

HIGH PEAK BOROUGH COUNCIL

Audit & Regulatory Committee

7th February 2024

TITLE:	Review of Polling Places and Polling Stations.
EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR:	Councillor Alan Barrow - Executive Councillor for Corporate Services and Finance
CONTACT OFFICER:	Angela Sherratt – Senior Elections Officer
WARDS INVOLVED:	All Wards.

Appendices Attached:-

Appendix A: Polling District Review – no proposed changes following consultation responses.

Appendix B: Polling District Review – proposed changes to policy arrangements

1. Reason for the Report

1.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 requires the Council to periodically review its polling places and polling stations. The Council's previous review was undertaken in 2019.

1.2 This report explains the findings of the current review and makes recommendations in respect of proposed changes. Any changes to polling stations as a result of this review will not come into force until the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections in May 2024.

2. Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that:

- i) The Committee approves the proposals setting out changes to polling districts, polling places and polling stations as detailed at **Appendix B** of the report.
- ii) The revised arrangements take effect from 1st May 2024.

3. **Executive Summary**

- 3.1 The Council must designate a polling place for every polling district. In determining where polling places should be located, the Council must attempt to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practical in the circumstances and that, so far as is reasonable and practical, polling places are accessible to electors, including those who are disabled. Each polling station in the Borough has been reviewed in accordance with these statutory requirements.
- 3.2 The review has been informed by information gathered from Presiding Officers and Polling Station Inspectors who were on duty at the previous two elections. In addition we have consulted elected members, members of the public and local access groups.
- 3.3 The Returning Officer for elections and the MP have been consulted on the proposed changes. The Returning Officer's comments are included in the appendices. Where changes are proposed, additional consultation with the affected ward members has been undertaken. The Returning Officer's final proposals have been published and the deadline for receipt of further comments was 22nd January 2024
- 3.4 The changes which are proposed as a result of the review of the consultation exercise are set out at **Appendix B**. The arrangements will continue to be reviewed periodically and further formal reviews will take place every five years.

4. **How this report links to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 The proposals within the report help to support the environment by enabling residents to vote at suitable, accessible facilities in the interests of the democratic process.

5. **Options and Analysis**

- 5.1 The options for proposed changes are found within the report and appendices. The Committee could decide not to support the proposed changes. The changes have been proposed after reviewing the responses to extensive consultation with relevant stakeholders and are recommended to improve residents' experience of electoral participation.
- 5.2 If the Committee decides to support the recommendations it will assist the electoral services team to administer the next scheduled elections effectively and will improve residents' experience of engagement with the electoral process.

6. Implications

6.1 Community Safety - (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)

No implications

6.2 Workforce

No implications

6.3 Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Council's Diversity and Equality Policies.

6.4 Financial Considerations

None directly

6.5 Legal

Under Section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council must review its polling places and stations every 5 years. The previous review was undertaken in 2019. The review supports the Council's legal duty to promote equality of access to services.

6.6 Sustainability

No implications

6.7 Internal and External Consultation

An full consultation exercise has been undertaken ahead of analysing the options which are found in the appendices.

6.8 Risk Assessment

All buildings have been risk assessed.

7. Background and Detail

7.1 Each relevant local authority in the United Kingdom must designate a polling place for each polling district in the Parliamentary constituency. The polling place is usually a building within the polling district and the polling station is usually within the polling place. It is the duty of the Returning Officer to provide a sufficient number of polling stations and allot the electors to those polling stations in such manner as he or she thinks the most convenient. Section 18 of the Representation of the

People Act 1983 requires these arrangements to be reviewed every 5 years. The previous full review took place in 2019.

- 7.2 There are a number of changes that have taken place since the last formal polling station review. Fairfield Methodist Church is no longer available and in 2021 the polling station for BA1 and BA2 was moved to St Peter's Church, North Road, Fairfield, Buxton.
- 7.3 In Glossop, a request was received to review the use of Padfield Primary School as a more suitable location was available at Padfield Congregational Church. A mini polling station review took place in 2022 and residents in ward PA3 were moved to the new location.
- 7.4 The Village Hall in Tintwistle was due to close and the polling station has now moved to Tintwistle Primary School, South Street, Tintwistle for T11, T12 and T13.
- 7.5 The polling station at St John Ambulance, Harris Road, Harpur Hill had been closed and the polling station moved to The Hoffman Bar, 4-6 Burlow Road, Harpur Hill Buxton for wards BU3 and CH3.

The new locations for these stations have been reviewed as part of this process and one change is proposed which is to move The Hoffman Bar polling station back to the former St John Ambulance location, which is now known as Harpur Hill Village Hall, as this has since reopened.

A temporary change of polling station was also included as part of the review for consideration. The Chinley and Buxworth Centre, 21 Lower Lane Chinley SK23 6BE is not available for 2024 and an alternative location considered was Chinley Bar and Lounge, 23 Lower Lane, Chinley SK23 6BE. This option is no longer available therefore a suitable alternative venue at Chinley Womens Institute Hall, 14C, Lower Lane, Chinley, High Peak SK23 6BD is recommended.

- 7.6 In respect of the wider review of polling stations, a notice of review was published on the Council's website on 2nd October 2023 together with documents available for inspection in Buxton Town Hall. This allowed Councillors and members of the general public to access background information in respect of the proposals within this report and to enable us to understand the views of members and residents. The closing date for comments was 10th November 2023.
- 7.7 As a result of the consultation process the Council has received the following representations:
 - Comment received concerning the reopening of Harpur Hill Village Hall (previously known as St John Ambulance).

- Comment received concerning the use of Tintwistle Primary School and a request that we return to Tintwistle Village Hall as this has not yet closed as it was expected to.
- Comment received from Hague Bar Primary School being used as a polling station and a request that an alternative location be used to remove the requirement for the school to close when an election is called. The alternative suggestion would be a mobile on a nearby car park.
- Comment received from the Reading Room, Peak Forest concerning the requirement for the playgroup to close on election day but agreeing with the draft findings of the review and that we continue with the use of the building.
- Comment received concerning the move for HV2 and HV5 to Moore Memorial Hall and a suggestion that the Bike and Boot Hotel (Formerly The Rising Sun) be used as this opened in September 2023.
- Comments received from Simmondley Primary School Governors and Senior Leadership Team, requesting that consideration be given to returning to Dinting Cricket Club which was used in 2021.

Analysis of all the representations received, together with details of the recommendations following that analysis, is contained in **Appendices A and B** attached to the report.

Mark Trillo
Executive Director and Monitoring Officer

Web Links and Background Papers

<https://www.highpeak.gov.uk/article/4526/Review-of-Polling-District-Polling-Places-and-Polling-Stations>

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