

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Strategic Lead - Regulatory

Council: 19 December 2018

Subject: Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2018

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to advise the Council of the response to the consultation on the review of polling districts and polling places and to seek approval of the final polling scheme.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that the Council agrees to adopt the scheme of polling districts and polling places as detailed in the Appendix 1 to this report.

3. Background

- 3.1** At its meeting on 29 August 2018, the Council approved the arrangements for conducting the review and accordingly copies of the Returning Officer's representations were sent to all elected members, the local MP, MSPs, and a range of local community organisations including those which represent disabled and elderly people, for comment. The deadline for submission of responses to the consultation was 12 November 2018.

4. Main Issues

Polling Districts

- 4.1** In 2016, the Council agreed that some minor changes be made to polling district boundaries arising from the Boundary Commission for Scotland's Review of Local Government Wards.
- 4.2** The election team has now reviewed all of the polling districts' boundaries in light of these changes and has proposed the following changes: (i) merge existing polling districts LO4D and LO5D into a single polling district and use St. Kessog's Church Hall as the designated polling place; (ii) merge existing polling districts LE10D and LE11D into a single polling district and use Bonhill Community Centre as the designated polling place; and (iii) merge existing polling districts CW12C and CW13C and use Napier Hall as the designated polling place. The polling scheme would then be re-numbered to take account of these changes. A map showing the proposed revised boundaries can be viewed at the Council Offices, 16 Church Street, Dumbarton, and in the Clydebank Library, Dumbarton Road, Clydebank, or on the Council's website at the following address:

- 4.3** In addition to above, there has been one small practical adjustment to the boundary line at Leven St, Dumbarton to allow some electors in properties on the opposite side of the street to Knoxland Primary School to vote there instead of travelling to the Concord Community Centre.
- 4.4** The merger of LO4D and LO5D has been proposed due to the small distance (0.5 mile) between the two polling places both of which have operated with a single polling station for a number of years. At present Lomond Ward has a total of five polling places which is one more than Kilpatrick Ward with a similar size electorate supported by three elected members. Reducing the number of polling places to four will mean that each polling place in Lomond Ward will accommodate an average of 2295 electors, which would be similar to Kilpatrick Ward which has an average of 2260 electors per polling place. However, some electors will have to travel further to vote. If the polling districts are merged into one then St Kessog's Church Hall is the more central of the two locations and is therefore the logical choice to be retained as polling place.
- 4.5** Following a decision of Council in 2015, electors residing in LE11D (Beechwood Housing Estate) now vote in the Bonhill Community Centre. This worked well in all elections held during 2016 and 2017 so there is unlikely to be any impact on the public if LE11D and LE10D are merged into one new polling district. It is therefore proposed that the above polling districts should be merged and that Bonhill Community Centre should be the designated polling place for the new polling district LE9D.
- 4.6** Old Kilpatrick is currently served by two polling places namely Gavinburn Primary School and Napier Hall. Given the desire to reduce the number of schools used as polling places it is proposed that all voters in Old Kilpatrick be asked to vote in Napier Hall and the two polling districts be merged to form a new polling district CW12C. Again some voters will have to travel further than before to vote. However, the vast majority of electors who voted previously in Gavinburn Primary School will still have to travel less distance to Napier Hall than some of the existing electors who have always voted there.

Polling Places

- 4.7** Following the interim review of the polling scheme in 2016, the Council agreed to use mobile polling places at Dalmonach (LE9D) and at Westbridgend (DU14D). There are now plans in place to build two new community centres in those locations and, if deemed suitable for use, it is proposed that the new community centres be designated as polling places for those polling districts. It should be noted that the election team is of the view that mobile polling places are only used as a last resort when no other suitable venue is available. They are very small and are not comfortable for polling staff who work there for 15 hours on election day. They are also very expensive to hire compared to the hire of a hall and require a special ramp to be built to make

sure they are accessible. This aside, the portable cabins are deemed to be suitable as a temporary polling places in the absence of a permanent building.

- 4.8** Given that there are no planned elections until 2021 the Returning Officer is of the view that mobile polling places at Dalmonach and Westbridgend should be used for any unplanned elections or referendums until the new community centres are built.
- 4.9** At the time of the consultation, there was some uncertainty on whether the Community Hall on Onslow Road, Clydebank, would be made available as a polling place. However, this has now been confirmed and it is therefore recommended that the Community Hall should continue to be used as a polling place.

