



AGENDA ITEM: 4

CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

Richard Long, Director of Legal and Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1. To review the Polling Districts and Polling places as required by the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

BACKGROUND

- 2. The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a duty for all polling districts and polling places to be reviewed by the end of 2007.
- 3. A Polling District is defined as the area created by the division of a constituency, ward or division into smaller parts, within which a polling place can be determined which is convenient to electors.
- 4. A Polling Place is defined as the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the Returning Officer.
- 5. A Polling Station is the room or part of the building where the poll takes place. These are chosen by the Returning Officer for the election. The Returning Officer is required to make a formal comment as part of this review.
- 6. In conducting the review the Council must demonstrate it has, as far as is practicable, met the criteria set out in legislation.
- 7. The aim of the review is to seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. The Council must 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.
- 8. In an ideal world electoral administrators would have the choice of a range of fully accessible buildings, conveniently located for the electors in the area. The Electoral Commission recognizes that, in practice, this is not the case and there may actually be little choice available. Where it is necessary to use a polling place where the

access is not ideal, the Commission expects the Council to make reasonable adjustments to provide access for all electors.

- 9 The Commission also recognizes that in reality the choice of polling place will often be a balance between the quality (access, facilities, etc.) of a building and the distances between the residents and that building compared to other options for polling places.
- 10 There is no fixed rule on how to decide how this should be done. The legislation provides that all electors in a constituency should have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. Councils should be able to show that they followed a reasonable methodology in arriving at their choice.
- 11 Another key issue for the Council is that when conducting the review, all decisions made must have been consulted upon, measured, and practical. The whole process should be as transparent and open as possible to avoid possible conflict.

THE PROCESS

- 12 As required, the first stage of the review was giving notice. A public notice was published in the Evening Gazette, and notices were posed in various locations in town. A list is given in Appendix 1.
- 13 In line with the recommendations of the Electoral Commission, letters and questionnaires were sent to all local Members of Parliament, Middlesbrough Councillors, and Election Agents.
- 14 Local disability organizations and black and minority ethnic groups were also consulted. The consultee list is also contained in Appendix 1.
- 15 The Voiceover Panel, the Council's citizen panel, was sent a special questionnaire exploring the issues around local elections, polling places and polling districts.
- 16 The Returning Officer was also written to for his comments, as this is a requirement of the review.

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION - CONSIDERATION BY WARD

- 17 Consideration has been given to each Ward, its polling districts and polling places, in line with the legislative requirement and taking into account the responses to the consultation.
- 18 The Returning Officer requested that as part of the exercise all polling places with a turnout of 15% or less in the May 2007 should be identified, and consideration given to the future viability of these polling places.
- 19 A complete list of Polling Districts and Polling Stations is attached at Appendix 2, including details of the number of eligible electors for each Polling District, and the number of voters and percentage turnout for the May 2007 elections.

Middlehaven Ward

AA	St Aidans Drive Meeting Room, Grange Road	
AB	Meeting House, Elder Court	
AC	Abingdon Road Primary School	There has been a request to review the polling district in order to significantly reduce the travelling distance to the current polling station for certain residents.

Comments:

A request has been received to enable residents of the 'Gems' (Pearl St, Emerald St, Ruby St, Amber St, Garnet St) to use the Polling Station at Grange Road, as this is considerably closer than the existing Polling Station.

I agree that the current arrangements should be amended. The map at Appendix 3 shows the details of the current arrangements.

Recommendations:

It is proposed that the following streets should be moved from Polling District AC to Polling District AA

Diamond Road

Borough Road from Union Street to Linthorpe Road

Linthorpe Road from Borough Road to Prince's Street

Prince's Street from Linthorpe road to Diamond Road

All streets encompassed within the above (all of Pearl St, Emerald St, Ruby St, Amber St, Garnet St. Parts of Windsor St, Kingston St, Percy St, Portman St, and Pelham St.

This will enable the residents to use the Polling Station at Grange Road, which is considerably closer than the Abingdon Road Polling Station.

