

Report to COUNCIL

Title: Polling District, Polling Places and stations Review

Report of the Chief Executive/(Acting) Returning Officer

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Date: 14 December 2022

1 Background

1.1 In November 2021 the independent Local Government Boundary Commission for England published its final recommendations report for new electoral arrangements for Oldham Council.

Electoral reviews are carried out to see whether the boundaries of wards within a local authority need to be altered to ensure effective local government and electoral equality. Electoral equality is achieved when all councillors represent roughly the same number of electors.

Oldham Council had not previously been reviewed since 2003 and the Commission decided that it should review Oldham in advance of the elections in 2023.

The Commission has decided that Oldham should have 60 councillors representing 20 three-councillor wards across the borough. The boundaries of 17 wards have changed, while three wards will stay the same. This will be used for the May 2023 elections and onwards.

Based on the final recommendations Oldham Council have undertaken a review of polling districts and polling places in the area. The review takes place under the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1983

Glossary of Terms

A polling district is defined as a geographical area created by the sub-division of a constituency or ward into smaller parts.

A polling place is a designated area (eg: a designated building) for a polling district into which polling stations are located.

A polling station is the room or area within a polling place where voting is conducted.

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 polling place reviews.

Guidelines

In undertaking the review, the authority ensured that: -

- All electors have reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
- In so far as is reasonable and practicable, that polling places are accessible to those who are disabled
- The accessibility needs of disabled persons had been considered.

Public notice of the review was given on **28 July** and information about the review was published on the Council's website. All members were also informed of the review and invited to submit comments and representations. Details on the current arrangements were also posted on the Council's website.

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 during a second consultation period that began on **1 September**.

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.

The outcome of the review

The attached appendix contains details of the outcome of the review and relates to each of the authority's 20 wards. It includes: -

- the polling district
- the polling places and stations
- whether any change was made

The proposals for change are included in Appendix A . The representations received during the process are included in Appendix B

The main changes are as follows: -

Chadderton Central

As part of the Boundary Review Chadderton Central has lost district CC1 to Chadderton North and CC3 to Chadderton South. The proposal is for the current CC1 to be renamed CN3 and CC3 to be renamed CS6, and the polling stations kept as they are currently. As part of the Boundary Review Chadderton Central gained districts CN4, CN5 and CN3. The proposal is for these districts to be renamed CC1, CC2 and CC3 and the polling stations kept the same. The proposal is for the current CC2 to be renamed CC4 to allow for these changes and the polling station kept the same. CC5 to remain unchanged and the current CC4 to be renamed CC6 and the polling station remain unchanged.

Chadderton North

As part of the Boundary Review Chadderton North has lost districts CN3, CN4 and CN5 to Chadderton Central. The proposal is for these districts to be renamed CC1, CC2 and CC3 and the polling stations kept the same. As part of the Boundary Review Chadderton North has gained district CC1. The proposal is for this to be renamed CN3 and the polling station to be kept the same. CN1 and CN2 remain unchanged, and we propose for CN6 to be renamed CN4 to allow for the districts lost to Chadderton Central and the polling station to remain unchanged.

Chadderton South

As part of the Boundary Review Chadderton South has gained CC3 from Chadderton Central. The proposal is for this to be renamed CS6 and the polling station kept the same. The current 5 polling districts in Chadderton South remain unchanged except a small section of district HO1 being absorbed by CS5.

Coldhurst

As part of the Boundary Review Coldhurst has absorbed part of district SM1. The proposal is for this district to be split and absorbed by CO1 (to vote at Barker Street Tenants Hall) and CO7 (to vote at Trinity House). We propose to split CO4 between CO3 (to vote at OBA Millennium Centre) and the current CO6 (to vote at Coldhurst Lifelong Learning Centre). The proposal is then to rename CO6, CO7 and CO8 to CO5, CO6 and CO7, and keep the polling stations unchanged.

Medlock Vale

As part of the Boundary Review Medlock Vale lost part of district MV3 to Hollinwood. Due to this change the proposal is to merge the remainder MV3 with MV4. The proposal is the rename the rest of the districts in this ward to allow for this change.

Alexandra

The proposal is to use Glodwick Cricket Club for district AL2 and merge AL5 with AL6 as they have a combined electorate of under 1,000.

Crompton

As part of the Boundary Review Crompton lost part of district CR2 to Royton North. The proposal is to split the remainder of CR2 between CR1 and CR3 and rename the districts accordingly. As a result, CR4 is dissolved.

St Marys

The proposal is to combine the districts SM2 and SM5 so that all electors from both districts vote at Pakistani Community Centre as the electorate for both is under 2,000 and rename the districts to allow for this merge.

The proposals mean that we will reduce the number of polling stations from 122 to 119.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Council is requested to consider and if considered appropriate approve the new polling districts, polling places and polling stations in the attached appendix A

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The costs of elections will be managed within budgetary provision.

4. Legal Services Comments

- 4.1 Included within the body of the report

5. Human Resources Comments

- 5.1 N/A

6. Risk Assessments

6.1 N/A

7. IT Implications

7.1 N/A

8. Property Implications

8.1 None

9. Procurement Implications

9.1 N/A

10. Environmental and Health & Safety Implications

10.1 N/A

11. Equality, community cohesion and crime implications

11.1 N/A

12. Equality Impact Assessment Completed?

12.1 N/A

13. Key Decision

13.1 No

14. Key Decision Reference

14.1 N/A

15. Background Papers

15.1 The following is a list of background papers on which the report is based in accordance with the requirements of section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972 Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations.
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16 Appendices

16.1 Appendix A – **Proposals for changes to Polling Districts and Polling Places 2022**
Appendix B – **Representations Submitted – Polling District Review 2022**