

**Report to COUNCIL**

## **Polling District and Polling Places Review**

**Report of the Chief Executive / (Acting) Returning Officer ,  
Director of Legal and Head of Elections and Land Charges**

**Officer Contact:** Jenna Madeley – Head of Elections and Land  
Charges

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**22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024**

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### **Reason for Decision**

To consider proposals and recommendations for polling districts and polling places in the area arising from a review.

### **Recommendations**

1. To recommend to the Council the adoption of parliamentary polling districts and parliamentary polling places as set out in the scheme contained in Appendix 1 and in the maps found in Appendix 2.
2. To recommend to the Council that the scheme contained in Appendix 1 be adopted in relation to both Parliamentary and Local Government Elections held in the borough.
3. To recommend that the Council requests that the Electoral Registration Officer makes the necessary amendments to polling districts for the 1 February 2024 electoral register.
4. To recommend to the Council that authority to be delegated to the Chief Executive to make, where necessary, alterations to the designation of any polling place where a polling place becomes unavailable prior to the next full review in consultation with ward councillors and group leaders.

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## 1. Issues for consideration

### Introduction

The Boundary Commission for England have now concluded the 2023 Review of Parliamentary constituencies in England and submitted a final report and recommendations. The legislative Order became effective on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023 meaning the new constituencies will be used for the next Parliamentary election. Based on this, there have been some changes to our Parliamentary boundaries and as such the Council have undertaken a polling districts and places review.

As required by the Electoral Administration and Registration Act 2013, compulsory reviews of parliamentary polling districts and polling places must take place every 5 years. The Council undertook its last compulsory review in 2019.

In an earlier Local Government review, it was decided that Oldham should have 60 councillors representing 20 three-councillor wards across the borough. In the Parliamentary review the Failsworth East and Failsworth West wards are now part of the Manchester Central constituency. It should be noted that the Oldham West & Royton constituency has been renamed Oldham West, Chadderton and Royton. The other constituency, Oldham East and Saddleworth, remains unchanged.

It should be noted that the parliamentary constituency boundaries are based on groupings of the wards in place prior to Oldham's Electoral Review. The new ward boundaries which came into effect in 2023 therefore no longer exactly correlate with the parliamentary constituency boundaries. To ensure that both parliamentary and local elections (standalone or combined) can be delivered using the same scheme, there are a small number of polling districts which have been created. These can be found highlighted in Appendix 1.

### 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 (e.g., 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.

### The Designation of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations.

Under the Representation of the People Act 1983 it is the Councils duty to divide constituencies into polling districts and to designate polling places for those districts and the power to divide wards into polling districts at local government elections. The Electoral Commission advises that polling districts for UK parliamentary and local government elections should always be the same. It therefore follows that any review of parliamentary polling arrangements should be conducted simultaneously with local government arrangements and this review has been conducted on that basis.

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The allocation of polling stations is the responsibility of the Returning Officer for the election concerned. However, in practice the location of likely polling stations is a key consideration when identifying polling places and the boundaries of polling districts, particularly in those areas where there are limited suitable premises.

On occasion, it may be necessary to change the designation of a polling place outside the statutory review process. This usually occurs as a result of premises being closed or unexpectedly becoming unavailable, often at short notice. Authority is delegated to the Chief Executive to make, where necessary, alterations to the designation of any polling place in such circumstances.

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.

### **Aim of the Review**

In conducting a statutory review, the Council must, when designating polling districts, seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.

In designating polling places, the Council has an obligation that it will:

- a) Seek to ensure that all 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 it is responsible for are accessible to all electors who are disabled.
- c) Have regard to the accessibility for disabled persons to potential polling stations in the place.
- d) Other than in special circumstances, locate the polling place in the polling district it serves.
- e) Ensure the polling place is small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the polling district how they will be able to reach the polling station.

The focus of the review was to identify wherever possible, polling places/ stations (including temporary stations) which met set criteria relating to the location, facilities, accessibility, health and safety and space.

Public notice of the review was given on 1 December 2023 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 and the proposed changes of the (Acting) Returning Officer were also published. The final proposals are included at Appendix 1.

In undertaking the review, the authority ensured that: -

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- 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.

