

Part A

**Report to:** Council

**Date of meeting:** 30 January 2024

**Report author:** Electoral Services Manager

**Title:** Polling District, places, and stations review

**1.0 Summary**

1.1 This report sets out the results of a review of the Polling Districts and Polling Places within the borough. A public notice of the review was posted 25 September 2023 which invited comments. Direct consultation was also carried out with the elected members for the various tiers of government covering the borough, political parties, and voluntary sector organisations, including disabled and ethnic minorities.

1.2 Responses received for changes to polling place/stations within polling districts DA & DD, and LB (within respective Leggatts and Oxhey Borough Wards) are set out in Appendix 1 and 1A.

1.3 From responses received, only one relating to Leggatts DA plus DD, provided a clear suggestion for alternative polling stations location within its polling place, while 2 responses from individuals who reside outside the borough boundaries, regarding the other (Oxhey LB), simply expressed requests for the polling place/stations to be moved without a clear suggestion of a specific alternative.

**2.0 Risks**

2.1

<b>Nature of risk</b>	<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Suggested Control Measures</b>	<b>Response</b> (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	<b>Risk Rating</b> (combination of severity and likelihood)
i. Change of current 2 x polling station location from school hall via main school gate entrance, to	ia. Initial confusion for electors due to change from longstanding main gate entrance to more concealed side entrance. ib. Increased walking distance for	ia-ic. Maintain current designated polling location within school's main hall without change for polling districts DA and DC. ii. Public awareness action to forewarn	Treat & tolerate	Unlikely (2) x High (3) = rating of 6

<p>the nursery classroom via more concealed side entrance.</p> <p>ii. Request/ agreement for school to remain open on days when polls are held from 2/5/24 onwards.</p>	<p>electorate to attend their polling station with possible difficulty for older and disabled electors.</p> <p>ic. School’s nursery classroom and entrance via side gate too small to house 2 x polling stations for total electorate allotted to venue.</p> <p>ii. Limited car parking at polling place during hours school is open.</p> <p>i and ii. Possible decline in voter turnout.</p>	<p>allotted electorate that school will remain open on day of poll with effect from 2/5/2024 with potential for limited car parking during school hours.</p>		
<p>Change of polling location re. Polling District LB – within Oxhey Ward</p>	<p>ia. Initial confusion for electors due to change from longstanding polling station location.</p> <p>ib. Only response/ requests received for change during Review were from 2 currently non-eligible Hertsmere BC electors* whose children currently attend Bushey and Oxhey Infants School.</p> <p>ic. Possible decline in voter turnout.</p> <p>ii. Potential increase in ongoing election costs for the Oxhey ward</p> <p>iii.</p>	<p>ia.-ic., and ii. Maintain current designated polling locations without change for polling district LB.</p> <p>But if a change considered and confirmed ensure - An extensive public awareness action to forewarn electorate prior to the initial change of venue and at first of each type of election in addition to usual poll cards clearly highlighting change of venue with location map.</p>	<p>Treat</p>	<p>Unlikely (2) x High (3) = rating of 6</p>

	<p>*Note following the next national UK general elections, electors within Hertsmere BC's Bushey North Ward will become part of the Watford constituency and consequently eligible to respond to future Watford Polling District and Place Reviews.</p>			
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### 3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 that the current arrangements for Callowland, Central, Holywell, Meriden, Nascot , Park, Stanborough, Tudor, Vicarage and Woodside wards, as set out in Appendix 1, continue without change.
- 3.2 that the existing polling place/polling stations within the School Hall at The Orchard Primary School for Leggatts Ward be retained in the knowledge that the school will remain open on future polling days with effect from 2 May 2024 without addition for the reasons set out in Appendix 2.
- 3.3 that the current arrangements for Oxhey Ward polling district LB continue unchanged for the foreseeable future following the 2023 Review.

**Further information:**

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**Report approved by:** Group Head of Democracy and Governance

### 4.0 Detailed proposal

- 4.1 The council is required to undertake a review of all Polling Districts and Polling Places within the Borough at least every 5 years. Whilst the Electoral Services Manager informally reviews the adequacy of polling places after each election the council last conducted a formal review in 2019.

4.2 Following conduct of the 2023 Polling District and Polling Place review full details of the various submissions made to the review are contained in Appendix 1 and 1A, and officer comments on them is contained in Appendix 2.

4.3 Only 3 submissions were received relating to 2 Wards. No changes were proposed for the other 10 Wards.

#### 4.4 **Leggatts Ward**

4.4.1 The Orchard Primary School's Executive Head Teacher had requested that the council considers –

1. An alternative location for the necessary 2x polling stations within the polling place, but after a visit to the school by the Electoral Services Manager, it was felt that the alternative location offered would not be large enough to accommodate the 2 required polling stations. Following discussions, the Executive Head Teacher the school has accepted that the school hall can be retained for the polling venue. Full details are set out in Appendices 1 and 2.

Therefore, officers recommend that the polling places remain as current for the reasons set out in Appendix 1 and 2.

2. That the school be permitted to remain open for pupil attendance/education on the next, polling day and all future election dates. Acceptance of this request is recommended by officers for the reasons set out in Appendix 2.

#### 4.5 **Oxhey Ward**

4.5.1 Prior to the 2023 Review an Oxhey ward councillor had raised the issue of the use of Bushey and Oxhey Infants School as the designated polling place for polling district LB. 2 responses were received to the advert regarding the review from parents of children attending the school asking the council to reconsider using the venue as they did not wish the school to close on polling day. However, no response was received from either the school or any currently eligible Watford Borough/constituency registered elector to the advert requesting views on the polling district review. It is not recommended that the location be changed for the reasons set out in Appendix 2.

### 5.0 **Implications**

#### 5.1 **Financial**

5.1.1 The Chief Finance Officer comments that the recommendations set out in this report are within existing budgets. However, if the Council decides to relocate the polling place for the Oxhey Ward polling district LB there is a possibility for budget implications because of the need to hire a suitably large non-public funded venue as an alternative.

## 5.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that it is a legal requirement to conduct a 5 yearly review of polling districts and polling places. The Council is required to publish its polling districts and polling places prior to March 2024

## 5.3 **Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection**

5.3.1 All polling stations are checked to ensure that they are accessible by electorate with disabilities.

## 5.4 **Staffing**

5.4.1 No implications

## 5.5 **Accommodation**

5.5.1 Consequent to the completion of the 2023 Polling District and Polling Place Review as per officer's views detailed in Appendix 2 no change or additional polling place accommodation will be required for the foreseeable future.

## 5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 At every election the council has a single point of contact with the police in case of any crime and disorder issues and the police are entitled to enter any polling station during an election.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Submissions received

Appendix 1A – Submissions received from Hertsmere BC resident electors

Appendix 2 – Officers comments on the Submissions

## **Background papers**

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.