

Statutory Review of Polling Districts and Places – Kirklees Council

(Acting) Returning Officer Submission

October 2023

In accordance with Section 18c (sub section 1) of the Representation of the People Act 1983, Kirklees Council is conducting a review of all polling districts and places.

The Council determines the polling district boundaries within wards. The Council has delegated decision making on boundary changes to the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee.

The closing date for submissions and comments in connection with the review was Monday 30 October. Comments were put forward for consideration and the (Acting) Returning Officer has made several decisions and proposals resulting from the responses received.

Dalton Ward – DA03 Polling District

The (Acting) Returning Officer received comments from all three ward members relating to re-allocating voters located in the DA03 polling district to their closest neighbouring polling district and station to improve accessibility to polling stations in the area.

The Electoral Services Team have conducted a site visit to both polling station locations in the neighbouring polling districts and have confirmed that The New Church, Grove Place, Long Lane HD5 9LL and the Common Room at Rear of Cottage Homes, Wakefield Road, Waterloo HD5 9XT can accommodate an increase in voters without surpassing the Electoral Commissions recommended threshold of 2250 voters in person at each location.

Following a discussion with ward members, they have agreed to the following proposals in street splits between the two neighbouring polling districts:

DA03 Streets	Proposed Polling District	Polling Station	Electorate	Postal Voters	In-person Voters
Kingston Avenue	DA02	The New Church	110	43	67
Lady Lane	DA04	The New Church	44	16	28
Lees Close	DA02	The New Church	52	20	32
Alton Avenue	DA02	The New Church	38	14	24
Eton Avenue	DA02	The New Church	31	7	24

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First Avenue	DA02	The New Church	8	0	8
Grosvenor Road	DA02	The New Church	153	42	111
Henley Croft	DA02	The New Church	19	4	15
Long Lane	DA02	The New Church	98	28	70
Marlow Close	DA02	The New Church	22	1	21
Mayfield Avenue	DA04	The New Church	135	33	102
Nursery Lodge Court	DA02	The New Church	21	5	16
Second Avenue	DA02	The New Church	30	9	21
Staines Croft	DA02	The New Church	34	6	28
Teddington Avenue	DA02	The New Church	89	26	63
The Grange	DA02	The New Church	16	8	8
Dalton Green Lane	DA04	Cottage Homes	181	65	116
Green Lea Road	DA04	Cottage Homes	10	2	8
Kelso Grove	DA04	Cottage Homes	13	4	9
Mayfield Grove	DA04	Cottage Homes	33	14	19
Melrose Close	DA04	Cottage Homes	34	5	29
Myers Croft	DA04	Cottage Homes	21	4	17
Rowlands Avenue	DA04	Cottage Homes	79	28	51
Tolson Crescent	DA04	Cottage Homes	135	33	102
Wakefield Road	DA04	Cottage Homes	114	33	81
White Rose Avenue	DA04	Cottage Homes	68	21	47

The ARO proposes that DA03 is split as detailed above and that the Dalton ward will now consist of 7 polling districts only.

Cleckheaton Ward – CL01 Polling District

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The (Acting) Returning Officer received one representation from Councillor Kath Pinnock relating to the proposed change of polling station in CL01. Councillor Pinnock cited that although she would prefer for Cleckheaton Town Hall to be available, she was supportive of the temporary alternative.

Councillor Pinnock also highlighted that the proposed replacement building has been used as a polling station in the past and that voters would be familiar with the location.

A site visit has been undertaken at St John's The Evangelist Church to confirm that the site has adequate facilities and space. The building is large enough to host the electorate in CL01 and has excellent facilities available.

The ARO has determined that the polling station is temporarily moved to St John's The Evangelist Church whilst Cleckheaton Town Hall is unavailable.

Dewsbury West ward – DW04 Polling District

During the consultation period a representation was put forward from Ethos College requesting that the (Acting) Returning Officer reviewed the allocated polling station location at their college. Ethos College specialises in providing longer-term full-time education to Key Stage 4 pupils (ages 14 to 16) with wide-ranging Social, Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) needs. Therefore, on polling day they are required to close the school as due to safeguarding of pupils the polling station can not be run on site whilst the school is open.

