

# North Tyneside Council

## Report to Council

### Date: 27 November 2014

#### ITEM 10

Title: Change to Polling Place

Portfolio(s): Elected Mayor

Cabinet Member(s): Mrs Norma Redfearn

Report from Service Area: Vivienne Geary – Head of Law and Governance and Returning Officer (Tel: 643 5339)

Responsible Officer: Joanne Macgregor - Manager Statutory Services (Tel:643 5350)

Wards affected: Longbenton

#### PART 1

##### 1.1 Purpose:

The purpose of the report is to request Council to consider and agree, the proposal attached in the Appendix to change the location of one polling place.

##### 1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Council consider and agree:

The alternative location for the polling place in Polling District CD in Longbenton ward as set out in the Appendix.

##### 1.3 Forward Plan:

Twenty eight days notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 27 October 2014.

##### 1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

This report does not specifically relate to any of the priorities contained in the 2014 - 18 Our North Tyneside Plan.

##### 1.5 Information:

- 1.5.1 Under the current elections legislation, the Council is required to designate a polling place for each polling district within its area and also to keep such polling places under review.

To encourage and facilitate voter participation, all electors should have reasonable facilities in which to vote. The Electoral Commission recommends that the following factors are taken into consideration when reviewing existing polling places or when assessing new polling places:

- The location: is it reasonably accessible within the polling district? Does it avoid barriers for the voter such as steep hills and major roads? Are there any convenient transport links?
- Size: Can it accommodate more than one polling station if required? If multiple polling stations are required, is the polling place ample enough to accommodate all voters going into and out of the polling stations, even where there is a high turnout?
- Suitability: is the building readily available in the event of any unscheduled elections? Is there any possibility that the building may be demolished as part of a new development? Is the building accessible to all those entitled to attend the polling place?
- Accessibility: Is the building accessible to all those entitled to attend the polling place?

### **1.5.2 Current Issues**

Longbenton Community College is due to undergo major refurbishment, and by May 2015 the site will not be accessible to use as a polling station. Alternative facilities have been considered and a potential alternative place identified. The proposal for the alternative polling place is as follows:

Longbenton Ward – to transfer the polling place in polling district CD from Longbenton Community College to the Community Building at St Bartholomew's and Stephen's Primary Schools, Goathland Avenue, Longbenton. It is envisaged that this will be a permanent move.

A map of the polling district and further information relating to the current and proposed polling place are set out in the Appendix.

Letters informing electors of this change will be sent out, and it will also be highlighted on the poll cards, sent out in April for the combined Parliamentary/Local Election to be held on 7 May 2015.

### **1.6 Decision options:**

The following decision options are available for consideration by Council.

#### Option 1

To agree to the recommendations, as set out in the Appendix.

#### Option 2

To request that officers undertake further work to identify an alternative proposal to the one submitted to Council and report back to the next Council meeting.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

### **1.7 Reasons for recommended option:**

Option 1 is recommended for the following reason:

Longbenton Community College is no longer available to use as a polling place, the use of the Community Building at St Bartholomew's and Stephen's Primary Schools will ensure that voters have a polling station which is accessible to all voters, and is well known within the community.

## **1.8 Appendices:**

Appendix: Proposed change to polling place

## **1.9 Contact officers:**

Viv Geary, Head of Law and Governance and Returning Officer (643 5339)  
Joanne Macgregor, Manager Statutory Services (643 5350)  
Alison Campbell, Finance Business Manager (643 7038)

## **1.10 Background information:**

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

- (1) Electoral Commission's Guidance for (Acting) Returning Officers for the UK Parliamentary general election and local government elections in England on 7 May 2015.
- (2) Section 18B of the Representation of the People Act 1983 as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

## **PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING**

### **2.1 Finance and other resources**

There are no financial implications to this proposal, the hire cost of Longbenton Community College is £100, and this will be replaced by the cost of the hire of the Community Building which will also be £100.

### **2.2 Legal**

Under Section 18B of the Representation of the People Act 1983 as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006, an authority is required to designate a polling place for each polling district.

### **2.3 Consultation/community engagement**

#### **2.3.1 Internal Consultation**

Ward Members in the affected ward and the Elected Mayor have been consulted on the Returning Officer's proposal on the alternative polling place.

### **2.4 Human rights**

This report supports Protocol 1 Article 3 of the Human Rights Act, which provides a right to free elections.

## 2.5 Equalities and diversity

The proposals support the Council's equality and diversity policies by seeking to provide all electors with reasonable and practicable facilities to vote. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken in relation to the proposed change to the polling place in Longbenton Ward. Any further changes to the current polling place and district proposals will be subject to further equality impact assessments as they arise.

## 2.6 Risk management

The relevant risks have been assessed with the Senior Risk Advisor and will be added to the risk register as appropriate.

## 2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications directly arising from this report.

## 2.8 Environment and sustainability

There are no environment and sustainability implications directly arising from this report.

## PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Deputy Chief Executive  x
- Head(s) of Service  x
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s)  x
- Chief Finance Officer  x
- Monitoring Officer  x
- Head of Corporate Strategy  x