

# LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

<b>REPORT:</b>	<b>GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE</b>	
<b>DATE OF DECISION</b>	<b>MONDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2024</b>	
<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>AMENDMENTS TO POLLING STATIONS FOR ELECTIONS ON 2 MAY 2024</b>	
<b>CORPORATE DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR:</b>	<b>DAVID COURCOUX, DIRECTOR OF POLICY PROGRAMMES AND PERFORMANCE</b>	
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>SETH ALKER, HEAD OF ELECTIONS</b> Email: <a href="mailto:seth.alker@croydon.gov.uk">seth.alker@croydon.gov.uk</a> Telephone: 020 8604 7469	
<b>LEAD MEMBER:</b>	<b>CLLR SEAN FITZSIMONS CHAIR OF GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE</b>	
<b>DECISION TAKER:</b>	Report is for information only	
<b>AUTHORITY TO TAKE DECISION:</b>	<p>Part 3 of the Constitution provides, in respect of General Purposes Committee functions that it is authorised to act in relation to:</p> <p>“Any matter not reserved to the Council or delegated to another Committee and related to a non-executive function.”</p>	
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>No</b>	N/A
<b>CONTAINS EXEMPT INFORMATION?</b>	<b>No</b>	N/A
<b>WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<b>BENSHAM MANOR, BROAD GREEN, FAIRFIELD, NEW ADDINGTON NORTH, SHIRLEY NORTH, THORNTON HEATH, WADDON, WOODSIDE</b>	

# **1 SUMMARY OF REPORT**

- 1.1** This report provides information on the Constituency Returning Officer's decision to allocate electors to polling stations at the Greater London Authority elections on 2 May 2024, that are not the same as the Parliamentary election polling places that were approved by the Council on 27 January 2020.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

For the reasons set out in the report, General Purposes Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1** Note the changes in the location of some polling stations for the Greater London Authority (GLA) elections on 2 May 2024, compared to the Mayor of Croydon and Croydon Council elections in May 2022.
- 2.2** Note the full list of polling places for the GLA elections on 2 May 2024 and any other elections that take place before the completion of the next statutory review of polling districts and polling places as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.3** Note that there will be no changes to polling district boundaries in advance of the completion of the statutory review of polling district and polling places in 2024, the timetable for which was approved by the General Purposes Committee on 9 October 2023.
- 2.4** Note that the Returning Officer, retains the authority to make further alterations to polling places if a venue becomes unavailable or unsuitable.

## **3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1** A full statutory review of polling districts and polling places will take place in 2024. Following this review the Council will designate future parliamentary polling districts and polling places, which, in the absence of any special circumstances, will also be used for local government elections (including GLA elections).
- 3.2** The timetable for the statutory review was approved by the General Purposes Committee on 9 October 2023. This review will be complete and a new scheme of parliamentary polling districts and polling places will be in force from either 1 December 2024 or 1 February 2025, depending on when the next General election takes place.
- 3.3** The Constituency Returning Officer at Greater London Authority elections has a duty to provide a sufficient number of polling stations and allot electors to these polling station

as she sees fit. In the absence of special circumstances, this should be in the parliamentary polling place for that district.

- 3.4** A number of the parliamentary polling places designated by the Council in January 2020 are either unavailable, or are no longer suitable to be polling places at the forthcoming Greater London Authority elections on 2 May 2024.
- 3.5** Where the designated parliamentary polling places are unavailable, The Constituency Returning Officer has identified alternative venues to be used as polling stations at the elections on 2 May 2024. The changes are detailed in paragraph 4.1 below
- 3.6** Prior to the Mayor of London and Greater London Assembly elections in May 2021, the Government directed Returning Officers to make efforts to avoid using schools as polling stations to avoid further disruption following the lengthy closure of schools during the Covid pandemic. A number of these alternative venues were used again at the Croydon Council Governance Referendum in October 2021 and Mayor of Croydon and Croydon Council elections in May 2022. As electors have been accustomed to going to these alternative venues the Constituency Returning Officer has chosen to continue using them at the forthcoming Greater Authority Elections on 2 May 2024
- 3.7** The choice of polling stations at the Greater London Authority elections on 2 May 2024 is separate from the statutory review and designation of parliamentary polling districts and polling places by the council.
- 3.8** The Elections Act 2022 legislated to introduce the requirement for electors to show photo ID in order to vote at a polling station. This will add to the time it takes to issue ballot papers to electors. As a result the Electoral Commission revised its recommendation on the maximum number of parliamentary electors to each polling station from 2,500 to 2,250 electors.
- 3.9** There are currently 6 polling districts where the electorate is over the Electoral Commission's revised recommended number of polling station voters.
- 3.10** The future designation of polling districts, including the number of electors in each of them will be addressed as part of the forthcoming statutory review of parliamentary polling districts and polling places.
- 3.11** None of the existing polling districts will be amended to address these over-sized electorates in advance of the statutory review, as these changes may then be changed again as a result of the review causing unnecessary voter confusion.
- 3.12** In advance of the statutory review turnout figures for each of these polling districts have been reviewed to consider whether additional mitigations are needed to compensate for the higher number of electors in these areas. In most cases it is considered that even with over-sized electorates, the existing polling places will be able to cope with increased time needed to issue ballot papers under the new rules as set out in paragraphs 4.9 – 4.12 below.

