

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL**11 September 2019****Report by Deputy Chief Executive****Statutory Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To advise the Council of the responses to the second consultation stage of the review of polling districts and polling places, following approval by the Council in June of a new draft scheme.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That the Council:-
- (a) notes the additional comments received and the responses;
 - (b) approves the new polling scheme ; and
 - (c) agrees that delegated powers be granted to the Chief Executive to alter or amend any polling place should it become unavailable or unviable for example due to fire or flood.

BACKGROUND

3. At the meeting on 26 June the Council approved a new draft polling scheme as the basis for further consultation, noting that a final version of the scheme would be submitted to this meeting for consideration. The draft scheme that was approved contained a number of polling place changes and some minor boundary changes.

REPORT

6. Following approval of the draft scheme a second stage of consultation has taken place. Contact was made with all those who were contacted as part of the first phase of the review, as well as the details of the consultation exercise being publicised on the Council's website.

7. In response to this second phase of consultation a further 17 comments were received. The comments are summarised and responses provided below.

Ward 1 – Barrhead, Liboside & Uplawmoor**The Foundry**

1 further comment has been received about the possibility of using The Foundry as an alternative to all polling places in Barrhead. However as was explained in the previous report, notwithstanding the fact that this would not be convenient for the vast majority of voters who would be moving to a polling place further away than their existing polling place,

it does not satisfy the legal requirement for wards to be divided into smaller polling districts and for there to be a polling place in each polling district unless in exceptional circumstances. In view of this it is not proposed to make any further changes to the draft scheme.

Ward 3 – Giffnock & Thornliebank

Thorntree Hall/Thornliebank Primary School

A further comment was received again suggesting Thorntree Hall as an alternative to Thornliebank Primary School to remove the requirement for parents and carers to make arrangements for childcare on polling days.

In particular it was suggested that temporary disabled parking be created at the front of the building on polling day to address the issue of the steep slope from the car park and that the Council take action to address the drainage issues in the car park.

A full description of Thorntree Hall and the advantages/disadvantages of moving there were provided in the previous report.

Notwithstanding, further investigation has taken place into the additional comments made.

Arrangements have been made with the Roads Service to carry out the necessary drainage works in the car park to ensure that all spaces are available for hall users.

Due to the location of the building and the potential impact on road safety it would not be possible to create parking immediately outside. There is short stay parking (30 mins between 8am to 6pm Monday – Saturday) in the parking bay in front of the buildings next to the hall but this is heavily used by regular traffic and it would not be practical to restrict its use to voters. In any case it would not be possible to police these restrictions.

The previous report also outlined the steps that would be taken in conjunction with the Director of Education to mitigate the effects of polling day by trying to harmonise polling days and in-service days.

The previous report suggested that whilst Thorntree Hall could be used, on balance Thornliebank Primary School remained a better option. The comments made have been investigated and relevant action taken. However, it is not considered that the remedial action taken makes such a significant difference to justify moving from Thornliebank Primary School to Thorntree Hall.

Giffnock Primary School

It was commented that no alternatives were considered to Giffnock Primary School. The challenge facing East Renfrewshire in general is that in some areas, due to their makeup, suitable alternative premises are not available. This is the case with Giffnock Primary School. The school holds 5 polling stations and there are no suitable alternative premises that could accommodate that number of stations within the particular polling district.

It was also suggested that the review should have considered the more fundamental issue of whether or not schools should be used as polling stations at all. However this is not the purpose of the review, the point of which is to identify suitable premises within polling districts to enable polling to take place, and which is carried out from the perspective of what is best for the voter. As has been mentioned elsewhere, it has always been acknowledged that using schools as polling stations may require parents and carers to make alternative

childcare arrangements, but as has been demonstrated in this review, every effort has been made to move out of schools where possible, even where it has been considered that the school remains the most appropriate premises.

OLM Primary School

A comment has been received suggesting the use of Woodfarm Education Centre as an alternative to OLM Primary School. It should be pointed out that the Council does not have the power to simply commandeer premises but can only use them with the agreement of the owner. In the June report it was explained that discussions were ongoing about the possibility of using Woodfarm Educational Centre as an alternative to OLM Primary School, the issue being whether or not the centre would be able to provide exclusive use of their premises on polling day. I am pleased to report that this has now been confirmed and it is therefore recommended that the Council no longer use OLM Primary School as a polling place but use Woodfarm Educational Centre as an alternative.

