

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Executive

Council: 26 September 2007

Subject: Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To advise of the requirement on the Council to conduct a review of polling districts and places within its area and to outline the timetable and processes for carrying out this review.

2. Background

- 2.1** The Electoral Administration Act 2006 imposed a duty on Councils to review polling districts and polling places within their boundaries by the end of 2007. Under the new legislation, Councils must seek to ensure that all electors in parliamentary constituencies within their areas have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, every polling place within the area is accessible to electors who are disabled.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The review should be carried out in time for the preparation of the new register. This means that any proposed changes to polling districts would have to be notified to the Electoral Registration Officer in detail by early November.
- 3.2** To comply with the statutory timetable, notice of the review was given on 10 September 2007. The Notice was published in Council offices and libraries and on the website. A copy of the notice forms Appendix I to this minute.
- 3.3** The Council is required by law to consult the local parliamentary Returning Officer, who must submit representations to the authority on the polling scheme. These representations must be published by the authority with relevant parties being given the opportunity to comment on them. The Returning Officer's representations were accordingly published on the website and made available in offices and libraries for consultation. A copy has previously been issued to each member. A summary is attached to this report as Appendix II.
- 3.4** Letters inviting comments on the existing polling scheme and on the Returning Officer's representations were issued to Elected Members and to a range of local organisations representing disabled and elderly people.
- 3.5.** The closing date for representations is 5 October 2007. Representations from electors and other concerned individuals and organisations will be incorporated into a report to Council at its meeting on 31 October 2007.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** There are no personnel issues associated with these proposals.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** There are potentially financial implications of adopting new polling places which require improved access as only 50% of funding is met by the Scotland Office in preparation for an election. Costs will vary depending on the number of premises used and the nature of adaptations required. At present, all of our designated polling places have disabled access.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** No risk analysis is required.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1** The polling scheme was used as recently as 3 May 2007 in the combined Scottish Parliament and local elections. The existing polling places worked well. To take account of the complexity of the May elections, the number of voters at each station was reduced to an average of 500 to 800. It is not recommended that the Council modify the polling places or districts at this stage, unless strong representations are received from electors or relevant organisations. However, for a Westminster election at which only one ballot paper is required per elector, it is appropriate to increase the number of voters at each station to an average of 800 to 1200 and accordingly to reduce the number of polling stations at each polling place.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1** It is recommended that the Council adopt the representations submitted by the Returning Officer as its preferred polling scheme and that a final decision be taken thereon at the next meeting in the light of any public representations received within the consultation period.

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David McMillan
Chief Executive
Date: 7 September 2007

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Appendix I: Notice of the Review
Appendix II: Summary of Returning Officer's representations

Background Papers: Electoral Administration Act 2006, Section 16
Statutory Instrument No 2965 "The Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006"

Wards Affected: All wards