

Subject: Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Access Arrangements

Status: For Publication

Report to: Full Council

Date: 7th November 2007

Report of: Chief Executive as Returning Officer

Portfolio Holder:

Key Decision: Yes – Council and Returning Officer function

Forward Plan General Exception Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval of the proposals following the review of Polling Districts and Polling Places in line with the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities and associated corporate objective.

- Delivering Quality Services to Customers (Customers, Improvement)
- Well Managed Council (Improvement, Community Network)

Reviewing the voting arrangements for Parliamentary and Local Elections will benefit voters using the facilities and aid the democratic process in encouraging electors to vote.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

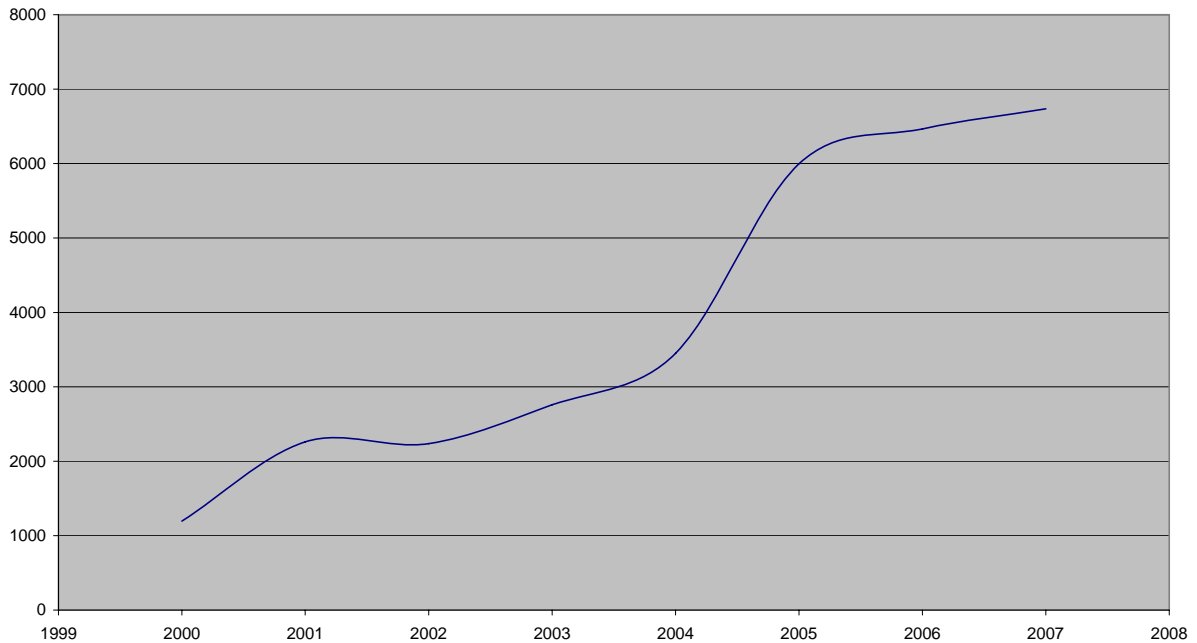
The review is a statutory requirement and the Council will be in breach if a review is not undertaken.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

