

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Council
DATE	14 May 2014
LEAD OFFICER	Chief Executive
TITLE OF REPORT	Polling Places at the Scottish Independence Referendum
REPORT NUMBER	OCE/14/013
CHECKLIST RECEIVED	YES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

At its meeting on 5 March 2014, the Council considered a report from the Chief Executive regarding Polling Places at the Scottish Independence Referendum (OCE /14/004).

It was noted within that report that the polling scheme for the Scottish Independence Referendum shows an increase in polling stations at a number of polling places. The report proposed changes to polling places in order to accommodate this increase.

The purpose of this report is to gain the final approval of the Council, following public consultation, for the proposed changes to polling places for the Scottish Independence Referendum.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Council

- i. agrees the proposed changes to polling places for the Scottish Independence Referendum as outlined;
- ii. notes that officers will make all necessary arrangements to ensure that the Chief Counting Officer's Directions are met in full; and
- iii. agrees that a report providing an update on the arrangements being put in place for the delivery of the Scottish Independence Referendum will be brought to the Council at its meeting on 25 June 2014.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

The Council considered a report from the Chief Executive on the matter (OCE/14/004) at its meeting on 5 March 2014. The Council i) agreed the recommended changes to polling places as outlined and iii) agreed to proceed to public consultation on the recommendations

Public Consultation

The public consultation was advertised on the Council website, with the Disability Advisory Group and with Dyce and Stoneywood Community Council. Braeside and Mannofield Community Council is not currently established.

The deadline for representations was Friday 4 April 2104. No representations were received and it is therefore proposed that the following changes to polling places for the Scottish Independence Referendum be made.

Polling District	DG0102 (Dyce North)	SS1102 (Mannofield)
Normal Polling Place	Dyce Church Hall	Mannofield Church Centenary Hall
Recommended Change for the Scottish Independence Referendum	Dyce Church – Dr Cox Room	Mannofield Church Hall
Reason for Change	Dyce Church Hall will accommodate 4 polling stations in total for polling districts DG0101 (Kirkhill) and DG0103 (Dyce South). This is the maximum number it can hold. Dyce Church – Dr Cox Room is located close by and across the road from Dyce Church Hall.	Mannofield Church Centenary Hall will accommodate 2 polling stations for polling district SS1103 (Broomhill West). The maximum number it can hold is 3. A further 2 polling stations are required for SS1102. Mannofield Church Centenary Hall and Mannofield Church Hall are part of the same building.

Chief Counting Officer's Directions

Late on Friday 2 May, after the original version of this report had been submitted for circulation to members, the Chief Executive in her capacity as Counting Officer for the Scottish Independence Referendum in Aberdeen City received her copy of the Chief Counting Officer's Directions for the Referendum.

The Directions are concerned with ensuring consistency across Scotland in such matters as the colour of the ballot papers, the official mark, the ballot paper numbering system, dates for the dispatch of poll cards and postal ballot packs, the quantities of ballot papers to be printed and the timing of and method to be used for the count. All of these will be accommodated within the plans already in place for the delivery of the Referendum in the City.

The key Direction that will require an alteration to what is currently planned is the instruction to all Counting Officers to ensure that there should be a maximum of 800 electors, excluding postal voters, allocated to each polling station. The attached polling scheme which increases the number of polling stations in use for the Referendum to 174 from the 132 used for the European Parliamentary Elections is based on 1,000 electors, excluding postal voters, being allocated to each polling station.

Work is now underway to make the arrangements necessary to meet the requirements of the Direction and it is currently estimated that a further 90+ polling stations will now be required. The intention will be to ensure that the vast majority of these are housed within existing polling places, but it is likely that additional polling places will also be required.

The Direction will also mean that additional staffing will now be required in order to deliver the Referendum (for example each polling station requires a Presiding Officer and a Polling Clerk). The initial estimate is that in total up to 300 additional staff will now be required.

Members will be aware that it is the statutory duty of the Council to place at the disposal of the Returning Officer the services of officers employed by the Council to assist in the discharge of the Returning Officer's functions in relation to elections. For the Scottish Independence Referendum, the Council is under a similar duty to provide, or ensure the provision of, such property, staff and services as the Counting Officer may require to carry out her functions.

The Chief Executive in her capacity as Counting Officer will discuss with members of the Corporate Management Team the allocation of property, staff and services on 18 and 19 September to ensure the proper and effective conduct of the Scottish Independence Referendum in Aberdeen.

An update report on the arrangements being put in place for the Referendum will be brought to the Council at its meeting on 25 June 2014.

6. IMPACT

When identifying suitable polling places the aim is to put the interest of voters first and to ensure equality of access. The Returning Officer has a statutory duty to encourage electoral participation and selection of appropriate polling places is an important part of this. Feedback and requests from local communities are always considered and acted upon where possible and appropriate.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

It is important that the designated polling places are determined in time for the Scottish Independence Referendum and that they are fit for purpose.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Polling Places at the Scottish Independence Referendum, report to Council Meeting of 5 March 2014 (OCE/14/004)

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

David Gow
Team Manager (Civic Support)
davidgow@aberdeencity.gov.uk
01224 523881

Ciaran Monaghan
Head of Service, Office of Chief Executive
cmonaghan@aberdeencity.gov.uk
01224 522293