Ward 4 – Clarkston, Netherlee & Wiliamwood

Carolside Primary School

5 further comments have been received expressing disappointment that it is proposed to continue to use Carolside Primary School.

One of the comments suggests that alternatives “...have not been given appropriate consideration on balance, with the inconvenience of using the school.” This comment is not accepted. It has always been acknowledged that using schools for polling places will cause inconvenience and where **suitable** alternatives have been identified these are used. All known alternatives to Carolside Primary School were fully investigated and the reasons for rejection were clearly outlined in the previous report.

It has also been commented that the nursery that was rejected as an option has 2 buildings. Further clarification has been sought from the Director of Education who has confirmed that the second building “The Cabin” is an outdoor play building that would not be suitable for use as a polling place.

The comments have further highlighted that one of the original responses was from the Parent Council and that more weight should therefore be attached to the comments.

Again the comments made in respect of Carolside Primary School do not acknowledge the steps that would be taken in conjunction with the Director of Education to mitigate the effects of polling day by trying to harmonise polling days and in-service days.

The comments also refer to the need for processes to be put in place in respect of payment for wraparound care and that these should not be a reason for not using the nursery. It should be noted that the original comments regarding payment processes were expressed by the Director of Education, and that whilst acknowledged were not the main factor in deciding that the school remained the most appropriate location for the polling place. This was down to the suitability of the premises.

The comments also refer to extension works to be carried out at the nursery in 2020 and seeking assurances that the use of the nursery would be revisited in any future review. This will be the case

None of the comments made raise any new issues over and above those reported previously. In conclusion there are no material changes which would lead to a change in the previous recommendation to continue to use the school as a polling place.

Busby Primary School

Comments were received suggesting 3 alternatives to Busby Primary School; Duff Memorial Hall; Busby Masonic Hall and Busby Parish Church Hall. Contact was made with Busby Parish Church and Busby Masonic Club who have both advised that due to heavy usage by them they would not be able to permit the use of their premises. A visit was made to the remaining facility and an analysis is given below.

Duff Memorial Hall

Duff Memorial Hall sits on Main Street/East Kilbride Road. It is located relatively near to the current polling place and so would not be much of an inconvenience to voters having to go there. Due to its location there is no on-street parking in the vicinity of the hall. However there is a car park on Riverside Terrace which can take approximately 14 cars plus a further 2 spaces for blue badge holders. This is a busy car park used by visitors to the library and neighbouring commercial and residential properties.

The hall is attached to Busby Library, and shares the same access from the pavement although it has a separate entry door. The hall comprises a main hall and 2 separate committee rooms, and also has adequate facilities for staff if required.

There are 4 polling stations located at Busby Primary School. The main hall could accommodate 2 whilst each of the committee rooms could accommodate one of the remaining 2 stations.

However, whilst the main hall is easily accessible for disabled voters, both of the committee rooms require to be accessed via a set of stairs.

Taking account of the above, in particular disabled access issues and also the lack of adequate parking, it is not proposed to change the scheme to use Duff Memorial Hall as an alternative to Busby Primary School.

Ward 5 – Newton Mearns South and Eaglesham

Kirkhill Primary School

5 comments have been received expressing disappointment at the proposed continued use of Kirkhill Primary School, the reasons given being the loss of teaching time for pupils and the need for parents/carers to arrange childcare.

In all cases the use of Broom Parish Church as an alternative is suggested. However, the reasons behind the choice of Broom Parish Church as an alternative to Crookfur Pavilion were explained in the previous report, in that those potential alternative premises that lay within the polling district were either unsuitable or were not able to be used due to conditions attached to their use.

One of the comments further suggests that Broom Parish Church could be used as a polling place for 2 polling districts and replace both Crookfur Pavilion **and** Kirkhill Primary School, and that this would help shared election staffing. In conducting the review officers visited the church to assess its suitability and regardless of the fact that the suggestion does not meet

the test for polling places to be within the polling district they serve unless there are exceptional circumstances, housing 8 polling stations simply would not be possible. The number of voters allocated to polling stations is based on directions issued by the Electoral Management Board and so it would not be possible to reduce the number of polling stations with the consequent increase in elector numbers per station.

The comment also refers to a lack of evaluation of other alternatives but does not identify what these might be. The challenge in this area, as in other areas is that there are few if any suitable alternatives. As part of this and previous reviews, where alternative suggestions have been made that have not already been considered these have been taken into account and assessed for their suitability. This will continue to be the case.