## 4 BACKGROUND AND DETAILS

### 4.1 Changes to polling stations compared to the Mayor of Croydon and Croydon Council elections May 2022

Following consultation with ward councillors, the Returning Officer intends to make the following changes to polling stations for the Greater London Authority elections on 2 May 2024. All venues have been visited and assessed for suitability for electors and staff, including accessibility.

Ward members were notified in December of the proposed changes, and were asked to provide feedback and comments before a final decision was made by the Returning Officer. No objections were received.

Ward	Polling District	Designated polling station (2020)	New polling station for GLA elections on 2 May 2024	Reason for decision
Bensham Manor	BMR5	Ecclesbourne Primary School Pegasus Trust, Atlee Close, CR7 7FA	Queen's Community Hall, 1 Turner Crescent CR0 2NP	School unavailable. Queen's Community Hall was used as a polling station for the district at the GLA elections in 2021
New Addington North	NAN3	Temporary Polling Station, Car Park, Outside 193-219 Dunsfold Way, CR0 0TR	Goldcrest Community Centre, Goldcrest Way, CR0 0PL	Temporary units unsuitable as polling station venue as result of changes in the Elections Act 2022. Goldcrest Community Centre is the designated polling place for NAN4 polling district and was also used as polling station for NAN3 at the GLA elections in 2021
Selhurst	SEL4	Whitehorse Resource Base, rear Entrance, 80 Whitehorse Road, CR0 2JJ	West Croydon Baptist Church, Whitehorse Road, CR0 2JH	Whitehorse Resource Base no longer available as a polling station

Shirley North	SHN1	Oasis Academy Primary School, Dining Room, Longhurst Road entrance, CR0 7AR	Woodside Baptist Church Hall, Spring Lane, SE25 4SP	School is unavailable. Woodside Baptist Church Hall is the designated polling station for WDS5 and was also used as polling station for SHN1 at the GLA elections in 2021.
Thornton Heath	TNH7	Spurgeons College, 189 South Norwood Hill, SE25 6DJ	Waterside Centre, 26 Avenue Road, SE25 4DX	Venue unavailable. Waterside Centre is the designated polling station for SND1
Waddon	WDN3	Temporary Polling Station, Waddon Court Road, CR0 4AG	Waddon Leisure Centre, Purley Way, CR0 4RG	Temporary units unsuitable as polling station venue as result of changes in the Elections Act 2022. Waddon Leisure Centre is the designated polling place for WDN4 polling district and was also used as polling station for WDN3 at the GLA elections in 2021
Woodside	WDS6	The Robert Fitzroy Academy, entrance on Northway Road, CR0 6JN	Woodside Christian Centre, 1 Woodside Green, London SE25 5EY	School is unavailable

**4.2** BMR5, Bensham Manor ward. The designated polling station, Ecclesbourne Primary School, Pegasus Trust, Atlee Close, CR7 7FA is unavailable. The Returning Officer intends to use Queen's Community Hall, 1 Turner Crescent CR0 2NP. This venue was used at the GLA elections in 2021, when the Government directed Returning Officers to seek alternatives to using schools as polling stations, so is known to electors. The venue provides good access for electors, and has good facilities for staff. Additional signing will be used to direct electors to the station from Pawson's Road.

**4.3** NAN3. New Addington North ward. The designated polling station, Temporary Polling Station, Car Park, Outside 193-219 Dunsfold Way, CR0 0TR, is now considered unsuitable as a polling place. The use of temporary units has become increasingly

problematic as facilities for staff and voters are not ideal. They are small, the ramps provided are not DDA compliant, the toilet facilities for staff are not good, they are inconvenient for the immediate local residents who lose parking spaces and have activity outside their properties until late in the evening, and they are very expensive.

The requirements of the Elections Act 2022 have made these temporary units even less suitable. The additional time taken to process voters due to voter ID means that at a busy election voters are very likely to need to queue outside. There also needs to be somewhere available for a voter with a face covering to undertake the ID check in private, and there needs to be somewhere available for a voter to sit down if they need a rest. The temporary units cannot provide this.

