more suitable as a polling place than Grove Adventure Playground, due to its larger space, good visibility and the likely need to accommodate a double polling station in future. Using Marcus Lipton Youth Centre instead of Loughborough Primary School would also prevent disruption to school activities when elections take place. Marcus Lipton Youth Centre is therefore recommended as the polling place for BNT5.

2.10 Brixton Rush Common Ward

Holmewood Nursery School (Polling District BRC5 & BRC6)

- Councillor Martin Tiedemann asked that Holmewood Nursery is not used due to disruption to its activities. Roupell Park Community Hall, Christ Church, and Brixton Hill United Reformed Church were suggested as alternative venues.

Suggested Action: Roupell Park Community Centre was investigated and met the criteria for use. As a result of changes elsewhere in the ward, an additional polling district has been created. It is therefore recommended that Roupell Park Community Centre is used for BRC6 and Holmewood Nursery is not used at elections in future.

2.11 Brixton Windrush Ward

Brixton Library (Polling District BWR1 & BWR3)

- MP Helen Hayes strongly supported using Brixton Library as a polling place for BWR3 polling district but suggested using Brixton Recreation Centre for BWR1, due to commuter patterns around Brixton Tube Station.
- Councillor Scarlett O'Hara supported using Brixton Library as a polling station due to its location but suggested Brixton Community Base and/or Dexter Adventure Playground as additional/alternative venues.

Hill Mead Primary School (Polling District BWR2)

- MP Helen Hayes and Councillor Scarlett O'Hara both supported using Hill Mead Primary School as the polling place for BWR2.

Suggested Action: No evidence could be identified of an adverse impact on voting at Brixton Library due to commuter patterns and these were not part of the selection criteria. Brixton Rec was considered less favourably located and does not have room availability at ground level, therefore raising accessibility issues.

Brixton Community Base and the Dexter Adventure Playground were investigated. Due to its good location and shorter walking distances for voters in this part of the ward, Dexter Adventure Playground is recommended as the polling place for BWR3.

2.12 Clapham Park Ward

Richard Atkins Primary School (Polling District CPK2 & CPK3)

- Councillors Martin Tiedemann, Adrian Garden, and Edward Davie submitted representations against using Glenbrook and Richard Atkins Primary schools in this ward and put forward All Saints Church, and Clapham Park Cube as alternatives.

Suggested Action: All Saints Church did not want to be used as a polling place, but Clapham Park Cube is available and suitable for use as a double station. Due to walking distances, it is recommended as a double station for CPK2 & CPK3, rather than replacing Glenbrook Primary School. However, it is recommended that Richard Atkins Primary School is not used at future elections.

2.13 Clapham Town Ward

Macaulay C.E. Primary School (Polling District CTN3)

- A resident requested that Macaulay C.E. Primary School is not used as it disrupts education activities. However, no alternative was put forward by the resident and none could be identified.

Suggested Action: The school will need to continue as the designated polling place for this polling district unless and until suitable alternatives are identified.

2.14 Gipsy Hill Ward

Emmanuel Youth and Community Centre (Polling District GHL1)

- MP Helen Hayes strongly supported the proposal.
- West Norwood Forum agreed with the designation of Emmanuel Youth and Community Centre instead of Elm Wood Primary School.

Berridge Road Estate Community Resource Centre (Polling District GHL3)

- MP Helen Hayes strongly supported the proposal.

Paxton Primary School (Polling District GHL4)

- MP Helen Hayes strongly supported the proposal.
- West Norwood Forum asked that Paxton Primary School not be used and suggested Christchurch Gipsy Hill, Central Hill Community Youth Hub, or Upper Norwood Library Hub as alternatives.

Suggested Action: In addition to the above, the West Norwood Forum suggested increasing the number of polling stations for this ward from four to five, based on its overall size and geography. However, the review found no evidence in support of this and doing so would not be in keeping with the review criteria. All alternative polling place suggestions for this ward were investigated in detail but they were either not available or unsuitable for other reasons, as detailed in the final scheme report.

Emmanuel Youth and Community Centre is therefore recommended instead of Elm Wood Primary School, to reduce the impact on schooling. Paxton Primary School is recommended to continue serving GHL4 as suggested alternatives were not well located.

2.15 Herne Hill & Loughborough Junction Ward

St Matthew's Church Hall (Polling District HHL1)

- MP Helen Hayes strongly supported the proposal.

St Saviour's Church Hall (Polling District HHL2)

- MP Helen Hayes strongly supported the proposal.

Jessop Primary School (Polling District HHL3)

- MP Helen Hayes strongly supported the proposal.