2 further alternatives to Kirkhill Primary School were suggested; Maxwell Mearns Church and Broom Scout Hall. Contact has been made with both in order to arrange visits to assess the suitability of the premises. No response has been received to date from the Scout Hall. An assessment of the church hall is given below.

Maxwell Mearns Castle Church Hall

Maxwell Mearns Castle Church Hall lies to the west of Mearns Castle High School. Whilst the church hall would be more convenient for those voters from houses to the west travelling by car, it is less convenient for those voters who stay in the vicinity of Kirkhill Primary School. It is approximately equidistant for those voters from Waterfoot.

Disabled access into the hall is good. Access into the hall is along a short corridor from a foyer area, with double doors at both ends of the corridor. Whilst the hall is of a reasonable size the access into the hall for all 4 stations along the short corridor has the potential for voter congestion. There are adequate facilities for staff within the building. Whilst there is a good sized car park outside the church, access to the church is off Waterfoot Road down a long single track road. This would cause significant problems with constant two-way traffic to and from the church during the course of the day. On the day of the visit, traffic coming in the opposite direction was encountered both on the way in and out of the car park. In addition there is no footpath leading down to the church from Waterfoot Road. Pedestrian access would be via the single track road. The only other pedestrian access to the hall is via a steep staircase through the trees at the side of the hall down to Castlehill Drive. A large section of the path is not illuminated. On the day of the visit the path was wet and with leaf fall has the potential to be unsafe.

In conclusion notwithstanding the potential suitability of the Church hall itself, due its location and access issues, particularly pedestrian access and safety, it is not recommended that Maxwell Mearns Castle Church be used as an alternative to Kirkhill Primary School.

Notwithstanding, that it has not been possible to inspect the hall a preliminary inspection of the surrounding area has been made and an analysis is given below.

Broom Scout Hall

Lying in polling district EE14, Broom Scout Hall actually lies outwith the polling district served by Kirkhill Primary School (EE15). As such it cannot be considered as an alternative for the school. However, were it considered to be a suitable alternative to Broom Parish Church, then the Church could be used as an alternative to Kirkhill Primary School.

Broom Scout Hall lies on the west side of Broom Road. It is situated on the one-way section of Broom Road and access is taken from the north off Sandringham Avenue or off

Roddinghead Road. The section of Broom road on which the hall is sited is a narrow single lane road with no adjacent footpath. Pedestrian access is limited. There is adequate parking outside the hall with dedicated disabled parking although this is limited.

In conclusion notwithstanding the potential suitability of the Scout Hall itself, due its location and access issues, particularly pedestrian access and safety, it is not recommended that Broom Scout Hall be used as an alternative to Broom Parish Church.

Eaglesham Primary School

2 comments have been received supporting the proposals to move from Eaglesham Primary School to Montgomerie Halls.

Proposed Boundary Changes

It should be noted that no comments have been received in relation to the proposals as outlined in the previous report, to make adjustments to the polling district boundaries between polling districts EE05 and EE06 (Giffnock & Thornliebank Ward); and ES05 and ES06 (Barrhead Ward).

It should further be noted that in the event the polling scheme is approved, it will be used for any election called thereafter until the next review has been completed. However, should for any reason an approved polling place not be available at the time of an election, delegated authority is also sought for the Chief Executive to alter or amend any polling place should it become unavailable or unviable. This delegation was used in the European elections in May when Lygates House was used as a substitute for Mearns Parish Church Hall which was undergoing refurbishment.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

8. The cost of carrying out the review relates to officer time and are being met from existing resources.

CONSULTATION

9. As part of the exercise, consultation has taken place as detailed in Paragraph 6 above.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

10. There is a legal requirement to conduct a review by April 2020 and failure to do so would mean the Council was in breach of its legal obligations. There are staffing implications associated with the conduct of the review, but it is being carried out using existing staff resources. There are implications for the scheme depending on the continuing availability of the Council premises currently in use as polling places. There are no implications in terms of equalities or IT.

CONCLUSIONS

11. The Council is required to conduct a review of polling places and polling districts by

2020. The review that has been conducted takes into account future population growth, the Council's own development plans and, where possible, the concerns of parents and carers about needing to arrange alternative childcare on polling day. This has seen the number of schools used as polling places reduced by 3. It is recognised that the proposals to continue to use a number of schools will be disappointing to many parents. However every effort has been made to move to non-school premises where there were premises that were considered suitable. Arrangements to harmonise polling days and in-service days will further reduce the inconvenience to parents and carers.

