

COUNCIL

Polling District and Polling Place Review 2014

Report of Carolyn Wilkins, Returning Officer

17 December 2014

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1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present for consideration proposals on polling arrangements for Oldham as a result of a review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires the Council to undertake regular reviews of all polling districts and polling places in its area. The Act provides that the next review must be held between 1 October 2013 and 31 January 2015. Subsequent reviews must be every five years within a sixteen month period beginning with 1 October 2018.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 In designating polling places, the Council must:
- a) Seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;

- b) Seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.
- 2.5 The polling station is the actual area where the voting takes place ie the room or area where electors cast their vote. The Returning Officer is responsible for designating the polling station which must be within the polling place agreed by the Council.
- 2.6 Public notice of the review was given on 1 September and information about the review was published on the Council's website. All members, MPs and MEPs, presiding officers, owners of premises used as polling stations and other stakeholders were also informed of the review and invited to submit comments and representations. Details were also sent to Access for All. Details on the current arrangements were also posted on the Council's website.
- 2.7 Having received comments and representations on the current polling arrangements, the Returning Officer published proposals for polling districts and polling places for future elections and sought comments on them.
- 2.8 A number of principles were followed in determining the identification of suitable buildings for use as polling places. These included:
- Location and accessibility to electors within the polling district
 - Size – can it accommodate more than one polling station if required
 - Accessibility – is the building accessible to all those entitled to vote at the polling station
 - Availability – is the building readily available in the event of an unscheduled election.
 - Facilities available in the venue including parking, heating, lighting, toilet facilities and security
 - Public buildings -the election rules allow the Returning Officer the free use of buildings maintained by the council including schools maintained by the authority and free schools. These will be identified in the first instance.
 - Private buildings – in the absence of suitable public owned buildings, churches, clubs and other private sector buildings conveniently located and accessible to electors are considered for designation as the polling place
 - Mobiles – in the absence of any suitable public or private building in or adjacent to the polling district a mobile will be considered for designation

as a polling place. Given the difficulties of heating, lighting, security, comfort of staff and electors, the negative reaction from residents living close to the site of a mobile and the significantly higher cost of locating a mobile polling station, these are considered only as a last resort.

- The potential impact on election turnout of moving the polling station to a different location.

2.9 Current practice: Polling Places

The Returning Officer adopts a practice where, following each election, any issues in respect of the suitability of a polling place or a polling station is immediately addressed to ascertain whether there is a need to seek alternative accommodation. Polling places are therefore regularly reviewed and updated which reduces the number of issues that need to be addressed in the statutory polling place reviews.

In addition, the disabled access in respect of any polling place is assessed at each election by the completion of an access checklist by each Polling Station Inspector with any necessary actions being taken. The last full election took place on 22nd May 2014. This also reduces the number of issues that need to be addressed in the statutory polling place reviews.

2.10 Proposals

Comments have been received from a number of ward councillors on the draft proposals.

All of the comments received on the draft proposals have been considered by the Returning Officer and the recommendations for each ward is attached at Appendix A. The proposals have also been considered by Group Leaders.

The attached Appendix A sets out proposed changes to polling districts and polling places incorporating the recommendations in respect of Chadderton North, Failsworth West, Hollinwood, Royton South, St James and Waterhead. Appendix B contains the Ward maps

3 . RETURNING OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS;-

CHADDERTON NORTH – POLLING DISTRICTS CN1 and CN6

CN1 - An alternative venue for polling district CN1 be sourced if possible.

CN6 - North Chadderton High School to be used instead of St Matthews Church.

FAILSWORTH WEST – POLLING DISTRICTS FW1 and FW3

To move Park Avenue and Broadway into FW3 from FW1 easing the access for voters.

HOLLINWOOD – POLLING DISTRICTS HO3, HO2 and HO8

To move numbers 77 to 119 Limeside Road, 461/465 Roman Road, 1 to 12 Fox Park Road and all Tiber Avenue to HO2.

To split HO3 and create another polling district HO8 north from Oak Bank Road with the polling station situated at Cloughgate House. This would provide accessible voting places which are conveniently located for the electors many of whom are elderly.

ROYTON SOUTH – POLLING DISTRICT RS2

RS2 - Proposal to use the Scout Hut on Old Edge Lane instead of St Annes C E School to ease the car parking situation for electors.

ST JAMES – POLLING DISTRICT SJ2, SJ3, SJ4,SJ5 and SJ7

Proposal to combine SJ3 and SJ7 which will become SJ3, with Stoneleigh Park Community Cabin being utilised as the polling station.

Properties in Thackeray Road, 35 to 55 Whetstone Hill Lane, Ivanhoe St., Tennyson Street, 62 to 102 Vulcan Street and 45 to 111 Waverley Street to be moved from SJ2 to SJ4 and use Mayfield Primary as a polling station for easier access for the voter.

To use Fresh Church as a polling station instead of St. James' Children Centre.

WATERHEAD – POLLING DISTRICTS WA5, WA6, WA7 and WA8

To move Beresford Crescent, Beresford Street, Buller Street, Buttermere Road, Derwent Walk and Rydal Walk from WA6 to WA5 this will equalise polling district numbers and will ease voter access to the nearest polling station.

To move numbers 4 to 20 Clarksfield Road, Easterdale and Westerdale from WA8 to WA7 for ease of voter access.

WERNETH – POLLING DISTRICT WE5

For a new community centre at Primrose Bank to be used as the polling station for WE5 instead of Magnolia Gardens.

The other existing polling places have been retained as they provide accessible voting places which are conveniently located for voters

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is requested to consider the proposals made to polling districts and polling places and to approve the polling district review incorporating any changes considered appropriate.

The Council is also recommended to authorise the Chief Executive as Returning Officer in consultation with the Group Leaders to identify an alternative polling station, if necessary, for any other polling stations unavailable on the date of the election.

Financial Implications

There will be an additional cost in Hollinwood of approx £1,000 for the extra polling station, staff etc. and some cost savings in St James (approx £800) due to the reduction in the number of polling stations, staff etc.

Legal Services Comments

None

IT Implications

None

Property Implications

None

Procurement Implications

None

Key Decision

No

Forward Plan Reference

N/A

Background Papers

Records held in Elections Office, Room 222 , Civic Centre, West Street, Oldham, OL1 1UL

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Appendices

Appendix A – Proposals for Changes to Polling Places and Districts

Appendix B – Ward Maps (due to the size of the plans, the maps will be available in group rooms)