

CITY OF PLYMOUTH



ELECTIONS REVIEW 2003 - REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee - Select Pairing

8th October, 2003

'Overview and scrutiny is potentially the most exciting and powerful element of the entire local Government modernisation process. It places members at the heart of policy-making and at the heart of the way in which Councils respond to the demands of modernisation. In addition, overview and scrutiny is the mechanism by which Councils can achieve active community leadership, good governance and by which Councillors can become powerful and influential politicians.'

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: 'The Development of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government', September 2002

CITY OF PLYMOUTH

Portfolio and Holder:	Leader, Councillor Evans
CMT Member:	Head of Performance and Policy
Subject:	Elections Review 2003 - Review of Polling District Boundaries
Committee:	Overview and Scrutiny Commission City Council
Date:	6 th November, 2003 17 th November, 2003
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Ref:	5/CWB/KJ
Part:	I

Executive Summary:

This report informs the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and City Council of the outcome of the review of Polling District Boundaries following the City Council elections held in May, 2003, undertaken by the Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Select Pairing.

Strategic Choices:

The content of this report will contribute towards facilitating the electoral process by reviewing practices and implementing initiatives aimed at improving voting facilities and elector turnout. This report also connects with the delivery of corporate objectives as defined in Strategic Choices through enhancing and increasing the capacity of citizens to participate and exercise informed choice in all aspects of local decision-making.

Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land

Expenditure for the proposals contained in this report can be contained within existing budgets.

Other Implications: e.g. Section 17 Community Safety, Health and Safety etc.

Further investigations are required as regards to the use of mobile polling units in terms of security, health and safety and disabled access.

Recommendations & Reasons for recommended action:

The Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Select Pairing recommend that -

- (1) the proposals detailed at (i)-(xv) below be approved -
 - (i) Redruth Close be transferred from polling district EC to polling district EA;
 - (ii) Hillsborough NSU be reinstated as a polling station for voters within the eastern sector of polling district LE with Mutley Baptist Church being retained as a second polling station for the voters to the west of Mutley Plain;
 - (iii) no changes be made to polling district LC - Compton - but electors be offered a postal vote;
 - (iv) no change be made to polling district MD - Drake;
 - (v) no change be made to polling district HA/DD - Eggbuckland/Honicknowle - but electors be offered a postal vote;
 - (vi) Bearsdown Close, Bearsdown Road, Coltsfield Close, Shallowford Close and Shallowford Road (nos. 1-55 and 10-50 be transferred from HF (St. Edwards Primary School) to HE (Austin Farm Primary School);
 - (vii) Langdale Close and Gardens be merged with the remainder of polling district GD, with additional voters transferred from GE - all voting at Estover Community Centre;
 - (viii) the area around Kingston Drive/Feversham Close, currently polling district QA, be moved to polling district QB to use Glen Park Primary School;
 - (ix) no change be made to polling district TB - Plymstock Radford;
 - (x) in polling district CA - St. Budeaux - the alternative venues of The Barn at Kit Hill Crescent and the Independence Hall at Miers Close (or other suitable locations) be used to replace Barne Barton Primary School. Bull Point Primary School continue to be used for the voters within its immediate vicinity;
 - (xi) no change be made to polling district CC - St. Budeaux;
 - (xii) polling district NB - St. Peter and the Waterfront - be divided and use of Kiddicare Nursery at 19 North Street be investigated for use by the voters living at St. Judes. Minor transfer of voters from polling district NA to NB using Catherine Street Baptist Church as replacement for Virginia House;

- (xiii) no change be made to polling district NF - St. Peter and the Waterfront;
 - (xiv) Edna Terrace be transferred from polling district OC to polling district OD - Sutton and Mount Gould;
 - (xv) no change be made to polling district OG - Sutton and Mount Gould - but that electors be offered a postal vote;
- (2) use of the mobile unit at Williams Avenue be discontinued and Prince Rock Primary School used instead with composition of the polling district boundary, i.e. the transfer of voters from the adjacent area, being delegated to the Senior Electoral Assistant;
- (3) a standing Select Pairing be established, endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and City Council, in order to readily be available to consider matters on elections or electoral registration when decisions are required.

The reasons for recommended action are as follows:-

- (i) to provide accessible and convenient polling stations for all voters;
- (ii) to maximise postal voting and election turnout.

Alternative options considered and reasons for recommended action

None.

Background papers:

Reports of the Special Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Polling District Boundaries/Improvements in the Voting System - to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission of August and September, 2002

Report of the City Solicitor to Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 18th September, 2003 - "Elections Review 2003"

REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S SELECT PAIRING - ELECTIONS REVIEW 2003 - REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

1.0 Background

- 1.1 In accordance with Section 18 of the Representation of the People Act, 1983, the City Council must give effect to polling district boundary alterations following the Periodic Electoral Review. In 2002 a special Overview and Scrutiny Panel was set up to look specifically at Polling District Boundaries and a number of recommendations were made as a result, including that further work be undertaken on the elections process as a whole in order to improve the local voting system.
- 1.2 As a result of the Special Overview and Scrutiny Panel's report of 26th September 2002, the Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee was allocated "Elections Review 2003" within its 2003/04 work programme and appointed a Select Pairing to undertake this work.
- 1.3 The Community Well-being Select Pairing met on 18th September and on 8th October, 2003, as part of the ongoing Elections Review 2003 scrutiny process. At their meeting on 8th October they were advised that there was a need for the polling district boundaries element of the review to be considered by City Council on 17th November, 2003. This was because, if their recommendations were to be effective for the elections in 2004, revised boundaries would need to be incorporated into the Register of Electors due to be published on 1st December, 2003. Bearing this in mind, the Pairing dedicated the meeting to focussing their attention on this issue alone so that their findings could be presented in a report in accordance with the given timescales.