The ten Greater Manchester Local Authorities work with the Disabled People's Panel on elections to identify and implement measures to improve the accessibility of polling stations for disabled voters and to raise awareness about the different options for voting and the assistance available and this has been taken into consideration.

Several 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.
- Mobile units – in the absence of any suitable public or private building in or adjacent to the polling district a mobile unit 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.

## **Polling Place/ Station Visits**

Election Officers have undertaken visits to polling stations since May 2023. The purpose of these visits was to assess the suitability of existing arrangements and identify alternatives where required, as well as taking into consideration the implications of planned electorate growth as a result of residential development. As regards accessibility issues, election officers review polling places regularly and seek feedback from Presiding Officers and Polling Station Inspectors after each election. This work then assisted in developing the (Acting) Returning Officer's representations.

## **Responses to the Consultation**

### **CN2 – St Herberts Parish Centre**

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**Comment:** Use a mobile unit at Toby Carvery Car Park for this district to ease electors at the top of the district.

**Response:** The recommendation is to continue using St Herbert's Parish Centre. It is considered that it will be confusing for electors at the bottom end of the district to walk past St Herbert's, as a polling station (for CN1), to access a mobile unit at the top of the district. This coupled with the costs and complexities faced with mobile units has meant St Herbert's is the most viable option for this district.

**Recommendation:** No change

## The Proposals

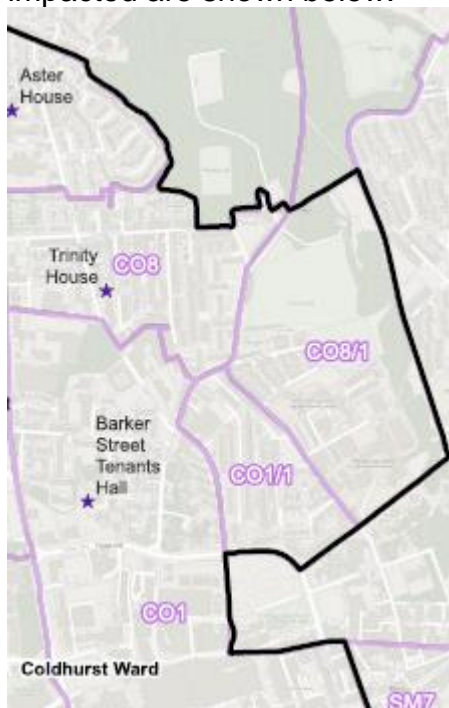
The proposals for consideration are:

### Chadderton North

Due to the impending closure of Mills Hill Community Hall the proposal is to use Mills Hill Primary School, Baytree Avenue, Chadderton, Oldham, OL9 0NH as a replacement polling place for the district CN3 covering stations 10 & 11.

### Coldhurst

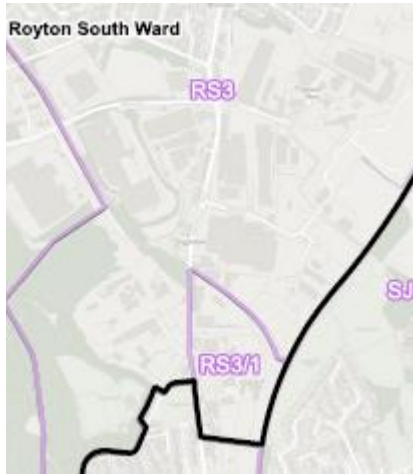
Due to the local boundary of districts CO1 and CO8 covering two Parliamentary areas in part, the proposal is to create 2 new districts: CO1/1 and CO8/1. The areas impacted are shown below:



The purpose of these districts is to allow for the areas to be voting in the correct Parliamentary constituency at the next Parliamentary Election.

### Royton South

Due to the local boundary of district RS3 covering two Parliamentary areas in part, the proposal is to create a new district: RS3/1. The area impacted is shown below:



The purpose of this district is to allow for the area to be voting in the correct Parliamentary constituency at the next Parliamentary Election.