Ayresome Ward

BA	Teesside & Dist Soc for the Blind Bishop Street	
BB	Whinney Banks Youth & Community Centre Harehills Road	Turnout 15% May 2007 The Youth & Community Centre is to be demolished as part of the regeneration of the area. A comment was received in response to the consultation that the Bell Street area is some way from Harehills Road, and not easily accessible to residents in the Bell St area.
BC	Whinney Banks Primary School Fakenham Avenue	

Comments:

The Harehills Road Youth & Community Centre, which houses the Polling Station for Polling District BB, is to be demolished in the future.

Also, Ayresome Ward covers a large geographical area. Polling District BB has certain roads to the North of the District that are not easily accessible to the Southern area where the Polling Station is presently located.

Consideration should be given to a Polling Station being established at Archibold School, or in a mobile station, to cater for the Bell St, Ayresome Green Lane, Barnaby Avenue, Liverton Avenue and Ashton Way area.

Recommendations:

That further work is carried out to determine the timescales for the demolition of the Harehills Road Youth and Community Centre, and that depending on the outcome, further consideration is given as to how best to serve Polling District BB in the future.

That, depending on the above, the possibility of establishing a Polling Station in the Bell Street area is considered.

Gresham Ward

CA	Newport Neighbourhood Centre St Paul's Road	
CB	WMNT Resource Centre Meath Street	
CC	The Nursery Crescent Road	
CD	St Aidan's Community Church Clifton Street	

Comments:

None.

Recommendations:

None

University Ward

DA	Former Clinic Woodlands Rd /Clarendon Rd junction	Turnout 10% May 2007 High postal vote. Polling Station not in Ward
DB	Breckon Hill Community Centre Breckon Hill Road	

Comments:

Polling District DA had a 10% turnout in respect of votes cast at the Polling Station. However, offsetting this to some extent is the fact that University Ward has one of the highest levels of postal voting in the town.

This was the first time that the former Clinic has been used as a Polling Station. However, this Polling Station is not in University Ward, but in the neighbouring Middlehaven Ward. Although the Ward Councillors did not respond to the

consultation exercise, a subsequent informal request has been received from Cllr Majid to try and identify a Polling Station within the Ward.

Initial examination of the area has not identified any obvious suitable buildings owned by the Council.

Recommendations:

That further work is undertaken, and in particular the University is contacted, to try and identify a suitable location for a Polling Station within Polling District DA.

North Ormesby and Brambles Farm Ward

EA	Youth and Community Centre Derwent Street	
EB	St Alphonsus' RC Primary School Cadogan Street	
EC	Mobile Station Cargo Fleet Lane / Merlin Road	
ED	Brambles Farm Community Centre Marshall Avenue	Turnout 13% May 2007

Comments:

Consideration has been given to the location of the Polling Station in Polling District ED. The present Polling Station is centrally located within the Polling District, and is located within the local Community Centre. In view of this, it is not likely that a better site will be found.

Recommendations:

None

Linthorpe Ward

FA	Linthorpe Primary School Roman Road	Used in 2007 as the Army Cadet Hall in Burlam Road is no longer available on Thursdays. Presiding Officer had issues re heating; access to the school; lack of mobile phone signal. Two members of the public commented that Burlam Road was a more convenient location.
FB	Friends Meeting House Cambridge Road	
FC	Baptist Church Hall Cambridge Road	

Comments:

Comments have been received from two of the Ward Councillors. Parents of children attending Linthorpe Primary School had objected to use of the school as a Polling Station.

There are no Polling Stations in the east of the Ward, which is some distance from the two Polling Stations located on Cambridge Road. The difficulties faced by residents of that part of the Ward are recognized.

Also, the north of the Ward (the old Hospital site) is being developed as housing, and there is no Polling Station in that part of the Ward.

Initial work has failed to identify any obvious buildings suitable for use as Polling Stations. The 'Barnes Annexe' has been suggested, but it is in the neighbouring Park Ward, and its availability is uncertain in any case.

In spite of the above, it is recognized that the present situation is not sustainable, especially with the new housing development on the old Hospital site.

Recommendations:

That the JSU is approached to try and establish the population estimate for the old Hospital site.

Consideration should be given to splitting Polling District FA into two separate districts, thus giving four polling districts in the Ward.