Legislative Framework

- 4.1 Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council has a duty to divide the borough into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each district. It also has to keep the polling places and polling districts under review.
- 4.2 Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a duty on Councils to undertake a review of Polling Places, Polling Districts and Access arrangements, which must be completed by 31st December 2007 and thereafter every four years. The purpose of a review is to ensure that all electors in a constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- 4.3 A polling district is a section of a Ward and a polling place must be allocated for each polling district. A polling place can be a geographical area, or it can be a specific building or premises. If no specific polling place is designated then the polling district will be the polling place by default. In addition, and unless there are special circumstances that lead the authority to determine otherwise, each parish must be in a separate polling district.
- 4.4 Council should be aware of the distinction between polling districts, places and polling stations. The designation of a polling districts and places are a matter for the Council, whereas decisions regarding polling stations are the remit of the Returning Officer. The Returning Officer is responsible for deciding the arrangement and number of polling stations within each Ward. In doing so she has to have regard for the number of electors, type of election, availability of staff and equipment, previous voter turnout and any other relevant matters. Consequently, the detailed arrangements at each Ward may vary from election to election. The Returning Officer is grateful for comments and suggestions regarding polling stations which will assist her in making these provisions.
- 4.5 When conducting the Review it was important to take into consideration the effect of postal voting on the turnout at polling stations. Since changes in legislation in 2000, allowing all voters the option to vote by post, the number of permanent postal voters in the borough has risen annually. In 2000 there were 1197 postal voters and the latest figure in 2007 is 6737, with many further postal voting forms being requested during the annual canvass. As the current number of people on the Register is 47768 that equates to 14% of the electorate voting by post which in turn significantly reduces the number of people attending polling stations. In May 2007 15% of voters chose to vote by post and a further 20% voted in polling stations, therefore when looking at the numbers of people allocated to a polling station it is necessary to remember that at local elections approximately 20% of the number of people allocated will use the facility. That figure will increase to around 30% at Parliamentary elections.

Number of Postal Voters



The Review Process

4.6 A considerable amount of background information was necessary to inform the decision to be made by the Returning Officer, including the following:

- Electorate figures, broken down to polling district level.
- Details of existing polling places and an indication as to their overall suitability for the purpose.
- Details of potential alternative polling places and details of other locations which might appear suitable.
- Maps detailing polling district boundaries.
- Information regarding significant development and likely influx of electors.

Consultation

4.7 Notice of the review and supporting information was placed on the Council's website, in the One Stop Shop, and in local libraries. It was sent to the Acting Returning Officer for Hyndburn Constituency, Local and County Councillors, MP's, Parish Offices, Party Constituency Offices, Local Community Groups, and National Disability Organisations. Comments were invited from any interested parties. Information provided by Presiding Officers and voters at elections held during 2006 and 2007 were also used.

Responses

4.8 10 representations were received in response to the consultation. These were considered by the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, together with the Returning Officer's comments on the existing arrangements and proposals for any amendments. A summary of representations and amendments is given in

Appendix A and the Task and Finish Group's response will be provided at the meeting of Full Council. Once any changes have been approved, the findings of the Review will be published, in line with legislation, together with the designations of polling places and polling stations agreed and the reasons for any changes.

Proposals

4.9 Each Ward is dealt with separately and the Returning Officer's proposals for polling districts, polling places and polling stations are shown in Appendix A.

4.10 To summarise, it is proposed that the existing polling districts and places (not stations) remain the same, except the following: -

| WARDS & POLLING STATIONS | Polling District | Information |
|---|-------------------------|---|
| CRIBDEN | | |
| St. James the Less | RE1 & RE2 | It is proposed that the split of RE1 / 2 be deleted with the polling district returning to the name RE. |
| EDEN | | |
| Irwell Vale Methodist Church | MF2 | Due to the low number of electors allocated to this polling station it is proposed that the split of MF into MF1 and MF2 now be deleted. |
| Visitors Centre, Bleakholt Animal Sanctuary | MK1 / MK2 | It is proposed that the split between MK1 and MK2 be deleted and renamed MK. |
| FACIT AND SHAWFORTH | | |
| Whitworth Civic Hall | WJ | Following a Councillor suggestion, it is proposed that this polling district is renamed WA. |
| Shawforth Methodist | WK | Following a Councillor suggestion, it is proposed that this polling district is renamed WB. |
| GOODSHAW | | |
| Crawshawbooth CP School | RB | A minor amendment is proposed to move Greenfold Farm from RB to RC. |
| Rakefoot Methodist Church | RC | Minor Boundary change to move Greenfold farm from RB to RC |
| GREENFIELD | | |
| Stn 1 Haslingden CP School | RHF1 | Due to changes to Parliamentary boundaries the split between RHF1 and RHF2 is no longer required. It is therefore proposed to delete RHF1/S SPLIT and rename RHF. |

