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**REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND**

**POLLING PLACES 2023**

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNTY CONSTITUENCY**

**REPRESENTATIONS BY RETURNING OFFICER**

**Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places**

**West Dunbartonshire County Constituency 2023**

**Representations by the Returning Officer**

**1. Background to the Review**

**1.1** West Dunbartonshire Council conducted a full review of its polling districts and polling places in 2018. The Council approved the scheme of polling places and polling districts at its meeting on 19 December 2018 following a full public consultation.

**1.2** In 2020,the Council conducted an interim review of its polling places and polling districts and agreed to use a number of new venues as polling places thus reducing the number of schools included in the previous scheme. These new venues included: the Carman Centre, Renton, in place of Renton Primary School; the Cutty Sark Centre, Bellsmyre in place of the Bellsmyre School Campus; and Bonhill Church (Angus Room) in place of Bonhill Primary School. The Council also agreed to the use of the Hub Community Centre, Clydebank in place of Kilbowie Primary School, subject to concerns by a disability group being addressed but The Hub was not used in subsequent elections as the centre was being used as a Covid Vaccination Centre. Also, the Angus Room in Bonhill Church was not used during the pandemic as it was not possible to operate a one-way system in the Angus Room due to lack of space. The other new venue which was added in 2020 was West Kirk Church Hall, Westbridgend, which was deemed suitable for use and had a one way system in place during the pandemic.

**1.3** The Returning Officer is aware that there are a number of existing polling places which may not be available for use as polling places in the future due to Council savings options and external factors such as the Church of Scotland review of its properties, which could result in the closure of some church buildings. These issues will be discussed further in Section 4 of this paper.

**2. Factors in devising polling schemes**

**2.1** In devising the polling scheme, the Electoral Commission guidance suggests that the following factors should be taken into account:-

(a) the convenience of the situation of the polling place for local electors;

(b) the requirement to ensure that the polling place is accessible to voters with disabilities (statutory);

(c) the capacity of the polling place in terms of the number of polling stations it can accommodate;

(d) the general suitability of the polling place for electoral use;

(e) adequate parking for electors and staff; and

(f) suitable kitchen and toilet facilities for election staff who will be in the premises for up to 15 hours on polling day.

**2.2** The Council has sought, in recent years, to avoid using schools wherever possible. However, in many cases, schools are still the most convenient and suitable locations for polling places. The existing list of polling places consists of 14 church halls, 6 schools, 8 Leisure Trust premises, 8 private halls (includes Abbotsford Hotel), and 1 library.

**2.3** Ideally a polling place should be located within the polling district which it serves and this is the case in the majority of polling places within West Dunbartonshire with the exception of Dalmuir Barclay Church Hall, Bonhill Community Centre and Braehead Primary School, which all serve two adjoining polling districts.

**2.4** Detailsofall the proposed polling districts and polling places for the West Dunbartonshire County Constituency, together with Returning Officer’s proposed alternative polling places are listed in Appendix 1 to this paper.

**3. Accessibility**

**3.1** The accessibility of premises used as polling places has steadily improved over the years. All of the existing polling places have disabled access and any new polling place under consideration needs to be assessed for accessibility before being adopted.

**4. The Representations**

**4.1** The representations that I have made take the form of a comparative list of polling places, giving details of the proposed polling districts which poll at each polling place and the number of electors in each together with a suggested number of polling stations at each place. Thereafter, each polling place is reviewed individually with the Returning Officer’s comments included, where applicable (see Appendix 2). This also includes details of some polling places which were used as contingency venues during the Covid pandemic and are proposed as alternative polling places should the polling place no longer be available to the Council. A diagram of each polling place is provided which depicts the internal layout of the polling place together with details of access for disabled voters (see Appendix 3). In addition, large scale maps of the existing polling districts with the locations of each polling place identified therein are available to view in the main libraries, the election office, Municipal Buildings, Dumbarton and on the Council’s website at [http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/voting-and-elections/](http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/voting-and-elections/interim-review-polling-places-polling-districts/).

Polling Districts

**4.2** There are no proposed changes to polling districts as a result of this review.

Polling Places

**4.3** As stated previously, some of the proposed polling places may not be available to the Council in future years as a result of Council saving options or the Church of Scotland review of its properties. The following properties may be affected: Bonhill Church (Angus Room), West Kirk Church Hall, West Dumbarton Activity Centre, Bowling Community Hall, Glenhead Community Centre and Parkhall Library.

**4.4** The Returning Officer is of the view that as long as thesevenues arestill available, they should be used as polling places but it is prudent to identify alternative venues should the situation change. A table of alternative premises proposed by the Returning Officer is shown on the final page of Appendix 1. Comments are invited on the both proposed list and the list of alternative polling places.

UK Parliamentary Boundary Review

**4.5** The UK Parliament has now approved the recommendations of the Boundary Commission, which means that a small part of the Glasgow City local authority area will form part of the new West Dunbartonshire County UK Parliamentary Constituency for future UK Parliamentary Elections. It is understood that the City of Glasgow Council will carry out a review of its polling scheme in 2023 and in so doing will identify a suitable polling place for those additional voters transferring to West Dunbartonshire County Constituency. However, if it can accommodate the increased numbers, these voters could be directed to vote in St. Margaret’s Church Hall. The election team will monitor the situation and report back to Council in December.

Impact of New Housing in West Dunbartonshire

**4.6** 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 a major impact on the proposed polling scheme. The Queens Quay development will be the most significant with approximately 570 new houses scheduled to be built over the next five years. 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. There are a number of other smaller housing developments which may have some impact of the polling scheme, the details of which are contained in the individual comments on each polling place in Appendix 2.

**5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

**5.1** Having examined the polling districts and polling places for West Dunbartonshire, I am of the opinion that the proposed scheme (as summarised in Appendix 1) is fit for purpose and that it takes due cognisance of the needs of electors and, in particular, disabled electors.

**5.2** I welcome comments on the proposed scheme and on these representations by local electors, interested individuals and organisations, particularly on issues of disability and equality.

**5.3** A full report on the outcome of the public consultation and incorporating the views of local members will be presented to Council, at its meeting on 20th December 2023.

**Peter Hessett**

**Returning Officer**

**West Dunbartonshire County Constituency**