Consideration should be given to exploring the possibility of establishing a new Polling Station in Sacred Heart School to serve the North of the Ward.

Further work should be undertaken to explore possible Polling Station sites in the East of the Ward.

Park Ward

GA	St Barnabas Church Hall St Barnabas Road	
GB	Linthorpe Community Centre Linthorpe Road	
GC	Mobile Station Phillida Terrace / Cumberland Rd	Presiding Officer commented that there were numerous complaints about disabled access, including an undulating grass area at the bottom of the ramp.

Comments:

We have not been able to identify any suitable buildings in the area in which to locate a Polling Station. Mobile Stations are not ideal, but are the only option in many areas of town. It is recognized that Mobile Stations do have limitations, especially in respect of access by users of electric wheelchairs that have a larger wheelbase and turning circle than manual wheelchairs.

We will examine the location where the mobile is sited prior to future elections with Streetscene officers to ensure that the Mobile is sited in the optimum position for access.

Recommendations:

None

Clairville Ward

HA	Grove Hill Library Eastbourne Road	
HB	Grove Hill Youth & Community Centre Bishopton Road	Turnout 13% May 2007
HC	Mobile Station Kildale Road	Turnout 15% May 2007 Presiding Officer commented about disabled access

Comments:

In relation to Polling District HB, the Youth & Community Centre is reasonably sited toward the centre of the Polling District, with good accessibility. It is unlikely that a better alternative site will be found to accommodate a Polling Station.

In respect of Polling District HC, see comments relating to Mobile Stations under Park Ward, above. Initial examination indicates no obvious buildings in Polling District HC that might be suitable and available for use as a Polling Station.

Recommendations:

None

Pallister Ward

IA	Berwick Hills Primary School Bransdale Road	Turnout 14% May 2007
IB	Residents' Lounge, Bellamy Court Addington Drive	
IC	Community Centre Charlbury Road	Turnout 12% May 2007 Comment that one of the Polling Booths within the Polling Station need to be wheelchair accessible.

Comments:

The comment relating to wheelchair accessibility is accepted, and will be rectified.

In respect of the low turnout in Polling Districts IA and IC, both have Polling Stations reasonably sited toward the center of the Polling District, and both with good accessibility. It would be difficult to identify any locations in these Polling Districts that would be any more suitable as Polling Stations than the current arrangements.

Recommendations:

None

Thorntree Ward

JA	Thorntree Community Centre Birkhall Road	Turnout 15% May 2007
JB	Thorntree Primary School The Greenway	
JC	Middlesbrough Teaching & Learning Centre (MTLC) Tranmere Avenue	Turnout 12% May 2007

Comments:

The access to MTLC has been changed, and the entrance from Tranmere Avenue has been closed. We will need to clarify with the managers at MTLC if pedestrian access can be facilitated from Tranmere Road, otherwise the suitability of MTLC as a Polling Station might be in doubt.

In respect of the low turnout, the Polling Station in Polling District JA is centrally located and in an accessible building. Although the Polling Station in Polling District JC is situated at the southern end of the district, there are no readily identifiable alternatives that could be used as a Polling Station.

Recommendations:

That clarification is sought from MTLC as to whether pedestrian access can be facilitated from Tranmere Road.

Acklam Ward

KA	Acklam Branch Library Acklam Road	Presiding Officer reported that there was insufficient space provided within the library.
KB	Acklam Further Education Centre Hall Drive	
KC	Scout Headquarters Tollesby Road	

Comments:

The accommodation provided within Acklam Library will be reviewed for suitability.

Recommendations:

None.

Beechwood Ward

LA	The Sutton Centre Collin Avenue	
LB	Grove Hill Methodist Church Marton Road	Turnout 15% May 2007
LC	Community Centre Gleneagles Court	
LD	Beechwood Youth & Community Centre Kirkham Row	

Comments:

The Polling Station serving Polling District LB was previously sited at Beechwood School where the turnout there was 11.42%. There are no readily identifiable alternatives to these two Polling Stations within Polling District LB.

Beechwood Ward is divided into four Polling Districts. The eligible electors in each are as follows:

LA	896
LB	1543
LC	645
LD	855

Consideration should be given to merging Polling Districts LC and LD. However, this would be dependent on whether there is easy pedestrian access between these Polling Districts.