The college itself is located on a steep hill adjacent to the housing estate on Dewsbury Moor. The school car park is not in use on the day and voters must park on street.

Following a site visit to the polling district to understand the concerns and issues surrounding this location, a suitable alternative venue has been identified at the Tenant and Residents Association, 8 School Avenue, Dewsbury Moor, Dewsbury WF13 4RU. The building is located 100 ft away from Ethos College in the main body of the housing estate.

The building has on street parking, suitable facilities and enough space to accommodate the electorate in the polling district.

The ARO has determined that the polling station is located at the Tenants and Residents Association building in May 2024 on a trial basis, following this election, the ARO will consult with ward members on the location's suitability for future elections.

Dewsbury West ward – DW05 Polling District

A representation was received from Councillor Darren O'Donovan regarding the use of St Paulinus School as a polling station for the DW05 polling district. Councillor O'Donovan suggested that instead of utilising the school, this polling district could be split between two new locations at Crow Nest Park and St Paulinus Parochial Social

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Club. Councillor O'Donovan also highlighted that there is also the Salfia Centre located within this polling district.

The law is quite specific in that Returning Officers (ROs) have the right to select schools as venues for polling stations and the (Acting) Returning Officer has made arrangements with St Paulinus School to facilitate the polling station up to 2027 to allow for the school to plan their inset days in advance to facilitate the polling station for the residents in the DW05 polling district. The booking has been confirmed for May 2024 by the school.

It would not be appropriate to split the polling district across two locations as the electorate limit for hosting a polling station is well within the threshold as prescribed by the Electoral Commission. The splitting of this location would have a greater financial impact on Kirklees Council as two venues would have to be hired, two sets of staff appointed and paid along with providing two sets of equipment. St Paulinus School provides better facilities for voters and staff, it is located in the very centre of the polling district and has off street parking available.

The ARO determines that the polling station will remain at St Paulinus School.

Golcar ward – GC03 Polling District

During the consultation period, a representation was made by a member of the public that flagged an anomaly in the GC03/04 polling districts following the development of a new estate on Cowlersley Lane.

The boundary line of GC03 run across the new estate which means that the properties located on Mill Rise are being sent to GC03 and travelling past GC04 to get to their polling station.

A site visit has taken place at Mill Rise to understand the elector's journey to the polling station and it is sensible to address this anomaly as part of the review ahead of the next election to avoid voter confusion.

The ARO proposes that the polling district boundary is amended to include Mill Court into the GC03 polling district.

Kirkburton ward – KB03A, KB03B, KB07A and KB07B Polling District

During the consultation period all members for the Kirkburton ward were consulted on the amendments proposed for Kirkburton ward polling districts to address historical anomalies and ensure the polling scheme is amended to address changes brought in by the new Parliamentary Constituencies.

Ward members are supportive of the amendments proposed.

The ARO proposes that KB03 A/B and KB07 A/B are merged to create two polling districts of KB03 and KB07 only to ensure the polling scheme matches the Constituency boundaries.

Batley East ward – BE10 Polling District

During the consultation period, the (Acting) Returning Officer received representations from all three ward members for Batley East.

They suggested that Batley Community Centre may be a more accessible alternative to the Royal Airforce Association that was originally proposed as it is a community building located closer to the residential area.

A site visit has been undertaken at Batley Community Centre to confirm the buildings accessibility and location to the electorate. The building provides a spacious room for a polling station, has full accessibility for wheelchair users and an ample car park for access by vehicle. The site is more than suitable to host a polling station and is a key building within the community of the BE10 polling district.

The ARO has determined that the polling station for polling district BE10 is located at Batley Community Centre.

