

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

13 February 2014

Report by Deputy Chief Executive

STATUTORY REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To seek approval of the new polling scheme for the East Renfrewshire area.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That the Council:-
 - (a) approve the new polling scheme; and
 - (b) agree 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. In terms of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended) local authorities are required to divide their area into polling districts for the purposes of parliamentary elections and to designate polling places for these polling districts and keep them under review.
4. The Electoral Administration Act 2006 further amended the Representation of the People Act 1983 by introducing a statutory duty for all polling districts and polling places for the purposes of parliamentary elections to be reviewed by the end of 2007 and at least every four years thereafter.
5. The last review took place in East Renfrewshire in 2010 at which time there was some slight change to a small number of polling districts to reflect the changed Scottish Parliament constituency boundaries.
6. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced new provisions which require councils to conduct a review of their polling scheme (that is the current polling districts and polling places) at any time in the period of 16 months beginning 1 October 2013 and within the 16 month period every 5 years thereafter.

REPORT

7. At the meeting of the Council on 11 December 2013, the Council considered a report regarding arrangements for the review of the Council's polling scheme.

8. The report outlined the wide ranging consultation that had taken place on the previously approved scheme, provided details of and comments in respect of each of the responses that had been received, and explained why it was not proposed to make any alterations to the scheme at that time but that the scheme be used as a basis for a second phase of consultation. This was agreed by the Council.

9. Following agreement by the Council, all parties who had been contacted as part of the initial consultation were again contacted. They were advised of the Council's decision and invited to make any further comments on the now approved draft scheme. A copy of the statutory notice and report considered by the Council were sent out at the same time

10. Replies were received from the following:-

- Ken Macintosh MSP – No comments to make on the proposals
- Councillor Swift – Disagreeing with needless time off school.
- Deborah McVey (Eaglesham PS Parent Council) – Information was sought regarding the percentage of postal voters in East Renfrewshire and that number broken down into polling districts if possible. The percentage figure was provided. However postal vote numbers by polling district are not recorded; the figure only goes as far as ward level and this figure was provided for the Busby, Clarkston and Eaglesham Ward.
- Kay Reilly (St Joseph's PS Parent Council) – No comment other than to say that on polling day children from schools being used as polling stations often congregate around the school. This information has been passed to the Director of Education.

11. At the December meeting, in addition to the places already proposed as alternatives, Councillor McCaskill suggested that the possibility of using Giffnock South Parish Church Hall as an alternative to Carmichael Hall be investigated.

12. Arrangements were made to visit the hall and the following comments are made:-

13. The hall building itself is of a good size and would be able to be used satisfactorily as a polling station. Parking in the vicinity of the hall is poor – there is limited car parking next to the hall and only off street parking on Greenhill Avenue. There is no dedicated disabled parking. The hall is not owned by the Council and this introduces an element of unnecessary risk in that access cannot be guaranteed in the way that it can be for Council premises. Discussions took place with the hall keeper who has confirmed that the hall is extensively used and it is unlikely that they would be able to allocate the hall for use as a polling place.

14. Taking account of the above it is not recommended to change from Carmichael Hall to Giffnock South Parish Church Hall.

15. As part of the initial consultation, Councillor Swift had suggested that Broom Parish Church Hall be used as an alternative to Kirkhill Primary School. This was investigated at the time and for a number of reasons reported to the Council it was recommended not to use the hall. This was agreed by the Council.

16. As part of the second phase of consultation further discussion took place with the hall keeper and it has now been confirmed that the hall is extensively used and the church could not guarantee its availability to the Council.

17. In view of the foregoing it is not proposed to make any further changes to the draft scheme previously approved by the Council, a copy of which is attached (Appendix 1).

18. It should 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. As mentioned earlier, the next review will need to take place within the 16 months commencing 1 October 2018. 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, for example due to fire or flood.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

19. The cost of carrying out the review relates to officer time and some costs associated with postage and will be met from existing resources.

