

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF COUNCIL
25 JULY 2022**

**INTERIM REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES
2022**

1. Summary

- 1.1 Following the completion of the review of polling districts and polling places, to approve the arrangements proposed.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the recommendations following the review of polling districts and polling places for the borough, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be approved.
- 2.2 That the Chief Officer and Director of Corporate Services be granted delegated authority to:
- (a) amend a polling place, if the appointed place becomes unavailable; and
 - (b) if required, adjust the relevant polling districts, detailed in Appendix B to the report, following the outcome of the Community Governance Review.

3. Background and Discussion

- 3.1. As approved by the General Assembly of the Council at its meeting held on the 28 February 2022 [Min.No.6], a review of the polling districts and polling places was conducted between 7 March 2022 and 30 May 2022.
- 3.2. The details of the review were available on the Council's website for public consultation, together with invitations being sent to interested parties and organisations.
- 3.3. The comments from the (Acting) Returning Officer and other comments received from the review, were considered by the Electoral Provisions Sub-committee, at its meeting held on the 30 June 2022 [Min.No.7] and endorsed. Enclosed at Appendix A to the report are the recommendations for the polling district and polling places for the borough, recommended to the GAC for approval.
- 3.4. In addition to considering accessibility, lighting and location of the polling places, officers have also taken this opportunity to consider the effects of the Elections Act 2022. In May 2023, electors will need to present ID when voting at polling stations, so consideration has been given to the assessment of suitable space to allow polling station staff to check documents, and provide a privacy screen or separate area for confidential conversations.
- 3.5. If adopted, these arrangements would come into force on the republication of the register of electors in December 2022 and be used for the May 2023 local elections.

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- 3.6. Delegated authority is also sought for the Chief Officer and Director of Corporate Services to amend a polling place, if the appointed place becomes unavailable. Authority is also sought for the Chief Officer and Director of Corporate Services to adjust, if required, the relevant polling districts, shown at Appendix B, following the outcome of the Community Governance Review, which is reported elsewhere on the agenda.

4. Relationship to the Corporate Plan

Theme: A council performing strongly:

Objective 2. Inform and consult residents and stakeholders about Council services.

5. Financial, legal, staffing and other implications and risk assessments*

Financial Implications	The creation of additional polling places will incur more costs to run elections, however it is expected that the additional financial pressure would be offset by the reduction in the cost and usage of mobile units. The direct impact of this for local elections will be provided for by a provision within the identified initiative reserve.
Legal Implications	If approved by the General Assembly of the Council, any changes would not be implemented until after December 2022. Any elections which are held before this date would be administered on the current polling districts and polling places and would not take into account any of the changes identified.
Climate Impact Assessment	None
Public Sector Equality Duty	Persons with disabilities may be affected by the review, however this will be mitigated by making polling places accessible where possible and staff training provided on the assistance that can be provided. A full customer access review was undertaken in December 2021 https://www.dartford.gov.uk/downloads/file/1367/customer-access-review-full-assessment-dec-2021
Staffing Implications	The creation of additional polling districts will require the Returning Officer to employ more staff at election time.
Administrative Implications	The Electoral Management system will need to be amended prior to the publication of the Register of Electors in December 2022.
Risk Assessment	No uncertainties and/or constraints.

6. Details of Exempt Information Category

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Not applicable

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Recommendations for the Polling Districts and Polling Places

Appendix B – Map showing proposed Polling Districts

BACKGROUND PAPERS

<u>Documents consulted</u>	<u>Date / File Ref</u>	<u>Report Author</u>	<u>Section and Directorate</u>	<u>Exempt Information Category</u>
Interim Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2022	Electoral Provisions Sub-committee 30/06/22	Jeanette Pegler (01322) 343424	Electoral Services / Corporate	N/A