

COUNCIL

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2014 17 December 2014

Report of the Chief Officer (Governance)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To enable Council to consider arrangements for determining the outcome of the review of polling districts and polling places in the Parliamentary Constituencies of Morecambe and Lunesdale and Lancaster and Fleetwood.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) Council is asked to delegate consideration of the review of polling districts and polling places to a specially convened meeting of Council Business Committee in January, to comply with the legislative timetable. Council is also asked to delegate powers to Council Business Committee to authorise publication of prescribed statutory information about the outcome of the review.
- (2) To authorise the Returning Officer, in consultation with the relevant ward Councillors, to make any necessary changes to polling places that may arise other than as part of a review.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Section 17 of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a duty on local authorities to carry out and complete a review of polling districts and polling places between 1 October 2013 and 31 January 2015 and then in the period of 16 months beginning with 1 October of every fifth year after that. This ties in with fixed term Parliaments so that a review is completed before each Parliamentary election.
- 1.2 For clarification, a “polling district” is defined as the geographical area created by sub-dividing a constituency/ward; a “polling place” is defined as a designated area for a polling district in which polling stations are located and a “polling station” is defined as the room in which polling takes place.

2.0 Boundary Changes

- 2.1 Since the last polling district review in 2011, the Local Government Boundary

Commission for England (LGBCE) has carried out a review of the City Council's wards and changed the boundaries and names of some wards. There are some complex changes to parish wards too, as a consequence of the City ward changes. For example, Morecambe Town Council has 6 wards presently, but this will increase to 11 wards for the 2015 elections.

- 2.2 The timing of the review was chosen so that the changes made by the LGBCE could be incorporated into the review and the intention is to publish the electoral register on the new boundaries in January 2015.

3.0 Consultation

- 3.1 The consultation started on 8 August and Councillors were sent a list of the draft proposals and streets within each proposed polling district for consideration. Comments were received, and some inconsistencies were flagged up. The deadline for responses has now closed.

- 3.2 The boundary review was extensive and will entail a significant amount of detailed work. Officers are starting to draw up a definitive list of streets and properties on the new boundaries and will change the boundaries on the electoral management software accordingly. However, the review must be completed before 31 January 2015 and that timescale does not fit with the scheduled meetings of full Council. The next full Council meeting is due to be held on 4 February 2015.

4.0 Proposal

- 4.1 The options for considering the review are:

- a) to call a special meeting of Council to consider the matter in January
- b) to delegate consideration of the matter to Council Business Committee for consideration at a special meeting in January.

In the interests of saving Councillors' and officers' time and the expense of holding an extra Council meeting, officers recommend option b. All the information about the review (consultation, lists of streets in each proposed polling district, etc) will, of course, be sent to every Member of Council for their information as soon as the Council Business Committee agenda is published, so that any further comments can be made to Democratic Services or passed to Members of Council Business Committee to bring to the meeting.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 Council must complete a review its polling districts and polling places by 31 January 2015. In view of this timeframe, Council is recommended to delegate consideration of the review to a special meeting of Council Business Committee in January 2015.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Council has a legal obligation to carry out this review within the timescale set out in the report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Holding an extraordinary meeting of Council Business Committee rather than an extraordinary meeting of Council would save costs of officer time and travel reimbursement for Councillor and Officers, as well as small savings on refreshments, etc.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**Human Resources:**

None.

Information Services:

None.

Property:

None.

Open Spaces:

None.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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