

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL****Report by Strategic Lead - Regulatory****Council: 16 December 2020**

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**Subject: Interim Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2020****1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to advise the Council of the response to the consultation on the interim review of polling districts and polling places involving the Leven, Dumbarton and Clydebank Central Wards and to seek approval of the final polling scheme.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** It is recommended:

- (a) that the Council agrees to adopt the changes to the scheme of polling districts and polling places as shown in Appendix 1 and detailed in paragraph 4.9 to this report; and
- (b) that given the current Covid-19 pandemic and the uncertainty over the position at the time of the elections in May 2021, the Council is asked to agree that the Returning Officer has delegated authority to vary the polling scheme where an approved polling place is no longer deemed suitable due to the guidelines on social distancing in force at that time.

**3. Background**

- 3.1** At its meeting on 26 August 2020, the Council approved the arrangements for conducting the review and accordingly copies of the Returning Officer's representations were sent to all elected members, the local MP, MSPs, and a range of local community organisations including those which represent disabled and elderly people, for comment. The deadline for submission of responses to the consultation was 12 November 2020.
- 3.2** The review focussed primarily on those polling districts where schools were used and alternative buildings were available. The election team also took the opportunity to inspect some other buildings within these districts which previously had not been available for use. Local members were invited to comment on these suggestions prior to the Returning Officer publishing her representations as part of the wider public consultation which included all elected members.

**4. Main Issues**

### Polling Districts

- 4.1** The polling district boundaries were last reviewed in 2018 and no issues have been identified since then. Accordingly, there are no proposals to change polling district boundaries as part of this interim review.

### Polling Places

- 4.2** As previously stated, in order to identify the various options which could be considered as part of this review, local members from the Leven, Dumbarton and Clydebank Central Wards were asked to submit their views on some of the initial proposals put forward by the election team and were invited to suggest other alternatives, if any.
- 4.3** The following options were presented in respect of the Leven Ward:

#### Renton

Option 1 - Use the Carman Centre instead of Renton Primary School (LE7D)

Option 2 – Use the Carman Centre instead of both the Renton Primary School (LE7D) and St Martin's Church Hall (LE6D) and merge the two polling districts into one.

#### Bonhill

Use a hall in Bonhill Church instead of Bonhill Primary School (LE10D).

#### Bellsmyre

Use the Cutty Sark Centre in place of the Bellsmyre School Campus (LE11D).

#### Lomond Gate/Townend (LE12D)

Use St Patrick's Church Hall or Dumbarton Golf Club in place of Braehead Primary School (LE12D).

- 4.3.1** Comments were received from one elected member from the Leven Ward as follows:

1. Use the Carman Centre in Renton and then revert to the new School Campus in Renton when ready.
2. Keep St Martin's Church Hall.
3. Keep Bonhill Primary School.
4. Agree to switch to Cutty Sark Centre.
5. Keep Braehead Primary School.

**4.3.2** The election team agreed with the use of Carman Centre in Renton in place of Renton Primary School and to retain St Martin's Church Hall given the distances some electors would have to travel to vote. However, they recommended that the new school campus should not be used unless the Carman Centre proved to be unsuitable or was not available as a polling place. Since the initial consultation with local elected members, the Carman Centre has advised that they are not able to accept any external bookings at present due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

**4.3.3** The election team also held the view that Bonhill Church should be used instead of Bonhill Primary School and both new venues should be reviewed in light of any comments received after their use in Scottish Parliamentary Elections in May 2021. The election team supported the proposed change to the Cutty Sark Centre and that Braehead Primary School should continue to be used for voters in LE12D (Lomond Gate/Townend) due to the distances involved to travel for electors in the furthest parts of the Lomond Gate estate.

**4.4** The following options were presented in respect of the Dumbarton Ward:

Townend/Barloan (DU17D)

Use St Patrick's Church Hall in place of Braehead Primary School; and/or

Dumbarton East (DU19D)

Use St Patrick's Church Hall in place of Knoxland Primary School (DU19D); and/or

Silverton (DU20D)

Use St Patrick's Church Hall in place of St Patrick's Primary School (DU20D).

Westbridgend (DU13D)

Use West Kirk Church Hall in place of the Mobile Polling Place at Westbridgend high flats car park.

**4.4.1** Comments were received from two local members as follows:

St Patrick's Church Hall is not convenient for the vast majority of residents that currently vote in St Patrick's Primary or Knoxland Primary. All residents will be required to walk further so such a step is not supported. In addition, given that the next planned election is only 12 months away, and social distance requirements may very likely have to be implemented these two current polling stations should not be relocated to St Patrick's Church Hall.

**4.4.2** The election team agreed with these comments on the basis of the distances involved for voters to travel and that St Patrick's Hall was not located within either polling district. Given that it has already been proposed that Braehead Primary School would be used for voters from LE12D it makes sense to use it for voters from DU17D which has worked well in the past.

