

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

meeting date: TUESDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2024
 title: REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES
 submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
 principal author: MAIR HILL – HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To consider the recommendations arising from the Council's Polling District and Polling Place Review 2024 and make recommendations to Full Council.

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 Section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended) ("Act") sets out the requirements for the review of polling districts and polling places for parliamentary elections.

2.3 The following definitions are given in the Act:

- A Polling District is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK parliamentary constituency for the purposes of a UK parliamentary election.
- A Polling Place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the ((Acting)) Returning Officer.
- A Polling Station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place.

2.4 Whilst the review is confined to Polling Districts and Polling Places for Parliamentary Constituencies, the Electoral Commission advises that as polling districts and polling places for other elections are based on UK parliamentary polling arrangements, the requirements of any other elections that are held within the local authority area should be taken into consideration as part of the review. There is a requirement to consult the ((Acting)) Returning Officer (Parliamentary Elections). The ((Acting)) Returning Officer for Local Government Elections in the Ribble Valley Borough Council area is the Council's Chief Executive. There is also a requirement to consult the (Acting) Returning Officer for each constituency which forms wholly or part of the area. Whilst currently, Ribble Valley Borough and the parliamentary constituency are contiguous, at the next general election the new Pendle and Clitheroe Constituency will fall partly within the Ribble Valley area. The (Acting) Returning Officer for that Constituency has been consulted therefore as part of this review.

- 2.5 The Electoral Commission has published a guidance document 'Reviews of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations' ('Guidance') which the Council has referred to in conducting its review.
- 2.6 The Council's Electoral and Licensing Officer has completed a review of each polling place and station as recommended in the Guidance, and so has thoroughly assessed their accessibility, and suitability.

Consultation

- 2.9 The review was undertaken in accordance with the relevant legislation and Guidance and commenced on 5 January 2024 with the publication of the Notice of Review and information provided on the Council's website.
- 2.10 The Consultation period ran from 5 January 2024 until 2 February 2024. Copies of the Notice and information on where documents could be found were sent to all Councillors, County Councillors, Parish Councils, local representatives of each political party, the (Acting) Returning Officer for the future Pendle and Clitheroe Constituency and groups with expertise in accessibility issues. A press release was also issued, social media posts were used to publicise the review and copies of the Notice and information of the existing polling districts and polling places was made available in Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley Libraries.
- 2.11 The Consultation allowed electors of the Ribble Valley and other interested parties to make representations in relation to the size and boundaries of the polling districts, and/or the location and suitability of polling places.
- 2.12 The ((Acting)) Returning Officer's comments were published; sent to all persons listed in paragraph 2.10 above and placed in the Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley libraries.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 Six responses were received during the consultation periods which are detailed below and in **Appendix 1**. These responses and the comments of the (Acting) Returning Officer have been considered in full. The recommendations in respect of each of these are as follows:

Polling District - DF Langho

- 3.2 Having considered the consultation response relating to the ease of access to Mytton Fold on foot it is recommended that the polling place revert to its previous location of St Mary's RC Church Hall, York Lane, Langho Blackburn BB6 8DW. This polling location is accessible, and the location is more central for those attending to vote on foot.

Polling District - CO Chatburn

- 3.3 Having considered the (Acting) Returning Officer's representations and those received in the consultation, it is proposed that the polling place revert to its previous location of Chatburn Methodist Church Hall, 2 Pendle Avenue, Chatburn, Clitheroe BB7 4AX.

Polling District – CV3 Whalley Nethertown

- 3.4 Having considered the (Acting) Returning Officer's representation, that of the (Acting) Returning Officer for the future constituency of Pendle and Clitheroe and those received in the consultation, it is proposed that Whalley Nethertown have a separate

polling place. Ideally, this would be within the ward. However, consider thorough considered the geography of the ward and in view of the requirements needed for a polling place to be accessible, it has been determined that there is no suitable place within the ward. It is proposed therefore that the separate polling place be at Whalley Library, 1 Abbots Croft, Whalley, Clitheroe BB7 9RR. This location meets all the requirements for a polling place and is located nearer to the Nethertown Ward boundary than the previous polling place or other possible locations.

3.5 The proposal for each polling district and place are set out in the schedule appended to this report as **Appendix 2**, Committee is asked to approve these and recommend their adoption to Full Council.

3.12 It is also proposed that the Officer Scheme of Delegation within the Constitution be amended so that the following be delegated to the Chief Executive:

“To keep polling districts and polling places under review and amend any such arrangements (following consultation with the Local Ward Member(s) where there is an operational need, prior to the next compulsory District Review.”

This delegation would not negate the need for periodic reviews between compulsory reviews but would allow the Chief Executive to make change at short notice if there was an operational need. Committee is asked to recommend this addition to the delegation scheme for adoption by to Full Council.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

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

- Resources – N/A.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – As set out in the body of the report the Council has a duty to carry out the review.
- Political – N/A.
- Reputation – N/A.

5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Approve the proposals for polling districts and polling places in the Ribble Valley Parliamentary constituency as set out at Appendix 2 and recommend their adoption to Ful Council.

5.2 Recommend to Full Council for amendment of the Officer delegation scheme as set out in paragraph 3.12.

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1 Review Documents to be viewed on the Council’s website.

For further information please ask for Mair Hill, extension 4414