CONSULTATION

20. As part of the exercise, consultation has taken place as detailed in Paragraphs 8 and 9 above.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

21. There is a legal requirement to conduct a review by April 2015 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 has been conducted using existing staff resources. There are no implications in terms of equalities or IT.

CONCLUSIONS

22. The Council is required to conduct a review of polling places and polling districts by 2015. However, the review is being carried out now to allow the new arrangements to be in place in time for the raft of forthcoming elections and Scottish independence referendum. Once the review has been completed and a final scheme approved, a further review will not be required until October 2018. Consideration has been given to any comments received regarding alternatives to the current polling places but on balance it is not recommended that any changes be made.

RECOMMENDATION

23. That the Council:-

- (a) approve the new polling scheme; and
- (b) agree 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.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

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Appendix 1 – Proposed Polling Scheme

Polling District Ref.No.	Ward	Polling Place	No. of Stations
ES01	Neilston, Uplawmoor & Newton Mearns North	Mure Hall Uplawmoor G78 4AD	1
ES02	Neilston, Uplawmoor & Newton Mearns North	Neilston P.S. 43 High Street Neilston G78 3HJ	5
EE01	Neilston, Uplawmoor & Newton Mearns North	St. Cadoc's P.S. Crookfur Road Newton Mearns G77 6TT	4
EE02	Neilston, Uplawmoor & Newton Mearns North	Crookfur P.S. Capelrig Road Newton Mearns G77 6LF	4
EE03	Neilston, Uplawmoor & Newton Mearns North	Fairweather Hall Barrhead Road Newton Mearns G77 6BB	2
ES03	Barrhead	Cross Arthurlie P.S. Fern Drive Barrhead G78 1JF	4
ES04	Barrhead	Dalmeny Community Centre Barnes Street Barrhead G78 1EH	2
ES05	Barrhead	Arthurlie Parish Church Ralston Road Barrhead G78 2QQ	3
ES06	Barrhead	Carlibar P.S. Carlibar Road Barrhead G78 1BD	3
ES07	Barrhead	Auchenback Resource Centre 64 Aurs Drive Barrhead G78 2LW	3
EE04	Giffnock & Thornliebank	Thornliebank P.S. Main Street Thornliebank G46 7RW	2
EE05	Giffnock & Thornliebank	OLM P.S. Robslee Road Thornliebank G46 7DD	2
EE06	Giffnock & Thornliebank	Giffnock P.S. Academy Road Giffnock G46 6JL	5
EE07	Giffnock & Thornliebank	Braidbar P.S. Kyle Drive Giffnock G46 6ES	3

Polling District Ref.No.	Ward	Polling Place	No. of Stations
EE08	Netherlee, Stamperland & Williamwood	Netherlee P.S. Clarkston Road Netherlee G44 3SF	4
EE09	Netherlee, Stamperland & Williamwood	Clarkston Hall Clarkston Toll Clarkston G76 8NE	4
EE10	Netherlee, Stamperland & Williamwood	Carmichael Hall Eastwood Park Giffnock G46 7JS	2
EE11	Netherlee, Stamperland & Williamwood	Williamwood Parish Church Seres Road Clarkston G76 7QP	3
EE12	Newton Mearns South	Crookfur Pavilion Ayr Road Newton Mearns G77 6DR	4
EE13	Newton Mearns South	Kirkhill P.S. Kirkhill Road Newton Mearns G77 5RJ	4
EE14	Newton Mearns South	Mearns Kirk Church Hall Eaglesham Road Newton Mearns G77 5DE	3
EE15	Busby, Clarkston & Eaglesham	Busby P.S. Church Road Busby G76 8EB	4
EE16	Busby, Clarkston & Eaglesham	Carolside P.S. Ashfield Road Clarkston G76 7TX	4
EE17	Busby, Clarkston & Eaglesham	Eaglesham P.S. Strathaven Road Eaglesham G76 0LF	4
EE18	Busby, Clarkston & Eaglesham	Clarkston Hall Clarkston Toll Clarkston G76 8NE	1