St Jude's Primary C.E. School (Polling District HHL4)

- MP Helen Hayes strongly supported the proposal.
- A resident and a previous Presiding Officer also supported using this location.

Suggested Action: All of the above are designated as polling places for this ward. No alternatives were put forward during consultation.

2.16 Knight's Hill Ward

St Peter's Church Crypt (Polling District KNH1)

- MP Helen Hayes strongly supported the proposal.
- Councillor Jackie Meldrum asked that boundaries be amended slightly so that St Julian's Farm Road is split between two polling districts instead of three.
- The West Norwood Forum supported the retention of St Peter's Church Crypt but also suggested Macintosh Court as an additional/alternative venue.

West Norwood Health & Leisure Centre (Polling District KNH2)

- MP Helen Hayes and Councillor Jackie Meldrum made representation against using West Norwood Health & Leisure Centre, due to its location. They both suggested retaining St Luke's Church as a polling place instead.
- The West Norwood Forum supported the use of West Norwood Health & Leisure Centre, whilst recognising continued suitability of St Luke's Church and suggesting a number of alternatives.

West Norwood Fire Station Polling District (KNH3)

- MP Helen Hayes strongly supported the proposal.
- Councillor Jackie Meldrum requested that the district boundaries be amended so that residents in Joe Hunte Court did not have an excessive walking distance to vote.
- The West Norwood Forum supported using West Norwood Fire Station but put forward Cheviot Gardens Community Room as an additional/alternative location.

Crown Lane Primary School (Polling District KNH4)

- MP Helen Hayes strongly supported the proposal.
- Councillor Jackie Meldrum asked for the boundaries to be checked to ensure all sections of Truslove Road were included in the district.
- The West Norwood Forum were not in favour of using the school and put forward The British Home care home as an alternative.

St Luke's C.E. Primary School (Polling District KNH5)

- MP Helen Hayes strongly supported the proposal.
- Councillor Jackie Meldrum made representation in favour of extended the boundaries for this polling district further south.
- The West Norwood Forum were not in favour of using this location as a polling place.

Suggested Action: It is agreed that an additional polling district and polling place are needed for this ward due to excessive walking distances in its north-eastern section. It is recommended that an updated KNH2 polling district now includes the north-east part of the ward, with those electors voting at the West Norwood Health & Leisure Centre. St Luke's Church continues as a polling place for a revised KNH3 polling district. Minor changes to street boundaries are also recommended for voter consistency. No further changes are recommended in relation to the other initially proposed polling places.

2.17 Oval Ward

Ashmole Primary School (Polling District OVL4)

- Several resident representations were made against designating Ashmole Primary School as polling place for OVL4. These all put forward Bolney Meadow Community Centre or Tate South Library instead.

Suggested Action: Bolney Meadow Community Centre is recommended as the polling place for OVL4 instead of Ashmole Primary School due to excessive walking distances for voters.

2.18 **St Martin's Ward**

Deronda Hall (Polling District SMA2)

- MP Helen Hayes supported using Deronda Hall but raised concerns around its visibility from the main road.
- A resident commented on the ward boundaries and ward name.

The Salvation Army Church (Polling District SMA4)

- MP Helen Hayes supported the proposal.
- West Norwood Forum noted the Salvation Army Hall had been closed for some time and commented on its availability. However, has been confirmed as available during the review.

Suggested Action: Both of the above venues are recommended as polling places for St Martin's ward. Appropriate street signage will be provided for Deronda Hall and availability of the Salvation Army Hall has been confirmed.

2.19 **Streatham Common & Vale Ward**

St Andrew's R.C. Primary School (Polling District SCV1)

- A resident made a representation in support of using of St Andrew's R.C. Primary School, based on its location and previous use at elections.

Suggested Action: St Andrew's R.C. Primary School should continue to be used as a polling place for this ward. No alternatives have been put forward during consultation.

2.20 **Streatham Hill East Ward**

Streatham Wells Primary School (Polling District SHE1)

The Livity School (Polling District SHE3)

Hitherfield Children's Centre (Polling District SHE4)

- A resident made a representation against using schools as polling stations in general. St Simon & St Jude's Church, Streatham Hill Theatre and Darby & Joan Club were put forward as alternatives.

Suggested Action: The suggested alternatives were investigated, and all were found to be very poorly located for this ward, even if polling district boundaries were changed to accommodate them. It is recommended that the above three venues are all designated as polling stations for this ward.