**4.5** The following option was presented in respect of the Clydebank Central Ward:

Kilbowie (CC8C)

Use the Hub Community Centre in place of Kilbowie Primary School (CC8C).

**4.6** One local member and a member of public commented on the proposal and supported the use of the Hub Community Centre. A representative from the Access Panel made the undernoted comment in respect of the proposal:

Part of the proposal was to use The Hub instead of Kilbowie School. Our concerns are the accessibility of the building. Elderly and disabled people would not be able to access the building through the front entrance. If they take the side entrance where the ramp is, there are problems with the uneven ground where people park at the moment and there are a couple of spaces for blue badge holders. Wheelchair users, people with mobility problems and elderly people experience problems walking on it.

**4.7** The election team's proposal is to use the entrance on Kilbowie Road which is accessible via the ramp but the Access Panel has raised concerns about uneven ground to the rear of the premises where there are spaces for disabled parking. These issues have been brought to the attention of West Dunbartonshire Leisure Trust who manage the premises and hopefully works will be carried out prior to the next poll which addresses the issues raised by the panel.

Feedback from consultation

**4.8** Only one response was received from the consultation as follows:

In addition to the normal access considerations etc., the Council must make sure that the polling places the Council chooses can be operated safely with social distancing for staff and voters. The Council will have to plan for socially distanced queues and there must be room for polling agents to attend.

**4.9** Having considered all of the issues highlighted above and the views of local elected members, the Returning Officer has recommended that:

- (a) if available, the Carman Centre is used instead of Renton Primary School (LE7D) with the school being the nominated contingency polling place;
- (b) Bonhill Church (Angus Room) is used instead of Bonhill Primary School (LE10D);

- (c) the Cutty Sark Centre is used in place of the Bellsmyre School Campus (LE11D);
- (d) West Kirk Church Hall is used in place of the Mobile Polling Place at Westbridgend high flats car park (DU13D); and
- (e) the Hub Community Centre is used in place of Kilbowie Primary School (CC8C), subject to the issues raised by the Access Panel being addressed prior to any future poll.

**4.10** Copies of the layouts for all of the proposed polling places above are detailed in Appendix 2 to this report. Copies of maps showing the location of the proposed and existing polling places within each polling district can be viewed on the [Council's website](#).

**4.11** It should also be noted that the Council had previously agreed that the new Dalmonach Community Centre, when opened, should be used as the polling place for LE8D.

**4.12** Given the current Covid-19 pandemic and the uncertainty over the position at the time of the elections in May 2021, the Council is asked to agree that the Returning Officer has delegated authority to vary the polling scheme where an approved polling place is no longer deemed suitable due to the guidelines on social distancing in force at that time. The election team has identified a list of contingency polling places which can be used in the event that the approved polling place is deemed to be unsuitable due to social distancing. Some of these places will be schools which will already be closed on 6 May 2021, as this has been identified as an in-service day.

## **5. People Implications**

**5.1** There are no implications for employees of this Council.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Implications**

**6.1** The only elections funded by the Council are the Local Government Elections and any Local Government by-elections which may occur from time to time. The proposals contained within this report will reduce these costs by approximately £2000 as the Council will no longer need to hire portacabins and ramps for use as polling places.

**6.2** There are no procurement implications for the Council arising from this report.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

**7.1** The Council is required to review its polling scheme on a regular basis to ensure it is fit for purpose. Failure to do so could result in reputational damage to the Council.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 8.1** The Council must ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, every polling place within its area is accessible to electors who are disabled.
- 8.2** An EIA screening was carried out in respect of the proposals and no impacts on equality groups were identified with exception to the issues raised by the Access Panel on the Hub Community Centre which must be addressed prior to the centre being used as a polling place. All proposed polling places have been inspected by members of the election team and all have been assessed as suitable. The above proposals should not prevent anyone from being able to vote regardless of their circumstances as anyone can apply for a postal vote and persons with disabilities will be also able to appoint a proxy to vote on their behalf, if they so choose. The Returning Officer will ensure that all voters are notified of any changes to their polling place via their poll card which will also contain full information on how to apply for a postal vote or a proxy vote in advance of any forthcoming election or referendum.

## **9. Consultation**

- 9.1** Officers from legal and finance have been consulted on the content of this report.
- 9.2** The formal public consultation process commenced on 1 October 2020 and concluded on 12 November 2020. All comments received from the elected members have been included in this report. There were no comments received from members of public and community groups.

## **10. Strategic Assessment**

- 10.1** This report does not have a direct impact on the Council's Strategic priorities.

**Peter Hessett**  
**Strategic Lead - Regulatory**

**Date: 17 November 2020**

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**Appendices:** 1. Proposed list of polling places and districts for Leven, Dumbarton and Clydebank Central Wards.

2. Layouts of proposed polling places.

**Background Papers:** Interim Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places  
2020 - Returning Officer's Representations.

**Wards Affected:** Leven, Dumbarton and Clydebank Central.