

North Tyneside Council

Report to Council

Date: 24 November 2016

ITEM 8

Title: Change to Polling Place

Portfolio(s): Elected Mayor

Cabinet Member(s): Mrs Norma Redfearn

Report from Service Area:

Law and Governance

Responsible Officer:

Viv Geary, Head of Law and Governance and Returning Officer (Tel: (0191) 643 5339)

Wards affected:

Whitley Bay

PART 1

1.1 Executive Summary:

Full Council is required to formally consider the request to change the location of Polling District RB Polling Station (formerly Age UK Centre, Park Road, Whitley Bay) for the North Tyneside Mayoral Election which is to be held on 4 May 2017, and future elections.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Council consider and agree the alternative location for polling place at Livingstone Hall, Whitley Bay Baptist Church, Park Parade as set out in Appendix 1.

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 3 October 2016.

1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

This report does not relate to any of the priorities contained in the 2016/19 Our North Tyneside Plan

1.5 Information:

1.5.1 Background

Under current electoral legislation the Authority 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?
- Accessibility: Is the building accessible to all those entitled to attend the polling place?

1.5.2 Current Issues

Age UK has informed the Returning Officer that the building at Park Road, Whitley Bay will no longer be available to use as a polling place. It has therefore been necessary to look for an alternative facility. Other places within the polling district have been investigated but only one was available for electoral use.

1.5.3 The Alternative Proposed Provision

As an alternative to the above Livingstone Hall, Whitley Bay Baptist Church, Park Parade has been identified as suitable. The Hall is accessible to all voters, and is located near to the existing polling place. There is nearby parking, however this is a residential area.

The proposal supports the Authority's equality and diversity policies and the advice of the Electoral Commission by seeking to provide all electors with reasonable and practicable facilities to vote. An Equality Impact Assessment, attached at Appendix 2, has been undertaken in relation to the proposed change to the polling place in Whitley Bay Ward.

Any further changes to the current polling place and district proposals will be subject to further equality impact assessments as they arise.

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 Appendix 1.

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 reasons:

Livingstone Hall, Whitley Bay Baptist Church, Park Parade is accessible to all voters, and is located near to the existing polling place. There is nearby parking, however this is a residential area.

1.8 Appendices:

Appendix 1: Proposed change to polling place.

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment

1.9 Contact officers:

Viv Geary, Head of Law and Governance (643 5339)

Joanne Macgregor, Manager Statutory Services (643 5350)

Alison Campbell, Senior Business Partner (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 the review of polling places and polling stations.

(2) Section 18B of the Representations 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

If the proposal is accepted by Council, there would be an increase of £30 per election. The additional cost can be contained within the current Elections budget.

2.2 Legal

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

In accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Regulations made under that Act, Full Council is responsible for determining the location of polling places.

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 and are supportive of the proposed venue.

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 equality and diversity issues arising from this report are set out in the body of the report.

2.6 Risk management

The changes have been assessed for any relevant risks with the Senior Risk Advisor and if appropriate, will be added to the risk register.

2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no implications arising from this report.

2.8 Environment and sustainability

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

PART 3 - SIGN OFF

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