Mirfield ward – MF01 Polling District

A request has been received to change the location of the polling station for this polling district from Church of Christ the King, Stocksbank Road to Battyeford J&I School, the rationale provided is that Battyeford J & I School is more centrally located within the polling district, is in a better position to cater for the sheltered housing at Littlemoor Grove, Bankfield Court and Fox Royd Lane. The representation also states that whilst this proposal would necessitate the closure of the School on polling days, it would present the opportunity for the pupils to learn about and emphasise the importance of voting in local and national elections.

The polling station was changed in 2018 from Battyeford J & I School to the church. The school was concerned about the closure, the use of the school had caused some complaints/concerns over the years from polling station staff, electors and political representatives in previous elections, ward councillors were consulted and all were supportive of the move to the church.

Whilst the church is not centrally located in the polling district, it has roadside parking, provides disabled access and modern facilities and the move has enabled the school to stay open. No comments or complaints have been received from voters relating to the location of this polling station and ward councillors are supportive of the polling station remaining at the Church.

The ARO has determined that the Church of Christ the King will continue to be used as the polling station.

The representation received also detailed a proposed amendment to the polling district boundary that runs between MF01 and MF02 currently down Slipper Lane to be moved to match the public right of way (PROW) from Kitson Hill Road via Warren House to the A62.

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The representation states that since the southern side of Kitson Hill Road is occupied by Mirfield Free Grammar School sports fields, this would mark a clear separation of MF02 to the north from MF01 to the south.

The ARO proposes that the polling district boundary is amended to match the public right of way.

Mirfield Ward – MF01/MF03 Polling Districts

The representation received detailed a proposal to amend the polling district boundary between MF01 and MF03 to follow the public right of way from Huddersfield Road (A644) to the side of the Chinese take-away on Nettleton Road. This would require the polling district boundary to be extended along the A644 from Doctor Lane to its junction with the PROW. This would also appear to necessitate the cancellation on the polling district boundaries on Doctor Lane and on Nettleton Road from the Chinese take-away premises to the A644.

With regard to Polling District and Polling Station Reviews no alterations can be made to polling districts that would affect Parish/Town Council ward boundaries. Altering MF01 (Battysford Ward) and MF03 (Eastthorpe Ward) would therefore not be possible.

The ARO is not able to propose this amendment as part of this review.

Mirfield Ward – MF08/MF06 Polling Districts

The representation received detailed a proposal to amend the polling district boundary to follow the PROW from Towngate/Pinfold Lane to Dunbottle Lane to become the polling district boundary between MF06 and MF08. This would entail the extension of the polling district boundary from the eastern end of the PROW to Camm Lane and the cancellation of the boundary along Camm Lane and Towngate. The boundary along Dunbottle Lane would change slightly (Dunbottle Lane is already split amongst three polling districts). This would have the advantage of uniting the whole of both Camm Lane and Towngate within MF06.

Additionally, the representation detailed another proposed change that would affect MF08 and MF06 polling districts. The proposal was to move 15 electors without postal votes from MF06 to MF08 by moving the polling district boundary up Richard Thorpe Avenue whilst uniting a larger number of properties on the eastern section of Crowlees Road with those already located in MF08.

With regard to polling district and polling station reviews no alterations can be made to polling districts that would affect Parish/Town Council ward boundaries. Altering MF08 (Northorpe Ward) and MF06 (Crossley Ward) would therefore not be possible.

The ARO is not able to propose this amendment as part of this review.

Mirfield Ward – MF05 Polling Districts

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The representation received detailed a proposal to move the polling district boundary in Upper Hopton so that it follows Hollin Hall Lane and the B6118 as far as the eastern boundary to MF05. The justification of this proposal was that electors located immediately north of the B6118 of religious faith may look to St John's Church in Upper Hopton. The proposal would require moving some electors located in DA06 to MF05.

With regard to Polling District and Polling Station Reviews, no alterations can be made to polling districts that would affect District Council ward boundaries. In order to facilitate the change, we would have to amend the Mirfield District ward boundary. This is not something Kirklees Council or the ARO can do, it would have to be considered by The Local Government Boundary Commission as part of the full electoral review currently taking place.

The ARO is not able to propose this amendment as part of this review.