UK Parliamentary Boundary Review 2018

- 4.10** In September 2018, the UK Parliament received recommendations from the Boundary Commission which among other things proposed that part of East Dunbartonshire Council's area (parts of Milngavie and North Bearsden) will form part of the new Dunbartonshire West County Constituency for future UK Parliamentary Elections, effective from the next scheduled UK General Election in 2022, if approved. The UK Parliament has not considered the proposals yet but given that East Dunbartonshire Council has local knowledge and expertise in running elections in that area, it is the Returning Officer's intention to use those polling districts and places as recommended by East Dunbartonshire Council for that part of the new UK Parliamentary boundary. It is understood that East Dunbartonshire Council will carry out its statutory review of its polling scheme in 2019.

Impact of New Housing in West Dunbartonshire

- 4.11** An assessment of the impact on the polling scheme of the number of new properties being built in West Dunbartonshire has been undertaken with the assistance of officers from the Council's Planning Section. While there are a number of new housing developments planned and/or being proposed throughout West Dunbartonshire, there are only a few of significant size to have major impact on the proposed polling scheme. The Queens Quay development will be the most significant with approximately 1800 new houses being built over a period of time. It is proposed that the additional electors from this area will vote in Waterfront Church Hall which has an additional hall with the capacity to cope with up to four additional polling stations. The new housing development in the Castle Road/Castlegreen Street area of Dumbarton East is also significant but there is sufficient space within the large assembly hall in Knoxland Primary School to accommodate the additional polling station needed to cope with the increase in voters. There are also some provisional plans for housing on the Carless Site in Old Kilpatrick but it is not clear at this point whether that the housing development will proceed or not. The Election Office will continue to monitor the situation and report back to Council if an interim review of the scheme is necessary. There are a number of other smaller housing developments which may have some impact

on the polling scheme, the details of which are contained in the individual polling place comments shown in Appendix 2 to this report.

Feedback from consultation

- 4.12** Local elected members were consulted and all comments received are shown in Appendix 3. In relation to Dumbarton Ward, Councillor McBride has suggested that electors from Oxhill could vote in St Michael's Church hall. The Election Office will revisit this option if the number of electors in the West Dumbarton Activity Centre in Brucehill increases significantly. Other elected members from Dumbarton Ward who responded to the consultation were satisfied with the Returning Officer's proposals.
- 4.13** One member of the public responded to the consultation and made the comment that she supported the proposal not to use Gavinburn Primary School as a polling place as she felt that every effort should be made to avoid using schools as polling places.
- 4.14** No comments were submitted by local and regional MSPs, the local MP or on behalf of any local or national political party.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** There are no implications for employees of this Council.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** The only elections funded by the Council are the Local Government Elections and any Local Government by-elections which may occur from time to time. The proposals within this report to reduce the number of polling places will result in a reduction in costs of approximately £770 per local government election, subject to any price increases which occur before or at the time of an election.
- 6.2** There are no procurement implications for the Council arising from this report.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** The Council is required by statute to complete the review within the required timescales. Failure to do so could result in reputational damage to the Council.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** The Council must ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, every polling place within its area is accessible to electors who are disabled. All polling places used in West Dunbartonshire are accessible and no new polling places have been added as a result of this review.

8.2 A full EIA was carried out in respect of the proposals as some voters may need to travel further to vote at the poll due to the merging of some polling districts. This will inevitably have a greater impact on persons with disabilities, frail elderly persons and persons on low incomes who may have to travel further to vote at the poll. A number of local organisations representing disabled and elderly people were invited to comment on the Returning Officer's representations and no comments were received. The proposals should not prevent anyone from being able to vote regardless of their circumstances as anyone can apply for a postal vote and persons with disabilities will be also able to appoint a proxy to vote on their behalf, if they so choose. The Returning Officer will ensure that all voters are notified of any changes to their polling place via their poll card which will also contain full information on how to apply for a postal vote or a proxy vote in advance of any forthcoming election or referendum.

9. Consultation

9.1 Officers from legal and finance have been consulted on the content of this report.

9.2 The formal public consultation process commenced on 1 October 2018 and concluded on 12 November 2018. All comments received from the elected members and the public have been included in this report.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 This report does not have a direct impact on the Council's Strategic priorities.

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Date: 3 December 2018

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Appendices:

1. Proposed list of polling places and districts.
2. Returning Officer's comments on individual polling places.
3. Summary of comments submitted by West Dunbartonshire elected members.

Background Papers: 1. Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2018
- Returning Officer's Representations.

2. Equality Impact Assessment.

Wards Affected: All