Recommendations:

That further investigation is undertaken to explore the viability of merging Polling Districts LC and LD.

Park End Ward

MA1 MA2	St Pius X RC Primary School Amersham Road	Turnout 15% May 2007 The Presiding Officer noted that the entrance to the Polling Station was via the rear of the school and not easily accessible in wet weather.
MB	Park End Community Centre Overdale Road	

Comments:

Re-siting the entrance via the front of the building will be explored with the head teacher.

In respect of the low turnout, the Polling Station in Polling District MA is reasonably located toward the centre of the Polling District and in an accessible building. There are no readily identifiable alternatives that could be used as a Polling Station.

Recommendations:

None.

Beckfield Ward

NA	Southlands Leisure Centre Ormesby Road	The Presiding Officer reported that the rooms used as the Polling Station were a long way from the entrance.
NB	Ormesby Methodist Church Hall Pritchett Road	
NC	Netherfields Community Centre Fulbeck Road	

Comments:

The Centre Manager will be contacted to explore the possibility of using the old canteen area as a Polling Station in future.

Recommendations:

None.

Brookfield Ward

OA	St Clare's RC Primary School Nursery Trimdon Avenue	
OB	Acklam Whin Primary School Carlbury Avenue	
OC1 OC2	St Margaret's Church Hall The Oval	

Comments:

None.

Recommendations:

None.

Kader Ward

PA	City Learning Centre Acklam Grange School Lodore Grove	
PB	Kader Primary School Staindrop Drive	Presiding Officer reported that the premises provided disability access, but that the Polling Station itself was not fully accessible.
PC1 PC2	Mobile Station Thinford Gardens / Shoreswood Walk	
PD1 PD2	The Botanic Centre Sandy Flatts Lane	

Comments:

The site will be inspected to see whether the internal layout can be arranged in order to provide full disability access.

Recommendations:

None.

Ladgate Ward

QA	Residents' Association Meeting Room Broughton Avenue	
QB	Mobile Station Marton Manor Primary School	This was a temporary arrangement.

Comments:

The use of a mobile was a temporary arrangement. The intention is to move the Polling Station back inside the school once the building works have been completed.

Recommendations:

None.

Marton Ward

RA	Captain Cook Primary School Stokesley Road	
RB	Marton Community Centre Cypress Road	

Comments:

None.

Recommendations:

None.

Stainton & Thornton Ward

SA	Memorial Hall Meldyke Lane	
SB	Hemlington Hall Primary School Briscoe Way	The Presiding Officer reported that there was no ramp for wheelchair access.

Comments:

A DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) Audit has been undertaken by Children Families & Learning department. Accessibility will be checked prior to any future elections.

There is a major residential development planned on the Hemlington Grange site. However, it could be a number of years before the site is developed and occupied. Once building commences, and prior to the next election, the development will be reviewed in respect of Polling Districts and Polling Places. It is envisaged that a new Polling Station will be required as the existing Polling Stations are too far removed from the site of the development.

Recommendations:

None.

Hemlington Ward

TA	Community Centre Otterhill Court	
TB	Hemlington Library Viewley Centre	
TC	Hemlington Recreation Centre Cass House Road	
TD	Viewley Hill Primary School Andover Way	A comment was received that access was confusing, as the school is located on Andover Way, but the entrance to the Polling Station is via the Surestart premises on Cass House Road.

Comments:

The wording of the poll cards at future elections will be checked to ensure that they accurately reflect the access point to the Polling Station.

Recommendations:

None.

Coulby Newham Ward

UA	Sunnyside Centre Manor Farm Way	
UB	Langdon Square Community Centre Landon Square	
UC	Lingfield Ash Meeting Hall Lingfield Ash	The Presiding Officer noted problems that had been experienced by people in finding this Polling Station, and the very limited parking due to resident parking. A mobile station in a more visible location was suggested.
UD	Rose Wood Primary School The Garth	

Comments:

We would not want to move from a building to a mobile station with all the access problems inherent in mobile stations. No alternative buildings have been identified in the area that would be suitable as a Polling Station.