2.21 **Streatham Hill West & Thornton Ward**

Henry Cavendish Primary School (Balham) (Polling District SWT1)

- A resident made a representation supporting Henry Cavendish Primary School as a polling place due to its location and previous use at elections.

Suggested Action: Henry Cavendish Primary School (Balham) should continue to be used as a polling place for this ward. No alternatives were put forward during consultation.

2.22 **Streatham Wells Ward**

Sunnyhill Primary School (Polling District SWE2 & SWE3)

- Councillor Malcolm Clark raised concerns over the proposed boundaries for SWE4 which would have resulted in some voters needing to walk excessive distances to vote at Julian's Primary

School. He proposed moving several streets into polling districts SWE2 and SWE3, with those residents voting at Sunnyhill Primary School instead.

Julian's Primary School (Polling District SWE4)

- As above, Councillor Malcolm Clark expressed his concerns over voter allocation at Julian's Primary School. He also suggested further consideration should be given to using a portacabin for this polling district.
- A resident also made a representation against using Julian's Primary School and suggested a portacabin or marquee could be used if no alternative premises were available.

Suggested Action: The review accepts Councillor Clark's comments regarding the initially proposed SWE4 boundaries. It is therefore recommended that Valley Road Estate and the surrounding area move into SWE2 and SWE3 polling districts as shown in the final scheme report. As stated at the outset of the review, using portacabins and other temporary structures is problematic and not desirable anywhere in the borough. It is recommended that Julian's Primary School continues as a polling place due to no suitable alternatives being available.

2.23 Waterloo & South Bank Ward

Oasis Hub Waterloo (Polling District WSB3)

- A resident cited Oasis Hub Waterloo as part of their representation, stated four polling stations are not sufficient for the ward and that polling stations are not accessible for disabled voters. However, assessments for this ward found all polling stations meet accessibility criteria and are within reasonable walking distance for all voters.

Suggested Action: Waterloo & South Bank is a two-member ward with a relatively low electorate. Four polling stations in total is therefore appropriate for this ward, based on the review criteria. No changes are recommended, and Oasis Hub Waterloo should continue as a polling place for WSB3.

2.24 West Dulwich Ward

Peabody Hill Community Centre (Polling District WED1)

- A large number of resident representations were received against designating Peabody Hill Community Centre as a polling place for voters living in Trinity Rise and Brockwell Park Gardens. These overwhelmingly supported using Holy Trinity Church for this part of the ward.
- MP Helen Hayes strongly supported ward proposals overall, whilst Thurlow Park Councillors Fred Cowell, Anna Birley, and Peter Ely submitted extensive alternatives to boundaries and polling places for the whole ward, as detailed in the scheme report (Appendix A) and representations (Appendix B).

Rosendale Primary School (Polling District WED2)

- Representations were made from two residents against using Rosendale Primary School for WED2 polling district. Their concern is around the school having to close and the disruption to children's education.
- MP Helen Hayes supported the proposal.
- Councillors Fred Cowell, Anna Birley, and Peter Ely suggested boundary and venue changes, as above.

Goodwin Hall, Chatsworth Baptist Church (Polling District WED3)

- MP Helen Hayes supported the proposal.
- Councillors Fred Cowell, Anna Birley, and Peter Ely suggested boundary and venue changes, as above.

Elmworth Grove Community Hall (Polling District WED4)

- MP Helen Hayes supported the proposal.
- Councillors Fred Cowell, Anna Birley, and Peter Ely suggested boundary and venue changes, as above.
- The West Norwood Forum supported Elmworth Grove Community Hall being used as a station.

Suggested Action: The review accepts the validity of the large number of comments regarding the initially proposed WED1 polling district. It is therefore recommended that an additional polling district is created around Holy Trinity and St Matthias Church to improve access for voters in this area. Boundaries in the revised WED2 polling district have been extended south, taking in the area around Thurlow Hill, with Peabody Hill Community Hall as designated polling place.

It is also recommended that the eastern section of the initially proposed WED3 polling district, around Ling's Coppice and Carson Road, forms part of the new WED5 polling district. This will reduce walking distances for residents who will now be allocated to vote at Elmworth Grove Community Hall instead of Goodwin Hall.

3. FINANCE

- 3.1 The provision of polling stations at elections accounts for a significant part of election budgets. Costs consist of premises hire and equipment provision, as well as salary, training and travel/subsistence payments for staff working at each polling station.
- 3.2 The Returning Officer pays a market rate for private venues used as polling places. Publicly funded premises, such as schools and tenant halls, are used free of charge with a flat rate of £150 paid for expenses. All other associated costs relate to staffing and equipment for each polling station. These costs averaged £233,000 for 135 polling stations at the last two borough-wide elections in Lambeth in 2019 and 2021. This was on average £1,726 per polling station.
- 3.3 The recommended increase of 7 polling stations for future elections would incur average increased costs of £12,000, assuming costs remain at £1,726, taking total polling station costs to approximately £245,000 per election. This increase will be met from current Electoral Services budgets.

