GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL
15 October 2007

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

1. Summary

1.1 To receive the recommendations from the Polling Places and Polling Districts Sub-Committee on its review of polling arrangements.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the work carried out by the Polling Places and Polling Districts Sub-Committee be noted.

2.2 That the proposed polling districts and polling places (Appendix A) be adopted and used for the revised Register of Electors for 2008, to be published on 1 December 2007.

2.3 That the Council notes that a short review of all polling districts and places be carried out approximately every 12 months with comprehensive review of all polling districts and places being carried out within four years.

3. Background and Discussion

3.1 Under the requirements of Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006, the Council was obliged to review all polling districts and polling places by 31 December 2007.

3.2 The General Assembly of the Council, at its meeting on 2 July 2007 (Minute 35), resolved that the review be carried out by a politically balanced Sub-Committee comprising seven Members: Councillors A Bardoe, R Bryant, J Kite, A Martin, D May, B Read and C Shippam. The Sub-Committee agreed at its first meeting on 1 August 2007 how the review would be conducted. It was considered important to consult people and organisations familiar with the current polling arrangements, and also those persons/organisations with particular expertise in access issues.

3.3 There are no purpose-built polling stations in the Borough. Facilities have to be hired for Election Day by the Returning Officer. These can range from community centres and schools to mobile units placed strategically within a district. Some of these buildings are not ideal polling stations and measures, such as temporary ramps, have to be put in place to make them fully accessible.

3.4 Careful consideration needs to be given to choosing a location which is both convenient and accessible.
3.7 The consultation for the review closed on 7 September 2007. A range of comments were received from organisations and individuals. The majority of these were in favour of the arrangements currently in place, and did not suggest any changes.

3.8 Because of the demolition of the Red Cross Hall polling place for the PC polling district, it was proposed by Officers, that the Masonic Hall be used as a replacement. However, one consultation response was that Our Lady’s RC Primary School would be a more suitable alternative because of its location.

3.9 Officers had previously given consideration to using Our Lady’s RC Primary School. However, it was felt that it did not provide suitable facilities for election purposes. The Sub-Committee supported Officers’ recommendations that the Masonic Hall would be the appropriate replacement.

3.10 At its meeting on 15 October 2007, the Sub-Committee discussed its concerns about using the Manor Gatehouse as a polling place. Although the consultation exercise had raised no issues about this location, and it was accepted that the building provided good facilities, including level ground, disabled access and generous car parking on site, Members were concerned about the accessibility of the Manor Gatehouse for electors in the polling district in terms of distance.

3.11 Both the Sikh Temple and the Baptist Church on Highfield Road were identified as potential locations. Officers were asked to investigate the suitability of these premises and whether the occupiers would be willing to allow their premises to be used for polling purposes.

3.12 Both organisations were approached. The Sikh Temple advised that they did not wish their premises to be used for polling purposes. The Highfield Road Baptist Church, however, was willing to be designated as a polling place.

Officers visited and assessed the Baptist Church premises and felt that it could be used as a polling place because:

- The proposed room is adequately sized with level ground access.

- There is external disabled access to the building. However, the room has an internal door which is below the 800mm required door width. This could cause difficulties for some wheelchair users and special arrangements would need to be put in place. This could mean the ballot box having to be carried to the person in the corridor by the Presiding Officer.

- There is tight access to the limited car parking available at the rear of the church premises and the parking restrictions in Springvale Road and Highfield Road would need to be kept in mind. There is, however,
a small public car park adjacent to the building which might help to accommodate the parking needs of electors.

- Facilities for the polling station staff, toilets and a kitchen, were on site.

- The playgroup which uses the building on weekday mornings during term time would close on polling day.

3.13 These findings were considered by the Sub-Committee, who have decided that the polling place for the OA polling district should be changed to the Highfield Road Baptist Church.

3.14 It was recognised by the Sub-Committee that the polling provision in the Borough needed to be reviewed annually. Moreover, with new housing developments, such as The Bridge, polling districts and polling places will need to be reviewed regularly, to ensure that provision meets demand.

3.15 The General Assembly of the Council are asked to endorse the Sub-Committee’s proposals in Appendix A, agree that the provision will be reviewed annually, and note the requirement under the Electoral Administration Act 2006, for a further full review before 2010.

4. Relationship to the Corporate Plan
   Not applicable

5. Financial, legal, staffing and other administrative implications and risk assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Implications</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal Implications</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing Implications</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Implications</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Assessment</td>
<td>No uncertainties and/or constraints</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Details of Exempt Information Category
   Not applicable.

7. Appendices
   Appendix A – Proposed Polling District and Polling Places
**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL**  
15 October 2007

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documents consulted</th>
<th>Date / File Ref</th>
<th>Report Author</th>
<th>Section and Directorate</th>
<th>Exempt Information Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jeanette Stephens</td>
<td>Member Services / MD</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(01322) 343251</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jeanette Stephens  
(01322) 343251  
Member  
Services / MD  
N/A