

INTRODUCTION

1. This review sets out the proposals for changes to Southwark's polling districts and locations as part of a review carried out as required by the Electoral Administration Act 2006.
2. The proposals seek to update the current scheme to enable Southwark to implement fully the guidance of the Electoral Commission. In particular the proposals seek to meet the recommended number of electors allocated to polling stations across the borough.
3. All proposals are made to ensure that there is a balance of the electorate within each polling district, that polling places are convenient and easily accessible for voters and that future demand arising from new building and development has been taken into account.
4. These changes will take effect with the publication of the new register on 1 December 2011. If an election were to be called prior to publication the existing polling districts and places would be used.
5. This report will be distributed to interested stakeholders who will be given seven weeks to make further recommendations. The Returning Officer, Councillors and local political parties will be consulted directly.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

6. The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a number of changes to the Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983 in respect of the way in which reviews of polling districts and polling places must be undertaken.
7. The Act required every relevant authority to have completed a polling district review by 31 December 2007. It requires that a review must then be carried out every four years thereafter. A second review must now be completed by 1 December 2011.
8. The Chief Counting Officer had the power to issue directions for the referendum in May 2011. One of those directions was to enforce the electoral commissions previous guidance regarding the number of electors allocated to polling stations.
9. This direction stated that the maximum number of parliamentary electors at a polling station should be 2,500. For the referendum this meant that Southwark had 112 polling stations at 105 polling places.
10. There have been minor changes to polling places at the last 3 borough-wide elections. These were necessary due to the lack of availability at the previously agreed polling places.
11. Significant regeneration schemes and large new developments have progressed since the time of the last review.

12. Southwark is a large and varied borough. There is a lack of suitable premises for polling places in many parts of the borough. This will limit the possible changes to polling districts and places.
13. The review is being undertaken at a time of limited and reducing resources.
14. The review of Polling Districts, Locations and stations does not include looking at ward boundaries or names. These are matters for the local government boundary commission at the electoral commission and should be addressed to them directly.
15. A review of parliamentary constituencies is currently being undertaken by the Boundary Commission for England. It is possible that any proposals arising from this may result in 2010 polling districts within a ward being allocated to different parliamentary constituencies.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

16. No polling station should have more than 2500 electors (excluding postal voters) assigned to it.
17. Southwark currently has 107 polling districts with a significant variation in size, ranging from 2,847 electors to just 271.
18. Significant regeneration schemes are continuing across the borough and large new developments have been completed in several areas and more are due to complete within the life time of the proposed polling district review.
19. Polling districts need to contain suitable premises to be used as a polling place at an election time. Suitability is assessed on a number of criteria including availability, cost, voter convenience, accessibility and suitable working environment.

ADDITIONAL MATTERS CONSIDERED

20. Physical barriers that divide a ward (such as railway lines, large open spaces and main roads) can act as a barrier to voters in some cases.
21. Stations should not have less than 1,000 electors registered to vote at them as this delivers poor value for money (cost per voter and staffing ratios).
22. The disposal of or changes to buildings used as polling places which may mean that they cease to be available as polling stations.
23. To ensure (where possible) continuity for voters in where they go to vote.
24. Transportation links to polling places (bus routes etc)
25. Turnout at previous elections
26. The disruption to other users of proposed venues (e.g. schools that may close on election day etc)

PROPOSED SCHEME

27. Appendix A sets out the proposed Polling districts and polling stations by ward with additional information regarding any change from previous years.

28. Headline figures include:

- Reduction in the number of polling districts from 107 to 100
- No polling district to have an electorate greater than 2500
- Reduction in the number of polling districts with an electorate of below 1000 from 22 to 8.
- Reduction in the variance of electorate totals from 2576 to 1963
- Reduction in the number of schools used as polling stations by 2
- An increase in the average electorate in each polling district from 1475 to 1578
- 57 polling districts in 17 wards affected by changes.
- Provision made for planned developments likely to come on stream before December 2015

29. The final scheme will be confirmed in accordance with the Councils constitution. The strategic director for Communities Law and Governance will publish the final scheme on the website.

TIME SCALE

30. The polling district review needs to be completed in time for publication of the new register by 1 December 2011.

Date	Activity
29 July 2011	Publish Notice of holding a review
29 July 2011	Contact all councillors, local MPs, local parties, agents at recent elections and disabled groups advising them of the proposals and inviting comment.
16 September 2011	Deadline for receipt of comments on the proposals
16 September – 30 September 2011	Adjustments to the proposal to either reflect responses to the consultation or to explain why it has not been possible to accept them.
7 October 2011	Formal acceptance of proposals by the strategic director.
17 October 2011	Publication of final agreed scheme (including full explanation of all decisions made including the reasons for adopting or not amendments received during the consultation process).
17 October to 1 December 2011	Incorporation of changes into the register.
1 December 2011	Publication of the new register incorporating the new polling district boundaries.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

31. The proposed scheme would result in a saving on polling stations costs in the region of £10,000 per borough wide election. Any saving would be realized by the body responsible for paying for the particular election.
32. Any variance to the proposed scheme may affect this amount.

