

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2023-24

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires Argyll and Bute Council to undertake a review, between the dates of 2 October 2023 and 28 January 2025, of polling districts and polling places within the Argyll and Bute area for the purposes of UK Parliamentary, Scottish Parliamentary and Local Government elections.

The Council is being asked to agree the following recommendations:-

- a) Note that polling districts and polling places will continue to be reviewed on an on-going basis by the Returning Officer to whom authority has already been delegated to make alterations in response to changing circumstances;
- b) Note that under the provisions of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 a further formal review of polling districts and polling places will require to be carried out by the end of January 2030 and on a 5 yearly basis thereafter;
- c) Approve the scheme of polling districts and polling places detailed in Appendix 1;
- d) Note the representations received during the consultation period detailed in Appendix 2 together with the Returning Officer comments thereon.

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2023-24

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires Argyll and Bute Council to undertake a review, between the dates of 2 October 2023 and 28 January 2025, of polling districts and polling places within the Argyll and Bute area for the purposes of UK Parliamentary, Scottish Parliamentary and Local Government elections.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is being asked to:-

- 3.1 Note that polling districts and polling places will continue to be reviewed on an on-going basis by the Returning Officer to whom authority has already been delegated to make alterations in response to changing circumstances;
- 3.2 Note that under the provisions of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 a further formal review of polling districts and polling places will require to be carried out by the end of January 2030 and on a 5 yearly basis thereafter;
- 3.3 Approve the scheme of polling districts and polling places detailed in Appendix 1;
- 3.4 Note the representations received during the consultation period detailed in Appendix 2 together with the Returning Officer comments thereon.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 There has always been a requirement on the relevant local authority to keep under review the polling districts and polling places used at parliamentary and local government elections. Section 17 of the Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires every local authority to undertake a review by the end of January 2025, and every fifth year thereafter. In practice in Argyll and Bute the fixing of polling district boundaries and polling places is delegated to the Chief Executive, who also acts as the Returning Officer for parliamentary and local

government elections.

- 4.2 The polling districts and polling places were last reviewed in Argyll and Bute in 2018. The polling district boundaries and polling places are the same for all elections whether UK Parliamentary, Scottish Parliamentary or local government elections.
- 4.3 The aims of the review were to seek to ensure that:
 - (a) all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and
 - (b) so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who may have a disability.
- 4.4 In an ideal world electoral administrators would have the choice of a range of fully accessible buildings, conveniently located for the electors in the area. In practice, however, this is not always the case and there may be little choice available. Where it is necessary to use a place where the access is not ideal then every reasonable adjustment is made to provide access for all electors. The choice of polling place will often be a balance between the quality (access, facilities, etc.) of a building and the distances between the residents and that building compared to other options for polling places. There is no fixed rule on how to decide how this should be done. The legislation provides that all electors in a constituency should have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- 4.5 The review was held from 2 October 2023 and details of the proposals were sent to all Elected Members, Community Councils, relevant Constituency MPs and MSPs, local Access Panels and the Electoral Registration Officer. These proposals are set out in Appendix I. Notices were posted, and copies of the documentation made available for public view, in Kilmory Headquarters and the Civic Centre, Helensburgh and on the Councils website. Representations on the proposed scheme were invited by 30 October 2023.
- 4.6 A number of representations have been received and these are detailed in Appendix 2, together with the Returning Officers comments.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Having taken into account the responses to the consultation, and in the knowledge that (a) polling districts and polling places will continue to be reviewed on an on-going basis by the Returning Officer, to whom authority has already been delegated to make alterations in response to changing circumstances; and (b) under the provisions of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 a further formal review will require to be carried out by 2030 and on a 5 yearly basis thereafter, it is

concluded that Appendix 1 be approved as the final scheme for polling districts and polling stations for Argyll and Bute.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – None
- 6.2 Financial – Reduction in the number of polling places will provide a cost saving for elections.
- 6.3 Legal – The review is in line with the requirement set down in the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.
- 6.4 HR – There will be a reduction in the number of staff required if the revised scheme is agreed.
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty
 - 6.5.1 Equalities – protected characteristics - None
 - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty - None
 - 6.5.3 Islands – Will ensure our island communities are able to participate fully in electoral processes.
- 6.6 Climate Change – Reduction in the number of polling places will reduce travel.
- 6.7 Risk – Reduces the risk of polling place issues as the venues identified all meet the required standards.
- 6.8 Customer Service – Ensures that the people of Argyll and Bute are able to fully participate in electoral processes.

Douglas Hendry – Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support

Policy Lead - Councillor Alastair Redman

November 2023

For further information contact: David Logan, Head of Legal and Regulatory Support

Phone 01546 604322

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – final proposals

Appendix 2 – responses to consultation