

Executive Summary and Recommendations

Title of Report: Designation of Polling Places

Date: 15 January 2009

Summary of this Report

1. A comprehensive Polling Place and Polling District review was carried out in October, 2007. A number of new polling place locations were used successfully for the first time at the GLA Elections on 1 May, 2008.
2. A few polling places need to be changed for the forthcoming European Parliamentary Elections on Thursday 4 June. Until the date of the forthcoming General Election is known it is impossible to identify now if any other changes will be needed for that election.
3. The Committee's approval is sought to the proposed changes for the elections on 4 June, 2009 as set out in the recommendations below.
4. The Chief Executive also has delegated powers to designate alternative polling places in the event of any polling place not being available at any election, following consultation with the Party Whips and respective ward councillors.

Recommendations

(i) That the Committee designate the following two alternative polling place locations for the European Parliamentary Elections on 4 June, 2009:

(a) MHC (Marylebone High Street) to be changed for all future elections (subject to the arrangements working satisfactorily) from St Marylebone School to the Hellenic Centre, 16-18 Paddington Street (as the School no longer has suitable accommodation and its use as a polling place has caused significant disruption to the school);

(b) RPB (Regent's Park) to be changed for the elections on 4 June 2009 only from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists to Rudolf Steiner House, 35 Park Road, which was previously a polling place (as the RCOG is unavailable for use as a polling place on the date of this year's European Parliamentary Elections);

(ii) That the Committee note the possibility of relocating the CHA polling district from the Churchill Gardens Youth Club to Churchill Hall (subject to any update from officers at the meeting).



City of Westminster

General Purposes Committee

Item No:	
Date:	15 January 2009
Classification:	For General Release
Title of Report:	Designation of Polling Places
Report of:	Head of Administrative Services
Wards involved:	Churchill, Marylebone High Street and Regent's Park
Policy context:	Management of the Council
Financial summary:	The cost of using polling places is met from the Government grant for administering these elections
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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The General Purposes Committee is responsible for electoral matters, including the designation of polling places. If any designated polling place is likely to be unavailable at any particular election, officers consult the Ward Members on possible alternatives and recommend any changes to this Committee.
- 1.2 The Chief Executive also has delegated powers to designate alternative polling places in the event of any polling place not being available at any election, following consultation with the Party Whips and respective ward councillors. This delegation is used if designated polling places become unavailable at short notice, e.g. there is usually only short notice of a General Election and alternative locations may need to be found quickly.
- 1.3 MHC (Marylebone High Street): Attempts have been made over the years to find an alternative polling place for the MHC polling district. Historically the location has been St Marylebone School, but it has always been disruptive to the school (particularly during exams) and the accommodation there was never ideal for voters. The School is on the edge of the polling district and due to rebuilding works as part of BSF, only a basement Sports Hall now provides a possible location for a polling place and this was used for the first time at the GLA elections in May 2008. However the location is in the basement and is only accessible via external stairs or a staff operated lift. The sports hall floor also requires a cover to prevent damage to its surface. At the GLA elections the school also required added security to separate voters from pupils. It is proposed to move the polling place for the European Elections to the Hellenic Centre, 16-18 Paddington Street. This is on a main road, more central to the polling district and with a suitable hall. Provided it proves to be successful, the intention is that this becomes the permanent location, although Marylebone School will remain as a fall-back.
- 1.4 Regent's Park (RPB): The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) is unable to accommodate a polling place at the European Elections on 4 June. It is therefore proposed to relocate the polling place (for this election only) back to the previous location at Rudolf Steiner House, 35 Park Road. Although just outside of the ward it is in the same road as the RCOG and very close by. It was previously used as a polling place for many years so will be familiar to many voters.
- 1.5 Abbey Road (ARC): The refurbishment of St John's Wood Library is now complete and will therefore be reinstated as the polling place. Robinsfield Infants School was used instead at the GLA Elections last year as a stop-gap during the library's refurbishment.
- 1.6 West End (WEC): The Grosvenor Chapel Meeting Room, South Audley Street is already designated as the new polling place. However as it was already pre-booked, it could not be used at the GLA elections in May 2008. This will be the first time it has been used as a polling place.

1.7 Churchill (CHA): Officers are exploring the possibility of relocating the polling place from the Churchill Gardens Youth Club to Churchill Hall. The Club have asked for the polling place to be relocated as it disrupts the Club's youth programme. Officers are awaiting confirmation as to whether or not Churchill Hall is available for use as a polling place at the elections on 4 June.

2. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

2.1 None.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The cost of hiring polling places at UK and European Parliamentary elections is covered by Government grant for the administration of elections.

4. WARD COUNCILOR CONSULTATION

4.1 The Churchill, Marylebone High Street and Regent's Park ward councillors are being consulted on the possible changes of polling place location in their wards and their views will be reported to the Committee.

Background Papers: Nil

Background Information

If you have any queries about this report, please contact
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