| WARDS & POLLING STATIONS | Polling District | Information |
|---|-------------------------|--|
| Helmcroft Court | RHF2 | Due to changes to Parliamentary boundaries the split between RHF1 and RHF2 is no longer required. It is therefore proposed to delete RHF1/S split and rename RHF. |
| Tor View School | HH | It is proposed to rename RHH to reflect Parliamentary boundary changes. |
| GREENSCLOUGH | | |
| St Saviours Church | BD1 | It is proposed that the split between BD1 and BD2 is removed. |
| St Lukes Mission | BD2 | It is proposed that the split between BD1 and BD2 is removed. |
| HAREHOLME | | |
| Newchurch Methodist Church | RP1 | It is proposed that the split between RP1 / RP2 be deleted. |
| Newchurch CE School | RP2 | It is proposed that the split between RP1 / RP2 be deleted. |
| HEALEY & WHITWORTH | | |
| 33 Thorburn Drive (Whitworth Family Centre) | WF | Following a Councillor suggestion, it is proposed that this polling district is renamed WC. |
| Tonacliffe Primary School | WG | Following a Councillor suggestion, it is proposed that this polling district is renamed WD. |
| '515' Youth & Community Centre | WH | This community centre is outside the Ward, therefore it is proposed that it is moved inside the Ward. Following a Councillor suggestion, it is proposed that this polling district is renamed WE. |
| HELMSHORE | | |
| Ravencroft, Communal Room | HI | It is proposed that the boundary of HL be amended to follow the river with the easterly portion being merged into HI. |
| Helmshore Textile Museum | HK | It is proposed that the boundary of HL be amended to follow the river with the westerly portion (Holden Wood) being included in HK. |
| Haslingden Sports Centre Squash Court | HL | It is proposed that the boundary be amended to follow the river and split this ward; the easterly portion being merged into HI and the westerly portion (Holden Wood) being included in HK. |

| WARDS & POLLING STATIONS | Polling District | Information |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| IRWELL | | |
| Sunnycrest Community Enterprises | BG | It is proposed that BG be split with the northerly portion being merged with BK. The southerly portion being merged with BH. |
| Sunnycrest Community Enterprises | BH | It is proposed that BG be split with the southerly portion being merged with BH. The new district to vote at the Fire Station. |
| St Mary's RC School | BK | It is proposed that BG be split with the north portion being merged with BK. The new district to vote at the Family Centre on Hawthorn Road. |
| LONGHOLME | | |
| Oakenhead Resource Centre | RF | It is proposed that the portion of RF to the south of the bypass be moved into RJ. |
| WORSLEY | | |
| Stonefold CE School | RHB | It is proposed to move properties from the south portion or RHB, below the junction with Hud Rake and Blackburn Road, into RHD. |

5. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE

- 5.1 The cost of the review, and any costs arising from the proposed changes to polling stations will be met from existing budgets.

6. COMMENTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF REGULATORY SERVICES

- 6.1 As the Deputy Returning Officer I welcome the report and support fully the recommendations. The Review will ensure that the Council complies with Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

7. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 7.1 This Review has been undertaken in line with the Council's Disability Equality policies to ensure that, as far as is reasonably practicable, all polling stations are accessible to voters.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 It is important that the proposed changes to the Polling District Review are given full consideration.

9. RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 That approval be given to the proposed changes to polling districts and places, as set out in 4.1 above: in order to comply with the Electoral Administration Act 2006.
- 9.2 That the Council make any comments it wishes to the Returning Officer to consider in relation to her proposals for the siting of polling stations.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 10.1 As identified elsewhere in the report and in line with statutory requirements.

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is an Equality Impact Assessment required Yes

Is an Equality Impact Assessment attached Yes

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|------------------------|--|
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| Background Papers | |
| The following background documents (as defined in Section 100D (5) of the Local Government Act 1972) have been relied on to a material extent in preparing this Report | |
| Document | Place of Inspection |
| The public notice, initial consultation document and responses received | Futures Park, Bacup |