

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Council
DATE	2 September 2019
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places
REPORT NUMBER	GOV/19/323
CHIEF OFFICER	Fraser Bell
REPORT AUTHOR	David Gow
TERMS OF REFERENCE	Statute

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to gain the final approval of the Council for the list of polling districts and polling places, following public consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Council :-

- 2.1 Approves the recommended changes to polling districts as outlined in section 3.8 below and in Appendix 1. These changes will come into effect when the Boundary Commission for Scotland's final report and recommendations for the 2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies is approved by the Westminster Parliament.
- 2.2 Approves the recommended changes to polling places as outlined in section 3.9 and in Appendix 2. Notes where these are dependent on the Boundary Commission for Scotland's final report and recommendations for the 2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies being approved by the Westminster Parliament.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council considered a report on the matter (GOV/19/253) at its meeting on 24 June 2019. The Council (i) agreed the recommended changes to polling

districts as outlined, (ii) agreed the recommended changes to polling places as outlined and (iii) agreed to proceed to public consultation.

Public Consultation

- 3.2 The public consultation was advertised on the Council website, on the Town House notice board, at the Central Library and using the Council social media channels. Consultation was also undertaken with the Electoral Registration Officer, Returning Officer for Aberdeenshire, the Disability Equity Partnership and Community Councils.

Comments Received Regarding Polling Districts

- 3.3 A query was received from Kirsty Blackman MP regarding the reason Palmerston (CN1202) is a very small polling district. The existing UK parliamentary boundary requires this polling district as it cuts through this very small part of Ward 12. However, if the 2018 Review proposals come into force, the boundary changes make this polling district unnecessary. It would then be merged with Bon-Accord (CS1201) and the districts renumbered to maintain sequential numbering. This change is therefore added to the final recommendations for polling districts.
- 3.4 Rosemount and Mile End Community Council expressed concern that the proposed revised UK parliamentary constituency boundaries split the Community Council area and will in time lead to the Community Council being broken up. The consultation period and time for responses in relation to the Review of UK parliamentary constituencies has passed and therefore it is too late to influence the final recommendations of the Boundary Commission for Scotland. Community Council boundaries are not dependent upon the UK parliamentary constituency boundaries and the implementation of revised parliamentary boundaries will not in itself lead to a change or review of the Community Council boundaries.

Responses Received Regarding Polling Places

3.5 Skene Square School

At the meeting of the Disability Equity Partnership on 17th July, concern was raised by one member of the group regarding access to Skene Square School. Issues raised included car parking, availability of ramps and access for wheelchair users. The member of the group who raised it did not have direct experience of voting at this polling place. There is car parking available and a permanent ramp to the entrance in place. On raising the concerns with polling staff, they had not received any negative feedback on access at the recent European Parliamentary Elections. One member of staff did mention that it may be preferable to open both sets of double doors that are situated on the route to the polling station and we will make note to do this in future. It is recommended that Skene Square Primary is continued to be used as a polling place.

3.6 Braehead School

A representation was received from a member of the public proposing St Columba's Church as an alternative to the use of Braehead School. It is agreed that this is a suitable alternative and it is recommended that this be the polling place for the Balgownie (DN0207) polling district.

3.7 Riverbank School

A representation was received from Riverbank Parent Council proposing Tillydrone Community Campus as an alternative to the use of Riverbank School. It is agreed that this is a suitable alternative and it is recommended that this be the polling place for the Tillydrone (CN0601) polling district.

Recommended Changes to Polling Districts

- 3.8 It is recommended that the changes to polling districts outlined in the report to Council of 24 June 2019 (GOV/19/253) be approved with the following addition;

Polling District	Recommended Change
Palmerston (CN1202)	To be merged with polling district Bon-Accord (CS1201) on implementation of revised polling district boundaries.

Recommended Changes to Polling Places

- 3.9 It is recommended that the changes to polling places outlined in the report to Council of 24 June 2019 (GOV/19/253) be approved with the following additions;

Polling District	Previous Polling Place	Recommended Change	Explanation (including timescale)
Balgownie DN0207 (previously DG0207)	Braehead School	St Columba's Church	Following representation from a member of the public, St Columba's Church provides a suitable alternative from after the Bridge of Don by-election. Braehead School will be used at the Bridge of Don by-election.
Tillydrone CN0601	Riverbank School	Tillydrone Community Campus	Following representation from Riverbank Parent Council, Tillydrone Community Campus provides a suitable alternative from its opening in August 2019.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 For the 2017 General Election, combined expenditure for the Aberdeen North and Aberdeen South constituencies was £379,518.92 and income was £377,384.98. For UK Parliamentary General Elections contested under the revised boundaries, we could expect to see a proportionate rise in these sums based on an increase in electorate, geographical coverage, staffing and polling place hire that the three additional polling districts will give. Using the proportionate change of the number of polling districts increasing from 90 to 93, projected expenditure increases by just under £13,000. The difference between expenditure and income increases from £2134 to £2206. The projected unrecoverable element is small enough that it could be expected to be accommodated within existing budget.

Following the Council meeting of 24 June 2019, the Returning Officer wrote to Scottish and UK Governments to draw attention to the discrepancy that exists for Local Authorities between election expenditure and recovered income and to ask that a review be carried out of the funding criteria. A response has yet to be received.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Timings of statutory reviews of polling districts and polling places are specified in the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013. The next statutory review must take place between 1st October 2018 and 31st January 2020.
- 5.2 The requirements of this review are set out in Schedule A1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

	Risk	Low (L), Medium (M), High (H)	Mitigation
Financial	The Council does not get reimbursed for all the additional expenditure caused by the extended boundaries.	Low	The Council will claim all additional costs, although there is always an element which is not accepted.
Legal	The review is a statutory requirement and must be complied with.	N/A	The Council will comply with its statutory duty.
Employee	There is no employee risk (the Returning	N/A	

	Officer is a separate employer)		
Customer	There will be no risk to customers in the Council area, beyond the fact that some voters will be using new polling places	Low	All voters are advised of polling places on their polling cards. All proposed new polling places have been risk assessed.
Environment	There will be no additional environmental risk	N/A	
Technology	There will be no additional technological risk	N/A	
Reputational	There will be no additional reputational risk	N/A	

7. OUTCOMES

Local Outcome Improvement Plan Themes

The proposals in this report have no direct impact on the LOIP

Design Principles of Target Operating Model

	Impact of Report
Organisational Design	The report complies with legislation
Governance	The report promotes, through the identification of designated local polling places, participation in the democratic process
Partnerships and Alliances	The incorporation of former Aberdeenshire polling districts into Aberdeen North and Aberdeen South constituencies will involve working with Aberdeenshire Council and the staff who ordinarily work in those locations. In more general terms, the hire of venues as polling places involves close working with the partners who are the owners of the respective properties.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment	Completed
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Duty of Due Regard / Fairer Scotland Duty	Not required

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: List of recommended changes to polling districts following consultation.

Appendix 2: Full list of recommended polling places following consultation.

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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