

Committee: Council

Date: 2nd April 2014

Wards: Cricket Green, Graveney, Merton Park and St Helier

Subject: Review of Polling Places

Lead officer: Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services

Lead member: Councillor Mark Allison

Contact officer: Tim Revell, Interim Head of Electoral Services

Recommendations:

- A. That the Council agree the designation of St Barnabas church as the polling place for polling district GB in Graveney Ward.
- B. That the Council agree the designation of the Scout Hall, Mitcham Park as the polling place for polling district ED in Cricket Green Ward.
- C. That the Council agree the designation of the Cricket Pavilion, John Innes Recreation Ground as the polling place for polling district RA in Merton Park Ward.
- D. That the Council agree the designation of Abbotsbury Primary School as the polling place for polling district BC in St Helier Ward.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report deals with the final changes to polling places before the elections on 22nd May 2014. The matter was considered by the General Purposes Committee on 12th March 2014 and this report brings the recommendations from that meeting to the full council meeting for approval.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. **General Purposes Committee report;** the detailed report considered by General Purposes Committee is attached as an appendix to this report.
- 2.2. **Graveney Ward;** following discussion at General Purposes Committee the possibility of an alternative polling to St Barnabas Church has been investigated. This indicated that the church was a better location than the alternative which was North East Mitcham Community Centre.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. The alternatives considered are set out in the report to General Purposes Committee.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

- 4.1. Ward councillors for these wards and political party agents were consulted on these proposed changes as set out in the report to General Purposes Committee.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. This meeting must make a decision on these proposals so that all polling districts have a designated polling place for the elections on 22nd May and electors are notified of their polling place well in advance of the election. It is planned that the delivery of poll cards will begin on Thursday 17th April, five weeks before polling day. By the date of this meeting the deadline for sending poll card data to the printers will have passed so if any of the recommendations are not agreed there will be a delay and additional expense in sending poll cards to electors in any wards affected. If an emergency occurs after this meeting the Returning Officer has power to designate a polling place.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. Provision for the hire of buildings for use as polling places is included within the budget for the elections on 22nd May. As the Borough council elections are combined with those for the European Parliament some of the cost will be recoverable from the Cabinet Office.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The Council has a duty under the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA) to divide its area into polling districts for parliamentary and local government elections, to designate a polling place for each polling district, and to keep these under review. The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 specifies that functions in section 18 of the RPA are not to be the responsibility of an authority's executive. This function has not been specifically delegated by the Council.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 These are dealt with in detail in the report to General Purposes Committee.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Integrity plans are maintained for elections. These involve working closely with Merton Police on operational matters, together with liaising with the Metropolitan Police Service officer specifically delegated with responsibility for potential election offences.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 In reviewing polling places, the reasonable facilities for staff at polling stations during elections have been considered. The physical fabric of possible polling places has also been considered to reflect the need for members of the public to visit their polling station.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Report considered by General Purpose Committee on 12th March 2014.

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 Reports on current and potential polling places and polling stations made by Electoral Services staff and by presiding officers and polling station inspectors at past elections.

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