4. LEGAL AND DEMOCRACY

- 4.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 section 18D requires that local authorities designate the polling places within their Parliamentary constituencies. Under Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA), Returning Officers have the right to use certain public buildings (including schools that receive public funds) for use as polling stations at elections.
- 4.2. Section 18B (4) of the RPA 1983 states that in conducting a review of polling places the authority must:
 - seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
 - seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons; and,
 - must be within the area of the polling district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area either wholly or partly outside of the polling district.

4.3 There were no further comments from Democratic Services.

5. CONSULTATION AND CO-PRODUCTION

5.1 In September 2021 an email was sent to all councillors, election agents and political parties, the contact for polling places and anyone who had given feedback over the past five years to ask for their views and alternative suggestions. Following the informal consultation, a formal consultation was published on 29 October with a closing date of 30 November 2021. A link to the Proposed Scheme Report and the formal notice was also sent to all of the previous consultees and anyone who had contacted us during the informal consultation, as well current and proposed polling stations and staff. The responses to the formal consultation are set out in Appendix B and the responses to the pre-consultation are detailed in Appendix C.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 The main risks that impede on the successful delivery of this project and Scheme are:

Table 1 – Risk Register

Item	Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Control Measures
1	Disagreement on proposed polling districts & stations	2	4	8	Councillors were contacted in regards to informal drop-in sessions with the Electoral Services Team as well as formally notified of the formal consultation. Specified persons/groups can make representations to the Electoral Commission on the Final Scheme.

Key

Likelihood	Very Likely = 4	Likely = 3	Unlikely = 2	Very Unlikely = 1
Impact	Major = 8	Serious = 4	Significant = 2	Minor = 1

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 Following guidance from the Electoral Commission, the review has ensured that any new polling station is accessible to all voters. Individual assessment visits were conducted in line with the Electoral Commission’s “Polling Place Suitability Template”. This template was modified to also include guidance from SCOPE on accessibility specifics such as doorway and ramp dimensions.

7.2 During each consultation stage disability organisations including SCOPE UK, AGE UK, and local organisation We Are 336 were contact for feedback or guidance. No response was received from any disability organisation or forums.

8. COMMUNITY SAFETY

8.1 There are no implications.

9. ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Environmental

Not applicable.

9.2 Health

Not applicable.

9.3 Corporate Parenting

Not applicable.

9.4 Staffing & accommodation

Not applicable.

9.5 Responsible Procurement

Not applicable.

10. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 10.1 The new scheme is due to be adopted on 7 February 2022 when a revised register will be published. The new wards, as well as polling districts and polling stations will come into effect for the 5 May 2022 Borough Elections.

AUDIT TRAIL

Consultation

Name/Position	Lambeth directorate / department or partner	Date Sent	Date Received	Comments in paragraph:
Councillor Andy Wilson	Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance	12.01.22	13.01.22	
Andrew Travers, Chief Executive and Returning Officer	Chief Executive's Department	07.01.22	11.01.22	
Wayne Chandai, Head of the Chief Executive's Office and Democratic Services	Legal and Governance	06.01.22	07.01.22	
Christina Thompson, Director of Finance and Property	Finance and Investment	11.01.22	12.01.22	
Fateha Salim, Assistant Director Legal Services	Legal and Governance	10.01.22	10.01.22	
Chloe Morris, Democratic Services	Legal and Governance	10.01.22	10.01.22	

REPORT HISTORY

Original discussion with Cabinet Member	n/a
Report deadline	14.01.22
Date final report sent	
Part II Exempt from Disclosure/confidential accompanying report?	No
Key decision report	No
Date first appeared on forward plan	N/A
Key decision reasons	N/A
Background information	Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013
Appendices	<p>Appendix A – Polling District & Polling Places Review 2021 – Final Scheme Report</p> <p>Appendix B – Representations & Appeals</p> <p>Appendix C – Stakeholder Feedback & Correspondence</p> <p>Appendix D – Map of New Wards</p> <p>Appendix E – Map of Current Polling Districts</p> <p>Appendix F – Map & List of Current Polling Stations</p> <p>Appendix G – Map of Scheme Polling Districts</p> <p>Appendix H - Response from the Acting Returning Officer</p>