12. Once the final scheme has been approved, a further review will not be required until October 2023. Further consideration was given to the additional comments received and the alternative venues investigated and the responses to the comments are contained in the report. For the reasons given, with the exception of the use of Woodfarm Education Centre instead of OLM Primary School it is not proposed to make any further changes to the draft scheme approved by the Council in June.

RECOMMENDATION

13. That the Council:-

- (a) Notes the further comments that have been received and the responses in respect of those comments;
- (b) Approves the amended polling scheme as outlined in Appendix 1, including the change to the polling district boundaries between polling districts EE03 and EE06, and between ES05 and ES06 as outlined in the previously approved draft scheme; and
- (c) agrees that delegated authority be granted for the Chief Executive to alter or amend any polling place should it become unavailable or unviable.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act

Report Author

Eamonn Daly, Democratic Services Manager 577 3023

e-mail:- eamonn.daly@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Background papers

None

BLANK PAGE

Appendix 1 – Proposed Polling Scheme

Polling District Ref.No.	Ward	Polling Place	No. of Stations
ES01	Barrhead, Liboside & Uplawmoor	Mure Hall Uplawmoor G78 4AD	1
ES02	Barrhead, Liboside & Uplawmoor	Cross Arthurlie P.S. Fern Drive Barrhead G78 1JF	4
ES03	Barrhead, Liboside & Uplawmoor	Dalmeny Community Centre Barnes Street Barrhead G78 1EH	2
ES04	Barrhead, Liboside & Uplawmoor	St Andrew's Parish Church Ralston Road Barrhead G78 2QQ	3
ES05	Barrhead, Liboside & Uplawmoor	Carlibar P.S. Carlibar Road Barrhead G78 1BD	3
ES06	Barrhead, Liboside & Uplawmoor	Auchenback Resource Centre 64 Aurs Drive Barrhead G78 2LW	3
ES07	Newton Mearns North & Neilston	Glen Halls Main Street Neilston G78 3NL	4
EE01	Newton Mearns North & Neilston	St. Cadoc's P.S. Crookfur Road Newton Mearns G77 6TT	4
EE02	Newton Mearns North & Neilston	Crookfur P.S. Capelrig Road Newton Mearns G77 6LF	4
EE03	Giffnock & Thornliebank	Thornliebank P.S. Main Street Thornliebank G46 7RW	2
EE04	Giffnock & Thornliebank	Giffnock P.S. Academy Road Giffnock G46 6JL	5
EE05	Giffnock & Thornliebank	Braidbar P.S. Kyle Drive Giffnock G46 6ES	3
EE06	Giffnock & Thornliebank	Woodfarm Education Centre 1 Burns Grove Thornliebank G46 7HF	2
EE07	Giffnock & Thornliebank	Carmichael Hall Eastwood Park Giffnock G46 7JS	2

EE08	Clarkston, Netherlee & Williamwood	Netherlee Pavillion Linn Park Avenue Netherlee G44 3PL	4
EE09	Clarkston, Netherlee & Williamwood	Clarkston Hall Clarkston Toll Clarkston G76 8NE	4
EE10	Clarkston, Netherlee & Williamwood	Williamwood Parish Church 4 Vardar Avenue Clarkston G76 7QP	3
EE11	Clarkston, Netherlee & Williamwood	Carolside P.S. Ashfield Road Clarkston G76 7TX	4
EE12	Clarkston, Netherlee & Williamwood	Busby P.S. Church Road Busby G76 8EB	4
EE13	Newton Mearns South & Eaglesham	Fairweather Hall Barrhead Road Newton Mearns G77 6BB	2
EE14	Newton Mearns South & Eaglesham	Broom Parish Church Mearns Road Newton Mearns G77 5HN	4
EE15	Newton Mearns South & Eaglesham	Kirkhill P.S. Kirkhill Road Newton Mearns G77 5RJ	4
EE16	Newton Mearns South & Eaglesham	Mearns Kirk Church Hall Eglesham Road Newton Mearns G77 5DE	3
EE17	Newton Mearns South & Eaglesham	Montgomerie Hall Gilmour Street Eglesham G76 0LH	4