

# **COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

## **Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2015 29 January 2015**

### **Report of the Chief Officer (Governance)**

#### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To enable Committee Members 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) That the Committee considers whether it wishes to make any changes to polling districts or polling places in light of the responses received during the review, and to give reasons for its decision.**
- (2) That the Committee authorises publication of the outcome of the review on the Council's website.**

#### **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.
- 1.3 On 17 December 2014, Council delegated consideration of the review to this specially convened meeting of Council Business Committee to comply with the legislative timetable. Council also delegated powers to this Committee to authorise publication of prescribed statutory information about the outcome of the review and resolved that Returning Officer, in consultation with the relevant ward Councillors, be authorised to make any necessary changes to polling places that may arise other than as part of a review.

## **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, the number of wards in Morecambe Town Council has increased from 6 to 11. As a consequence of the boundary review, changes have been made to the polling districts.
- 2.2 The electoral register on the new boundaries and the draft polling districts set out in this report was published in January 2015. Any amendments which are made as a result of this report will be reflected in the next publication.

## **3.0 Consultation**

- 3.1 The consultation on the review of polling districts and polling places started on 8 August and the deadline for responses was 19 September. All Councillors were sent the pages relevant to their ward and, where there were changes as a result of the boundary review, the paperwork showed which roads, or parts of roads, would move in or out of their ward. Those schedules of streets have not been appended to this report again, in the interests of saving paper, but a paper copy is available for any Member on request from Democratic Services and they have all been published with the agenda online.
- 3.2 Parish Council and Parish meeting clerks, the local County Councillors and the two local Members of Parliament were made aware of the review.
- 3.3 A notice of the review was published on the Council's website and at both Town Halls.

## **4.0 Responses to the Consultation**

- 4.1 Four written consultation responses were received in time for the deadline and a late written response was received in December. All are appended to this report for Members' information (Appendix A). The Elections Manager also spoke to two Bulk Ward Councillors. Some of the issues raised were with the boundary changes which were not the subject of the consultation, having already been determined by the order bringing the LGBCE's recommendations into effect. However, the following issues were raised:
  - Regarding a polling station at Lancaster Royal Grammar School in John O'Gaunt ward, the respondent anticipated the new residents moving into The Residence would need a more accessible place to vote. Voters at The Residence will in fact vote in a polling station located in The Gregson on Moorgate, being part of Bulk ward.
  - A ward Councillor for Castle ward rightly noted that some properties were missing from the schedule of properties being transferred to Scotforth West ward and these have now been corrected. He also asked if the residents in Aldcliffe who will move from Castle ward to Scotforth West could continue to vote at the Boys and Girls Club. Unfortunately, this would entail creating a separate polling station for those few properties which is not feasible so the recommendation is that those residents vote at Lancaster Methodist Church with the other residents in their new polling

district.

- In the same response, it was noted that Marsh Community Centre was a very busy station and would now have more voters added to the register as a result of the changes. In view of this, and because the number of electors is likely to grow in the area, officers are investigating using Lancaster Cricket Club for the MARB polling district. Failing that, an additional station will be located in Marsh Community Centre for MARB.
- A response was received from Scotforth Parish Council expressing concern that some residents in the current Ellel ward who will be relocated to the new University and Rural Scotforth ward might be expected to vote at a station located in the University grounds rather than Rowley Court on Scotforth Road. Voting at the University would cause problems with parking and finding the polling station on the large campus. In view of this, it is recommended that electors in those properties continue to vote at Rowley Court although this is outside their new ward.
- The low number of electors in Heysham Village area mean it would not be feasible to have a polling station in Heysham Village itself. It is proposed that voters in the village that were in Heysham South Ward and are now included in Heysham Central Ward should vote at Heysham Mossgate school. For the area of Westgate ward which forms part of the Heaton with Oxcliffe parish, it is recommended that those voters continue to vote at Westgate Primary school station and that no other arrangements are made. Postal votes are available for all elections, provided the elector applies within the deadline, so there should be no danger of lack of engagement or of disenfranchising voters because their station is some distance away.
- Concerns were expressed about Sandylands Nursery. As this venue is not suitable for a combined election it will only be used for a small, unparished polling district (HENC) for the 2015 election. The polling station for HENA, which is a larger polling district and part of the Morecambe parish, will be located Sandylands Primary School.

## **5.0 Polling Station issues**

- 5.1 Room B12 at St Leonard's House has been used as a polling station for the BLKA polling district for a number of years, however the building has now closed and an alternative has been sourced. The Kings Community Church, Phoenix Street, Lancaster will provide suitable accommodation.
- 5.2 More polling stations will be required at St Christopher's Church Hall and it may be necessary to use the Main Hall rather than the Council Room.
- 5.3 Father's House Elim Pentecostal Church Hall was used for the European Parliamentary Election (EPE) in 2014 for the first time, because demolition work was ongoing at the Skerton Learning Centre. That work is not yet completed and it is recommended that Father's House be used again for SKEB polling district, as the feedback about the venue was positive.
- 5.4 Yealand Village Hall will need two polling stations as a result of the boundary changes.
- 5.5 For WESE polling district, officers are looking at the possibility of putting a new polling station at Trimpell Sports and Social Club because it would be difficult to house another extra station at Lancaster Road School.

## **6.0 Returning Officer's Response**

6.1 The Returning Officer, who is also the Acting Returning Officer for the Parliamentary constituency elections, has no further comments on the polling districts and places proposed in the appendix to this report, except to note that there are currently 18 polling districts in the Lancaster and Fleetwood constituency which are sited within the Wyre Borough Council area and that he will be consulted on those when Wyre undertakes its own review.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

7.1 The Committee is asked to consider the schedules of polling districts and polling places set out in the appendices to this report and decide whether any changes should be made and, if so, the reasons for the changes.

7.2 On conclusion of the review, the Council is required to publish details of the actual designations of polling districts and polling places agreed as a result of the review and details of where the results of the review have been published. This will be done by way of press release and details of the agreed proposals will be available at the Customer Service Centres in Lancaster and Morecambe and will also be published on the Council's website.

### **CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

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

None.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications as a direct result of this report. The fees paid for polling stations used in elections are paid by the Cabinet Office for Parliamentary elections and by the Council for City Council elections, or the fees are split in the case of a combined election. Parish Council elections, if contested, are paid for by the City Council when held together every four years. Polling station fees for individual by-elections held outside the four yearly elections are charged to the Parish Council.

### **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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