The Returning Officer intends to use Goldcrest Community Centre, Goldcrest Way, CR0 0PL. This venue was used at the GLA elections in 2021, so is familiar to electors. It is also the designated polling place for NAN4 polling district, and had the required space for two stations. The venue provides good access for electors, and has good facilities for staff.

- 4.4** SEL4. Selhurst ward. The designated polling station, Whitehorse Resource Base, rear Entrance, 80 Whitehorse Road, CR0 2JJ is no longer available as a polling station. The Returning Officer intends to use West Croydon Baptist Church, Whitehorse Road, CR0 2JH. The venue provides good access for electors, and has good facilities for staff.
- 4.5** SHN1. Shirley North ward. The designated polling station, Oasis Academy Primary School, Dining Room, Longhurst Road entrance, CR0 7AR is unavailable. The Returning Officer intends to use Woodside Baptist Church Hall, Spring Lane, SE25 4SP. This venue was used at the GLA elections in 2021, when the Government directed Returning Officers to seek alternatives to using schools as polling stations. It is also the designated polling place for WDS6 polling district, and had the required space for two stations. The venue provides good access for electors, and has good facilities for staff.
- 4.6** TNH7. Thornton Heath ward. The designated polling station, Spurgeons College, 189 South Norwood Hill, SE25 6DJ is unavailable. The Returning Officer intends to use Waterside Centre, 26 Avenue Road, SE25 4DX, which is also the designated polling place for SND1 polling district, and had the required space for two stations. The venue provides good access for electors, and has good facilities for staff.
- 4.7** WDN3. Waddon ward. The designated polling station, Temporary Polling Station, Waddon Court Road, CR0 4AG, is now considered unsuitable as a polling place (see 4.3 above). The Returning Officer intends to use Waddon Leisure Centre, Purley Way, CR0 4RG. This venue was used at the GLA elections in 2021, so is familiar to electors. It is also the designated polling place for WDN4 polling district, and had the required space for two stations. The venue provides good access for electors, and has good facilities for staff.
- 4.8** WDS6. Woodside ward. The designated polling station, The Robert Fitzroy Academy, entrance on Northway Road, CR0 6JN is unavailable. The Returning Officer intends to use Woodside Christian Centre, 1 Woodside Green, London SE25 5EY. The venue provides good access for electors, and has good facilities for staff.

#### 4.9 Polling districts with more than the Electoral Commission's recommended number of voters

The following polling districts and polling stations have higher than the recommended number of polling station voters (2,250).

Ward	Polling district	Polling station	Current Polling station electorate for GLA elections on 2 May
Addiscombe East	ADE2	St Mildred's Church, Bingham Road, Croydon, CR0 7HR	2,520
Crystal Palace and Upper Norwood	CPU4	All Saints Church, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood, SE19 3LS	2,348
Fairfield	FFD2	Bedford Hall, Wellesley Road, Croydon, CR0 2AR	3,420
Norbury and Pollards Hill	NPH2	Norbury Library, Beatrice Avenue entrance, Norbury, SW16 4UW	2,693
Purley Oaks and Riddlesdown	POR1	Christ Church Hall, Brighton Road, Purley, CR8 2BN	2,288
Selhurst	SEL4	West Croydon Baptist Church, Whitehorse Road, Croydon, CR0 2JH	2,322

**4.10** The over-all turnout at the 2021 Greater London Authority elections was 41.75%. The turnout at the 2024 Greater London Authority elections is expected to be similar. Despite the increased time needed to issue electors with their ballot papers, the process will be manageable, and will not affect elector's ability to vote for the polling stations in ADE2, CPU4, NPH2, POR1 and SEL4 polling districts.

**4.11** For polling district FFD2, the size of the electorate is higher, and therefore for the GLA elections on 2 May at this polling station extra poll clerks will be employed, with an additional issue desk so that the higher number of electors who will vote will be able to be processed in good time.

**4.12** If the Greater London Authority elections are combined with a general election, the turnout is expected to be around 70%. At some of the polling stations with a high electorates this could make it harder to issue ballot papers to electors quickly resulting in delays to electors being able to vote. In order to address this, extra poll clerks will be employed, with an additional issue desk utilised at all of the polling stations with over-sized electorates.

## **5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1** Conducting the full statutory review of polling districts and polling places in 2023. While it is possible for the Council to undertake reviews of Polling Districts and Polling Places at any time, this does not remove the statutory requirement to conduct a full review every five years, in this case between 1 October 2023 and January 31 2025 (Section 18C of the Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983, as amended by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013).
- 5.2** Conducting the full statutory review before May would impact on the time and resources available to plan and deliver the elections scheduled to take place on 2 May 2024 and be a significant risk to the successful delivery of the election.

