

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

meeting date: TUESDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2023
 title: REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY
 submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To provide members with an update on the Boundary Commission's review of the parliamentary constituency, and how this will impact elections in the Ribble Valley.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions - }
 - Community Objectives - }
 - Corporate Priorities - }
 - Other Considerations - }
- The Council aims to be a well managed Council. The electoral process is a vital part of the Council's role within the community it serves.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Boundary Commission for England ("BCE") is an independent and impartial advisory non-departmental public body, established to keep under review the Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England. The parameters within which the BCE must conduct its reviews are set out in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986.

2.2 The BCE published the 2023 Review of Parliamentary boundaries in England in June this year. A copy of the report is [attached](#). The background to various stages to the reviews and the reasons for the change of the BCE recommendations for Ribble Valley are set out paragraphs 715, 727, 740, 750, 759 and [760](#). With regard to the final proposals, they note:

"There continued to be opposition to our proposed Ribble Valley, and Pendle and Clitheroe constituencies, although there was some support, particularly from the proposed Pendle and Clitheroe constituency. We acknowledge that the inclusion of the town of Clitheroe and the Whalley area in Pendle and Clitheroe, instead of a Ribble Valley constituency, is not popular with some residents and noted the alternative suggestions that had been made. However, we consider that there had to be change in this area, and, although both constituencies are significantly reconfigured, we judge that our revised Ribble Valley, and Pendle and Clitheroe constituencies both better meet the statutory factors for the whole of Lancashire than did our initial proposals or the alternatives that have been suggested. We also consider the inclusion of both the Walton-le-Dale East and Walton-le-Dale West wards, and also both Bamber Bridge East and West wards in the Ribble Valley constituency, along with the Coupe Green & Gregson Lane ward, to be a positive outcome for these wards."

2.3 Maps showing the extent of the proposed new Parliamentary Constituencies of Ribble Valley and Clitheroe and Pendle are enclosed at Appendix 1. The next step is that the Government will make orders bringing the BCE recommendations into effect. It is expected that this will be in effect in November 2023. UK parliamentary elections held after the order comes into force will be run on these new boundaries. Any by-

elections run before the next UK parliamentary elections will be on existing boundaries.

2.4 Separate to this, but intrinsically linked with the work required to bring in this change is the Council's duty to carry out a Review of its Polling Districts and Polling Places of Parliamentary constituencies. The Council must complete its next review between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025. This is complicated by the change to the constituency boundaries and the fact that a general election must be held by 28 January 2025.

2.3 The Electoral Commission publishes a guidance document 'Reviews of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations' ('Guidance') which the Council will refer to generally when completing reviews. It has however been updated to deal with the complications of the boundary reviews and general election.

3 ISSUES

3.1 The Council must therefore decide when to complete its Review within the 16-month period ending on 31 January 2025. It must decide this in the context of the following competing issues:

- The overarching business as usual work plan for elections (including the annual canvas).
- The impact of the new Parliamentary constituency boundaries to come into effect at the next parliamentary election.
- The delivery of the next parliamentary election which must take place by 28 January 2025, and which could be called at relatively short notice and conducted on the new boundaries.
- The implementation of the significant legislative changes under the next phase of the Election Act 2022 provisions.

3.2 In light of the above, the Electoral Commission's advice is to begin the Review as soon as possible in the period. The Council intends to do so and will begin its Review imminently. The Review will need to include both the existing and proposed parliamentary boundaries (as a by-election prior to the next general election would be on existing boundaries). The results of this Review will be brought to this committee and recommended to Council for approval.

3.3 The Council's elections team will also commence work with the respective teams in at Pendle, South Ribble and Preston Council's to ensure that arrangements are in place prior to the next general election. Details of those arrangements will also be brought to committee in due course.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – N/A.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The Council has a statutory duty to carry out the review of its Polling Districts and Polling Places.
- Political – N/A.
- Reputation – N/A.

5 **CONCLUSION**

5.1 Committee is asked to note the content of this report.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

1 None.

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