

**General Assembly of the Council**  
7 May 2014

**RE-DESIGNATION OF POLLING PLACES FOR FLEET ESTATE  
(BB) AND FLEET DOWNS (BC) POLLING DISTRICTS**

1. Summary

1.1 To ask the General Assembly of the Council to approve a change of polling places for the Fleet Estate and Fleet Downs Polling Districts due to the unavailability of the Fleetdown Community Centre which is shut for repair. It is proposed to designate the adjacent Fleetdown Library as the replacement polling place for both polling districts.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 That the General Assembly of the Council agrees to the designation of the Fleetdown Library as the polling place for Fleet Estate and Fleet Downs Polling Districts with immediate effect.

3. Background and Discussion

3.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 places a duty on the Council to divide the borough into polling districts for the purposes of parliamentary elections and to designate a polling place for each district and to keep these arrangements under review.

3.2 The designation of polling districts and polling places is the responsibility of the local authority, however, the locations and provision of polling stations remains the responsibility of the Returning Officer.

3.3 The difference between a polling district, a polling place and a polling station is outlined below:

A **polling district** is a geographical sub-division of an electoral area, i.e. a UK Parliamentary constituency, a European Parliamentary electoral region, a ward or an electoral division.

A **polling place** is a geographical area in which a polling station is located.

However, as there is no legal definition of what a polling place is, the geographical area could be defined as tightly as a particular building or as widely as the entire polling district. In Dartford the polling places are quite narrowly defined and any changes outside of these parameters, however minor, require the approval of the General Assembly of the Council.

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.

## General Assembly of the Council 7 May 2014

- 3.4 The current polling place for the Fleet Estate and Fleet Downs polling districts is the Fleetdown Community Centre where a double polling station is located at major elections and which was scheduled to be used for the European Parliamentary election on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014. However earlier this year the Community Centre suffered extensive damage due to high winds and the building is shut for repair.
- 3.5 A new location is therefore required for use at the European elections and officers have identified the Fleetdown Library as a suitable alternative. The Library is next door to the Community Centre, is large enough to accommodate a double polling station, and is well appointed with good disabled access and all the facilities required for electoral purposes. As a publicly funded building it is also available to the Council at nominal cost unlike the Community Centre which makes a significant charge for the use of its premises.
- 3.6 The Community Centre will not be available by 22<sup>nd</sup> May and the Fleetdown Library provides a good alternative. Members are therefore asked to approve the designation of the Fleetdown Library as the polling place for the Fleet Estate and Fleet Downs polling districts with immediate effect. The use of the Library will also be considered as part of a statutory Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places which has to be carried out later this year and feedback on the use of this location during the European election will inform this process.

#### 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Officers have visited the existing polling place, Fleetdown Community Centre, and established that it will not be available for use at the European election. The Fleetdown Library offers a good and permanent alternative location and it is recommended that it be designated the new polling place for both Polling Districts.

#### 5. Relationship to the Corporate Plan

Not applicable.

#### 6. Financial, legal, staffing and other administrative implications and risk assessments

Financial Implications	There will be a saving arising from the use of the Fleetdown Library as the Council will not incur a hire fee.
Legal Implications	None.
Staffing Implications	None.
Administrative Implications	None.
Risk Assessment	The Library is considered to be suitable for electoral purposes and a new polling place is required in time for the European election on

**General Assembly of the Council**  
**7 May 2014**

	22 May 2014.
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7. Appendices  
None

BACKGROUND PAPERS				
<u>Documents consulted</u>	<u>Date / File Ref</u>	<u>Report Author</u>	<u>Section and Directorate</u>	<u>Exempt Information Category</u>
None		A Twyman (01322) 343430	Member Services	N/A