

Report to:

COUNCIL

Relevant Officer:

Neil Jack, Chief Executive / Returning Officer

Date of Decision/ Meeting:

Wednesday 30 November 2022

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 under the new ward boundaries that will come into force at the local elections in May 2023. The recommendations from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on the new wards are currently subject to parliamentary approval which is anticipated to be early 2023.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To approve the polling districts and polling places as set out in the appendices of this report subject to parliamentary approval of the warding arrangements.

2.2 To delegate authority to the Returning Officer to make further changes to polling places/polling stations that may be necessary before the elections on 4 May 2023.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 In preparation for the new ward boundaries coming into effect it has been necessary to undertake an interim review of the polling districts and polling places.

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 Where appropriate, schools have been replaced with an alternative polling place although this has not been possible in every case. It should be noted that for the purpose of taking the poll in England and Wales, the Returning Officer is entitled to use, free of charge, schools maintained or assisted by a local authority as well as those schools that receive grants made out of moneys provided by Parliament. This includes academies and free schools.

4.2 The Electoral Services Manager works with schools to find solutions to enable them to remain open while being used as polling stations. In addition, where an existing polling place is no longer available an alternative has been identified.

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 Local Government Boundary Commission for England has undertaken a review of the Council’s electoral arrangements and made recommendations for new warding patterns, to be used for the May 2023 Local Elections onwards. As a result of the recommendations, a review of polling districts and polling places must be undertaken to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place for May 2023 relating to polling district boundaries within wards and the polling stations that will serve these new polling districts. A link to the proposed new ward boundaries can be found here: [Blackpool | LGBCE Site](#)

6.2 The responsibility for designating polling districts is for the council to determine. In drawing up polling district boundaries the Council must ensure that all electors in the area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.

6.3 The Council must also designate a polling place for every polling district. This is usually within the boundary of the polling district unless there are special circumstances e.g. lack of suitable buildings.

6.4 A polling district is a geographically area created by a sub-area of an electoral area (such as a ward or constituency) that is divided into for the purposes of delivering an election. A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be located. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district. The polling station is the actual room or area where the voting takes place.

6.5 Public notice of the review was given on 20 September 2022 and information about the review was published on the Council’s website. All members and Members of Parliament (MPs) were informed of the review and invited to submit comments and representations. The Electoral Services Team also held an informal drop-in session prior to the last Council meeting in September. The Chief Executive in his role as Acting Returning Officer at Wyre Borough Council was also invited to submit comments in respect of polling stations within the Blackpool North and Cleveleys constituency as the polling places are also used at Parliamentary elections. The second stage consultation

closed on the 28 October 2022.

6.6 In reviewing the polling districts and polling places the Council is required to actively seek representation from such persons as it thinks to 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 proposals by the Returning Officer. Details of the review were distributed to disability agencies across Blackpool although there have been no representations or amendments.

6.7 The proposed changes to polling districts and polling places are outlined within the attached appendices.

6.8 It was initially proposed that the revised register would be published on 1 December 2022. Unfortunately due to a delay in Parliamentary business this is now not possible. It is anticipated that the revised register with new ward boundaries will now be published early 2023.

6.9 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 Appendix 5(a) – Proposed changes
Appendix 5(b) – Maps (identifying new ward boundaries, new polling districts and location of polling places)

8.0 Financial considerations:

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

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 Schedule A1 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 prescribes the statutory steps for an authority conducting a polling district review.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 Polling Station Inspectors conduct on the job assessments of the polling places as part of their duties. Risk assessments are carried out prior to elections to ensure up to date suitability of venue and where appropriate adaptations can be made.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 All polling stations are assessed in terms of accessibility in line with Electoral

Commission guidance.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 None

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 Consultation on the proposed list of polling places and polling districts (as set out in the appendices) has been undertaken with ward councillors, Members of Parliament, members of the public and persons who have particular expertise in relation to access to premises and facilities for persons who have different forms of disability.

14.0 Background papers:

- The Blackpool (Electoral Changes) Order 2022
- Local Government Boundary Commission for England Report: New electoral arrangements for Blackpool Council Final Recommendations - July 2022