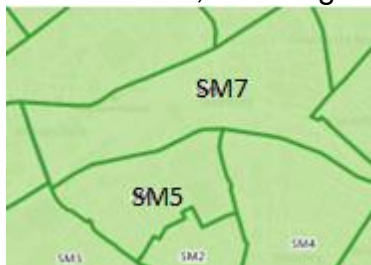
### **Hollinwood**

For the district HO5 (station 32) the proposal is to continue using a mobile unit on the school grounds, rather than a school building on a permanent basis. The address of the polling station will not change.

For the district HO3 (station 30), due to the closure of Avenues and Hollins Residents and Tenants Association, the proposal is to continue using a mobile unit on the premise car park, rather than the building itself. The address of the polling station will not change.

### **St Marys**

The proposal is to split SM5 into 2 districts, as shown on the map and create new district SM7, reverting to previous arrangements due to feedback at the last election. SM5 will retain Bethel Church (station 94) as a polling station and SM7 will take on Revive Free Methodist Church, Mount Pleasant, Terrace Street, Oldham, OI4 1JW (formerly known as Mount Pleasant Mission) as a polling station (to be numbered 96, meaning the overall polling station total will increase to 121).

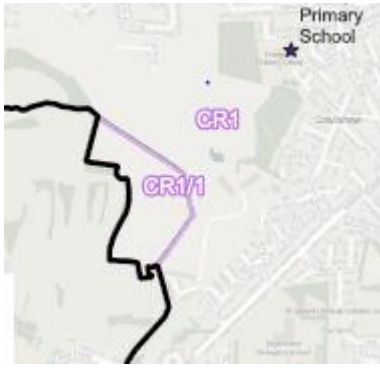


### **Alexandra**

For the district AL3 (station 61), due to the closure of The Children's Society, the proposal is to use Oldham Golf Club, Lees New Road, Oldham, OL4 5PN.

### **Crompton**

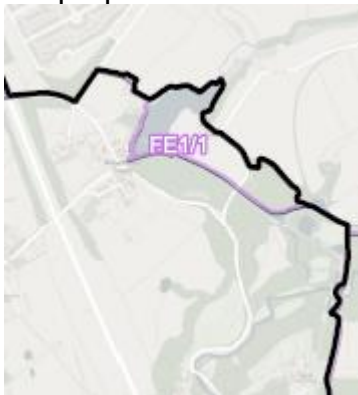
Due to the local boundary of district CR1 covering two Parliamentary areas in part, the proposal is to create a new district: CR1/1. The area impacted is shown below:



The purpose of this district is to allow for the area to be voting in the correct Parliamentary constituency at the next Parliamentary Election.

### **Failsworth East**

Due to the local boundary of district FE1 covering two Parliamentary areas in part, the proposal is to create a new district: FE1/1. The area impacted is shown below:



The purpose of this district is to allow for the area to be voting in the correct Parliamentary constituency at the next Parliamentary Election.

The polling districts and polling places not listed above have no changes and are proposed to remain the same, as per Appendix 1 (list of polling districts and polling places) and Appendix 2 (maps of wards).

## **2 Options/Alternatives**

The Council has a requirement to review polling districts and polling places for its area.

## **3 Consultation**

The proposals have been published on the Council's website and circulated to relevant stakeholders including members

## **4 Financial Implications**

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There is a cost associated with creating an additional polling station which will come from the Elections budget ( Chris Kelsall )

5 **Legal Services Comments**

The legal issues are contained in the report.

6 **Co-operative Implications**

n/a

7 **Human Resources Comments**

n/a

8 **Risk Assessments**

n/a

9 **IT Implications**

n/a

10 **Property Implications**

n/a

11 **Procurement Implications**

n/a

12 **Environmental and Health & Safety Implications**

n/a

13 **Community cohesion including crime and disorder implications in accordance with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

n/a

14 **Equality Impact ( including implications for Children and Young People )**

Officers have taken appropriate steps to ensure polling places and stations are accessible to all people who use the facilities.

15 **Key Decision**

No

16 **Key Decision Reference**

n/a



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17     **Background Papers**

The following is a list of background papers on which this report is based in accordance with the requirements of Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972. It does not include documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information as defined by the Act :

Name of File : Elections file  
Officer Name : Jenna Madeley  
Ext 4712

18     **Appendices**

Appendix 1- Oldham Council – Scheme for polling districts and polling places  
Appendix 2 – Maps of proposed polling districts and places