## **6 CONSULTATION**

- 6.1** Where polling stations are changing since the Mayor of Croydon and Croydon Council elections in 2022 because of unavailability or unsuitability, ward Members were consulted in December 2023 regarding the alternative venue that the Returning Officer intended to use.

## **7. IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1.1** Finance have been consulted and can confirm that any financial implications in the report can be met within existing budget. These elections are fully funded by the GLA.

Approved by Lesley Shields, Head of Finance for Assistant Chief Executive and Resources on behalf of the Director of Finance. 08/02/2024

### **7.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.2.1** Full Council, on 27 January 2020, following the last statutory review of Polling districts and Polling places, delegated authority to the (Acting) Returning Officer authority to approve an alternative polling place in the event that any polling place becomes unavailable or is found to be unsuitable in the run up to an election.
- 7.2.2** Rule 24 of the Greater London Authority Elections Rules 2007 and Rule 23 of the Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rules 2006, both made under the Representation of People Act 1983 provide that the Constituency Returning Officer (CRO) for GLA elections and the Returning officer ("RO") for other elections must provide a sufficient number of polling stations and, subject to the following provisions of this rule, must allot the electors to the polling stations in such manner as the CRO/RO thinks most convenient.
- 7.2.3** The rules provide that one or more polling stations may be provided in the same room.

- 7.2.4** The polling station allotted to electors from any parliamentary polling district wholly or partly within the electoral area must, in the absence of special circumstances, be in the parliamentary polling place for that district, unless that place is outside the electoral area.
- 7.2.5** The CRO/RO as the case may be, must provide each polling station with such number of compartments as may be necessary in which the voters can mark their votes screened from observation.
- 7.2.6** A Polling District is a geographical area created by the sub-division of an electoral area i.e. a UK Parliamentary constituency, a Ward or an electoral division.
- 7.2.7** A Polling Place is a geographical area in which a polling station is located. There is no legal definition of what a Polling Place is; it could be defined as tightly as a particular building or as widely as the entire polling district.
- 7.2.8** A Polling Station is the actual area where the process of voting takes place and must be located within the Polling Place designated for the particular Polling District.
- 7.2.9** The Council's functions relating to a review of polling districts and places are designated by law as non-executive functions and so cannot be discharged by the Leader or Cabinet. Save where Council has delegated responsibility for approving changes to Polling Districts and Polling Places to a committee, subcommittee or an officer responsibility for approving such changes rests with full Council. In this instance, the responsibility for approving Polling Stations within the Polling Districts and Polling Places is delegated to the (Acting) Returning Officer who is also the Constituency Returning Officer for the GLA elections.

Approved by: Sandra Herbert Head of Litigation and Corporate Law for and on behalf of the Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer. (07/02/24)

### **7.3 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.3.1** The Council has a statutory duty to comply with the provisions set out in Sec 149 of the Equalities Act 2010. The Council must therefore have due regard to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
  - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share.
- 7.3.2** An EQIA will be undertaken during the review into polling stations to ensure that all polling stations will be fully accessible to residents with disabilities, this includes those with both mobility issues sensory impairments and residents who are neurodiverse.

Approved by: Denise McCausland – Equality Programme Manager – 06/02/2024

## **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.4 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.4.1** There is a risk that voters will not know where their polling station is located. However this is mitigated by the fact that of the 7 polling stations venues that are changing, 4 have previously been used as an alternative polling station venue in 2021. In addition all voters will be sent a poll card advising them of their polling station, including a map and a message highlighting that this polling station has changed. There will be an online polling station finder on the council website which voters will be able to enter their postcode and find out where their polling station is located, and on polling day signage will be displayed at the former polling station location to tell voters where their station is now located.
- 7.4.2** There is a risk that those polling stations with electorates larger than the Electoral Commission recommended number of voters will struggle to process electors in a timely manner causing delays to electors voting. Previous turnout figures have been analysed to assess the number of voters who are likely to actually turn out and vote at the different elections. At a stand-alone GLA election the number of voters will be manageable at these venues. At a general election, with a higher turnout, this will be addressed by having additional staff and issue desks to process electors more quickly. At the GLA elections in May, there will be an additional poll clerk at each polling station who will help with the implementation of the now voter ID requirements.

### **7.5 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.5.1** There are no changes to processes relating to the personal data of any individual as a result of the changes to polling places, including for registered voters and polling station staff.

## **8 APPENDICES**

- 8.1** Appendix 1: Full list of Polling Stations for the Mayor of London and Greater London Assembly Elections on 2 May 2024

## **9 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None.