2.0 Committee Structure

Councillors

Councillor Stevens, in the Chair.
Councillor Fry.

Officers in Attendance

Nigel Spilsbury	-	Senior Electoral Assistant
Katey Johns	-	Democratic Support Officer

3.0 Objectives

- 3.1 The Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Select Pairing consider the appropriateness of polling district boundaries with a view to maximising voter turnout.
- 3.2 The Select Pairing's findings and recommendations, if any, are submitted to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 6th November and City Council on 17th November, 2003.

4.0 Detail

4.1 Following the review of ward boundaries, a thorough review of polling district boundaries was undertaken in 2002 and recommendations arising therefrom were implemented at the 2003 City Council Elections. The Electoral Registration Service subsequently carried out a review of procedures and related matters which included comments received from -

- political parties
- elected representatives
- candidates
- election agents
- voters
- officers

The outcome of this review was summarised in a report presented to the Pairing at their first meeting on 18th September, 2003, and it was apparent that in a number of areas voters had been discouraged from voting due to a change of polling district boundary or polling station location.

4.2 In considering the information presented to them, particularly in respect of assessing polling district boundaries and polling stations, the Pairing had to try to balance the convenience of the electors in voting with the availability of suitable premises. At the same time, they also had to bear in mind the changes made at the last review and the confusion which could arise should additional changes be implemented.

5.0 The Committee's Findings

5.1 Having considered in detail Appendix A of the report of the City Solicitor "Elections Review 2003", which set out comments/observations that had been received as a result of the initial review and consultation on Polling District Boundaries, the Pairing found that -

(i) **EC - Budshead**

It would be more appropriate for residents living at Redruth Close to vote at the Mobile station in Canterbury Drive. This would affect 26 voters in Redruth Close being transferred from polling district EC to EA;

(ii) **LE - Compton**

As a result of merging the areas to the east and west of Mutley Plain, the new polling district had been allocated Mutley Baptist Church as its polling station and use of the Hillsborough NSU Church Hall (former polling station for the area east of Mutley) had been discontinued;

(iii) **LC - Compton**

Voters in Donnington Drive and Beeston Walk had a long way to travel to the Compton Methodist Church Hall polling station (new Compton ward). Prior to 2003 this area had been included in the Efford ward and electors voted at the Mobile in Tees Close, off Deer Park Drive;

(iv) **MB - Drake**

Residents living in the north of this polling district had a fair distance to travel to Sherwell Church Hall, lower North Hill, when compared to Mutley Baptist Church Hall (now used for the Compton ward) which had previously been used;

(v) **HA/DD - Eggbuckland/Honicknowle**

Due to the change in ward boundaries, voters living within the vicinity of Chaucer Way now had to visit Manadon Vale Primary School to vote resulting in many citizens not bothering to take part in the 2003 elections at all. For these voters to use Chaucer Primary would mean having a split polling station which is something normally best avoided because of the confusion that could arise;

(vi) **HE/HF - Eggbuckland**

Voters living in Bearsdown Close, Bearsdown Road, Coltsfield Close, Shallowford Close and Shallowford Road (nos. 1-55 and 10-50) were situated closer to Austin Farm Primary School (HE) than the current facilities at St. Edwards Primary School (HF). This would mean splitting Shallowford Road between two polling districts which may cause an element of confusion;

(vii) **GC - Moor View**

The existing polling district was very small and support existed for merging the area under a general review of the adjacent districts;

(viii) **QA, QB, QC - Plympton Chaddlewood**

The polling stations were too close together, leading to inconvenience to a number of voters;

(ix) **TB - Plymstock Radford**

The polling district was too big and should be split if additional suitable locations exist;

(x) **CA - St. Budeaux**

The distance from Coldrenick Street to Bull Point Primary School was too great for many voters to walk. Also, the review undertaken in 2002 had failed to increase voter turnout;

(xi) **CC - St. Budeaux**

Criticism of the merger of the two polling districts following the last review;

(xii) **NB - St. Peter and the Waterfront***

Criticism of the merger of the two polling districts (Barbican and St. Judes) with electors voting at Virginia House;

(xiii) **NF - St. Peter and the Waterfront**

Criticism of merger of the two polling areas at Wyndham Street and Frederick Street with all electors now voting at Prynne House at Wyndham Square;

(xiv) **OC - Sutton and Mount Gould**

Edna Terrace would be better suited to polling district OD enabling electors to vote at Tothill Community Centre rather than Salisbury Road Baptist Church Hall. This would affect only 7 voters;

(xv) **OG - Sutton and Mount Gould**

The mobile unit at Clare Place (Cattedown) was merged with an adjacent polling district as a result of the 2002 review. 280 voters, including a number of elderly voters, were allocated the Methodist Church at Tresillian Street.

6.0 Written Material

The Committee received the following written material to assist with the consultation -

- (i) Report of the City Solicitor to Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 18th September, 2003 - "Elections Review 2003"

7.0 Recommendations

The Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Select Pairing recommend that -

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