

Report to:	COUNCIL
Relevant Officer:	Neil Jack (Returning Officer)
Date of meeting:	12 February 2020

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider the review of polling districts and polling places.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To endorse the polling districts and polling places as set out in the appendices to this report.

2.2 To note that alternative options to replace temporary (mobile) polling stations are currently being pursued and to agree that delegated authority is given to the Chief Executive to determine these following appropriate consultation.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 In compliance with Section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 (review of polling districts and places in Great Britain), the statutory responsibility for reviewing Parliamentary Polling Districts and Places in England and Wales rests with each relevant local authority for so much of any constituency as is situated in its area. The Authority must have undertaken and completed a review of all Parliamentary Polling Districts and Places in its area within 16 months, commencing 1 October 2018 (i.e. by 31 January 2020). To be effective for the Revised Register of Electors to be published on 1 December 2019.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 No alternative options were suggested or considered as part of this review process. Two successful elections had taken place in May 2019 and subsequently did not highlight any concerns that needed to be addressed as part of this review.

4.2 The snap Parliamentary election held on 12 December 2019 did highlight issues associated with the use of temporary (mobile) stations in terms of risk in relying on generated power. These are currently being reviewed to ascertain whether a permanent solution is possible. It is worth noting that the Council is empowered under Section 31 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 to allocate polling places to any polling district therefore all polling districts and polling places are under constant review.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is “Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience”

6.0 Background information

6.1 The Authority must have undertaken and completed a review of all Parliamentary Polling Districts and Places in its area within 16 months, commencing 1 October 2018 (i.e. by 31 January 2020). A review was completed as per the Returning Officer’s decision at the following link:

<http://democracy.blackpool.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1540>

6.2 Following this review a further review will need to take place within the period of 16 months commencing on 1 October every fifth year thereafter. It is worth noting that the Council is not prevented from carrying out a review of all or some of the polling districts and places in its area at other times and as such all polling places remain under constant review.

6.3 A Polling District is a geographical area created by a sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency for the purposes of a UK Parliamentary election. The Council is responsible for dividing its area into polling districts and for keeping these under review.

6.4 A Polling Place is a geographical area in which polling stations will be selected. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that polling stations are in close proximity to all electors in the polling district. It is possible to designate an entire polling district as the polling place and it is also possible to designate it more tightly (such as a particular building). The Council must designate a polling place for every polling district unless the size or other circumstances of the polling district are such that the location of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electorate. The designated polling place must be within the area of the polling district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside of the polling district.

6.5 A Polling Station is the room or area in which the voting takes place. This must be located within the polling place that has been designated for the particular polling district. In some cases, there is more than one polling station within a polling place, dependent upon how many people vote there. Unlike Polling Districts and Polling Places, polling stations are chosen by the relevant Returning Officer for the election.

6.6 In addition to the above, Local Authorities must comply with the following access requirements:

- (a) seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and
- (b) seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

In addition, the polling place must be an area in the district, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the district (for example, if no accessible polling place can be identified in the district).

6.7 The Council must give notice of holding a review, which requires publication in the Council's Office, in at least one conspicuous place within the Council's area, and on the Council's website. Notices were displayed in eight public libraries, the Council's Customer First Centre and on the Council's website during the consultation stage.

6.8 The published notice must include key information such as the timetable of the review, where documents can be inspected and how to make representations.

6.9 The Council is required to consult with the (Acting) Returning Officer for every parliamentary constituency that is wholly or partly within its area. The Acting Returning Officer from Wyre Borough Council was consulted during the consultation stage. No formal representations were submitted.

6.10 In respect to any representations from the (Acting) Returning Officer received, the Council would be required to publish the submitted representations within thirty calendar days of their receipt. No formal representations were submitted during the consultation stage.

6.11 In reviewing polling districts and polling places, the Council is required to actively seek representations from such persons as it thinks have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability. Such persons must be given the opportunity to make representations and to comment on the representations made by the Returning Officer. Details of the review were distributed to all the disability partnership network across Blackpool. No formal representations were submitted during the consultation stage.

6.12 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 Appendix 9(a) - Proposed Polling District and Polling Places 2019
Appendix 9 (b) - Street index

8.0 Legal considerations:

8.1 Section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 (review of polling districts and places in Great Britain) applies when conducting a review.

9.0 Human resources considerations:

9.1 None.

10.0 Equalities considerations:

10.1 None.

11.0 Financial considerations:

11.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the review although indirect costs such as the cost of hiring the polling stations may arise.

12.0 Risk management considerations:

12.1 Polling Station Inspectors conduct on the job assessments of the polling places as part of their duties. A risk assessment will be carried out on any proposed solutions to replace the temporary polling places.

13.0 Ethical considerations:

13.1 None.

14.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

14.1 Consultation on the proposed list of polling places as set out in the appendix has been undertaken with ward councillors, Members of Parliament and persons who have particular expertise in relation to access to premises and facilities for persons who have different forms of disability. Consultation will take place on a similar basis when reviewing the temporary (mobile) stations, as per the recommendation in this report.

15.0 Background papers:

15.1 None.