Recommendations:

None.

Marton West Ward

VA	Mobile Station Woodrow Avenue	
VB	Lingfield Primary School Buxton Avenue	
VC	Mobile Station Fulford Way	

Comments:

None.

Recommendations:

None.

Nunthorpe Ward

WA	The Avenue Primary School Cookgate	
WB	Nunthorpe Institute The Avenue Primary School The Avenue	
WC	Chandlers Ridge Primary School Chandlers Ridge	

Comments:

None.

Recommendations:

None.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 20 As indicated in paragraph 15 above, the Voiceover Panel has been consulted in respect of various matters concerning elections, including questions about Polling Stations. Unfortunately, the results of that consultation will not be available until early in the new year. It is recommended that the findings of the Voiceover Panel are reported to Corporate Affairs Committee early in 2008, and that any conclusions from that exercise are taken into account in the ongoing review of Polling Stations that the Council undertakes as part of the Elections planning process.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 21 Members are asked to agree the recommendations as set out below. In order to assist, maps of all the Polling Districts showing Polling Stations as used for the May 2007 elections are attached at Appendix 4.

22 Middlehaven Ward:

That the following streets should be moved from Polling District AC to Polling District AA

- Diamond Road
- Borough Road from Union Street to Linthorpe Road
- Linthorpe Road from Borough Road to Prince's Street
- Prince's Street from Linthorpe road to Diamond Road
- All streets encompassed within the above (all of Pearl St, Emerald St, Ruby St, Amber St, Garnet St. Parts of Windsor St, Kingston St, Percy St, Portman St, and Pelham St.

23 Ayresome Ward:

That further work is carried out to determine the timescales for the demolition of the Harehills Road Youth and Community Centre, and that depending on the outcome, further consideration is given as to how best to serve Polling District BB in the future.

That, depending on the above, the possibility of establishing a Polling Station in the Bell Street area is considered.

24 University Ward

That further work is undertaken, and in particular the University is contacted, to try and identify a suitable location for a Polling Station within Polling District DA.

25 Linthorpe Ward

That the JSU is approached to try and establish the population estimate for the old Hospital site.

Consideration should be given to splitting Polling District FA into two separate districts, thus giving four polling districts in the Ward.

Consideration should be given to exploring the possibility of establishing a new Polling Station in Sacred Heart School to serve the North of the Ward.

Further work should be undertaken to explore possible Polling Station sites in the East of the Ward.

26 Thorntree Ward

That clarification is sought from MTLC as to whether pedestrian access can be facilitated from Tranmere Road.

27 Beechwood Ward

That further investigation is undertaken to explore the viability of merging Polling Districts LC and LD.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Electoral Administration Act 2006

The Electoral Commission: Circular EC28/2007: Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

Contact:
Chris Davies
Members' Office Manager
(01642) 729704

REVIEW OF POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS: CONSULTATION

METHOD OF CONSULTATION	LIST OF CONSULTEES
PUBLIC NOTICE	Evening Gazette (10.09.07)
	Middlesbrough Council Website
	COUNCIL BUILDINGS
	Town Hall
	Civic Centre
	Registrars
	Middlesbrough House
	Vancouver House
	Reid House
	Melrose House
	Central Library
LETTERS	The Returning officer
Questionnaire*	Local MPs
	All Councillors*
	All Election Agents*
	Building Maintenance Officer (Property Services)
PUBLIC NOTICE and LETTERS	DISABILITY ORGANISATIONS
	Cleveland Disability Forum
	Riding for the Disabled
	The Stroke Association
	Middlesbrough Shopmobility
	BME ORGANISATIONS
	International Centre
	Jamia Mosque and Cultural Centres
	Abu Bakr Mosque and Cultural Centre
	Sikh Gurdwara and Cultural Centre
	Hindu Temple and Cultural Centre
	Chinese Community
VOICEOVER - Questionnaire	Middlesbrough Council Citizens Panel
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS</u>	
List of Current Polling Stations	
All Ward Maps	
List of Turnout at Local Elections - 3 May 2007	

Map of Middlehaven centre

Maps of all Polling Districts

