

**REPORT FROM: HEAD OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**TO: COUNCIL**

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## **REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To approve the outcome of the recent review.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the review findings and proposals for changes set out in paragraph 12 of the report and the schedule of polling districts and polling places be approved and adopted.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- (1) To meet the requirements of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 and Elections Act 2022.
- (2) To improve disabled access.
- (3) To increase voter turnout.

### **ISSUE**

- (1) Under the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 the Council is required to carry out a formal review of its polling district, polling places and polling stations between 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 and 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025. The last review was in 2019.
- (2) A working group was appointed to undertake this review.

(3) We have decided to conduct the review now based on an assessment of several factors:-

- Business as usual 'work plan'.
- The impact of new UK Parliamentary Constituency boundaries.
- The delivery of the next UK Parliamentary General Election which must take place before 28 January 2025 and which could be called at relatively short notice following the repeal of the Fixed Term Parliament Act.
- The implementation of the significant legislative changes which form part of the next phase of the Elections Act 2022 provisions.

(4) Public notice of the holding of the review was given on the Council's website, to local disabled organisations and community groups, town and parish councils, Borough and County Councillors and the ARO for Burnley Parliamentary Constituency. Comments and representations were invited between 2<sup>nd</sup> October and 23<sup>rd</sup> October.

(5) A schedule of the current polling districts and polling places together with the Returning Officer's comments was published on the Council's website and made available at Number One Market Street. The Returning Officer's comments are based on their own observations/feedback; Polling Station Inspectors' checklists and Presiding Officers' Polling Station Questionnaires.

(6) The working group considered the background information and comments from the Returning Officer together with the representations received. These are set out in the schedule.

(7) The following significant housing developments may need to be considered.

Polling District	Development	Number of dwellings
BC	St Thomas's Church, Wheatley Lane Road, Barrowford	79
DB	Riverside Mill, Nelson	140
GA	Meadow Way, Barnoldswick	30
GE	Brook Shed, Earby	50
GE	Spring Mill, Earby	53
IC	Further Clough Head, Nelson	129

(8) **A polling district** is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency for the purpose of a UK Parliamentary election.

In England, each parish is to be a separate polling district. This means that a parish or community must not be in a polling district which has a part of either a different parish or community within it, or an un-parished part of the local authority area within it, unless special circumstances apply.

(9) **A polling place** is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the ARO. 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.

(10) The working group took into account the following guidelines which reflect electoral law and widely accepted best practice:-

- The Council must seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.

- The Council must seek to ensure that so far is reasonable and practicable every polling place is accessible to electors who are disabled.
- Ideally the polling place should be in its own polling district.
- No polling place should be shared by two wards.
- Where possible natural boundaries should be used eg railways, roads and waterways.
- All properties on a minor road or estate should be in the same polling district.

**(11)** There are a number of factors that are to be considered when reviewing existing polling places or when assessing new polling places, including:-

- Can it accommodate more than one polling station if required?
- If multiple polling stations are required, is the polling place capable of accommodating all voters and staff required to provide a good service to voters?
- Is the size sufficient to provide necessary private areas or privacy screens for photographic identification checks?
- Is the size big enough to ensure the flow of voters and reduce the risk of congestion and queues even where there is a high turnout?

**(12)** The working group proposed that the existing polling places should be retained except for the following:-

Polling District	Existing Polling Station	Proposed Polling Station
EB	Brierfield Community Centre, Colne Road, Brierfield, BB9 5HW	Friends Meeting House, Walverden Road, Nelson, BB9 0PJ

The change to Friends Meeting House is intended to improve access for elderly and physically disabled voters.

## IMPLICATIONS

**Policy:** The Council is committed to equality in the provision of services and the Review has furthered this.

**Financial:** Any costs from changes to polling stations will be met from existing budgets.

**Legal:** None arising from this report.

**Risk Management:** None arising from this report.

**Health and Safety:** The Review has helped ensure the provision of polling places which are safe for voters and the staff working in them.

**Sustainability:** None

**Community Safety:** None

**Equality and Diversity:** The Council is committed to equality in the provision of services and the Review has furthered this.

## **APPENDICES**

Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Electoral Commission Guidance on reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations