



**REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND
POLLING PLACES 2018**

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNTY
CONSTITUENCY**

REPRESENTATIONS BY RETURNING OFFICER

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places West Dunbartonshire County Constituency 2018

Representations by the Returning Officer

1. Background to the Review

- 1.1** West Dunbartonshire Council conducted a review of its polling districts and polling places in 2013. The Council approved the scheme of polling places and polling districts at its meeting on 18 December 2013 following a full public consultation.
- 1.2** Since that review four of the approved polling places are no longer available to use, namely Dalmonach Community Centre, Aitkenbar Primary School and Highdykes Primary School (all within the Leven Ward) and Westbridgend Community Centre (Dumbarton Ward). In 2016/17, the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland approved changes to some of West Dunbartonshire Council's Ward boundaries which also had an impact on some of the existing polling districts' boundaries and minor adjustments were made to align with the new Ward boundaries.
- 1.3** In response to above changes and following an interim review of the Scheme, the Council agreed: (i) that portable mobile polling places be used at Dalmonach and Westbridgend; (ii) that voters in LE11D (Beechwood Housing Estate) should vote in Bonhill Community Centre; and (iii) that the Bellsmyre School Campus should be used in place of Aitkenbar Primary School. These polling places were used in the Local Government Elections in May 2017 and the UK General Election in June 2017.

2. Factors in devising polling schemes

- 2.1** In devising the polling scheme, the Electoral Commission guidance suggests that the following factors should be taken into account:-
- (a) the convenience of the situation of the polling place for local electors;
 - (b) the requirement to ensure that the polling place is accessible to voters with disabilities (statutory);
 - (c) the capacity of the polling place in terms of the number of polling stations it can accommodate;
 - (d) the general suitability of the polling place for electoral use;
 - (e) adequate parking for electors and staff; and
 - (f) suitable kitchen and toilet facilities for election staff who will be in the premises for 15 hours on polling day.

- 2.2** The Council has sought, in recent years, to avoid using schools wherever possible. However, in many cases, schools are still the most convenient and suitable locations for polling places. The existing list of polling places consists of 12 church halls, 10 schools, 9 Leisure Trust premises, 5 private halls (includes Abbotsford Hotel), 2 mobile polling places and 1 library.
- 2.3** Ideally a polling place should be located within the polling district which it serves and this is the case in the majority of polling places within West Dunbartonshire with the exception of Dalmuir Barclay Church Hall and Bonhill Community Centre which serve two adjoining polling districts.
- 2.4** All of the existing polling places for West Dunbartonshire County Constituency and the existing polling districts are listed in Appendix 1 to this paper. Details of the proposed changes to polling districts is summarised in Appendix 2 to this paper for ease of reference.

3. Accessibility

- 3.1** The accessibility of premises used as polling places has steadily improved over the years. All the existing polling places have disabled access and any new polling place under consideration needs to be assessed for accessibility before being adopted.

4. The Representations

- 4.1** The representations I have made take the form of a comparative list of polling places, giving details of the proposed polling districts which poll at each polling place and the number of electors in each (including 16 and 17 year olds which are included in Scottish Local Government and Scottish Parliamentary Elections but not UK Parliamentary Elections) together with a suggested number of polling stations at each place. Thereafter, each polling place is reviewed individually and comments where applicable (see Appendix 3). A diagram of each polling place is provided which depicts the internal layout of the polling place together with details of access for disabled voters (see Appendix 4). Large scale maps of the existing polling districts and proposed polling districts are available to view on the Council website at <http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/voting-and-elections/interim-review-polling-places-polling-districts/> and at the Council Offices, Church Street, Dumbarton and Clydebank Library, Dumbarton Road, Clydebank.

Polling Districts

- 4.2** In 2016, the Council agreed that some minor changes be made to polling district boundaries arising from the Boundary Commission for Scotland's Review of Local Government Wards.
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- 4.3** The election team has now reviewed all of the polling districts' boundaries in light of these changes and has proposed the following changes: (i) merge existing polling districts LO4D and LO5D into a single polling district and use St. Kessog's Church Hall as the designated polling place; (ii) merge existing polling districts LE10D and LE11D into a single polling district and use Bonhill Community Centre as the designated polling place; and (iii) merge existing polling districts CW12C and CW13C and use Napier Hall as the designated polling place. The polling scheme would then be re-numbered to take account of these changes. In addition to above, there has been one small practical adjustment to the boundary line at Leven St, Dumbarton to allow some electors in properties on the opposite side of the street to Knoxland Primary School to vote there instead of travelling to the Concord Community Centre.
- 4.4** The merger of LO4D and LO5D has been proposed due to the small distance (0.5 mile) between the two polling places both of which have operated with a single polling station for a number of years. At present the Lomond Ward has a total of five polling places which is one more than Kilpatrick Ward with a similar size electorate supported by three elected members. Reducing the number of polling places to four will mean that each polling place in Lomond Ward will accommodate an average of 2295 electors, which would be similar to Kilpatrick Ward which has an average of 2260 electors per polling place. However, some electors will have to travel further to vote. If the polling districts are merged into one then St Kessog's Church Hall is the more central of the two locations and is therefore the logical choice to be retained as polling place.
- 4.5** Following a decision of Council in 2015, electors residing in in LE11D (Beechwood Housing Estate) now vote in the Bonhill Community Centre. This worked well in all elections held during 2016 and 2017 so there is unlikely to be any impact on the public if LE11D and LE10D are merged into one new polling district. It is therefore proposed that the above polling districts should be merged and that Bonhill Community Centre should be the designated polling place for the new polling district LE9D.
- 4.6** Old Kilpatrick is currently served by two polling places namely Gavinburn Primary School and Napier Hall. Given the desire to reduce the number of schools used as polling places it is proposed that all voters in Old Kilpatrick be asked to vote in Napier Hall and the two polling districts be merged to form a new polling district CW12C. Again some voters will have to travel further than before to vote. However, the vast majority of electors who previously voted in Gavinburn Primary will still have to travel less distance to Napier Hall than some of the existing electors who have always voted there.

Polling Places

- 4.7** Following the interim review of the polling scheme in 2016, the Council agreed to use mobile polling places at Dalmonach (LE9D) and at Westbridgend (DU14D). There are now plans in place to rebuild two new community centres in those locations and, if deemed suitable for use, it is proposed that the new

community centres be designated as polling places for those polling districts. It should be noted that the election team is of the view that mobile polling places are only used as a last resort when no other suitable venue is available. They are very small and are not comfortable for staff who have to work there for 15 hours on election day. They are also very expensive to hire and require a special ramp to be built to make sure they are accessible. This aside, the portable cabins are deemed to be suitable as a temporary polling places in the absence of a permanent building.

- 4.8** Given that there are no planned elections until 2021, I am of the view that mobile polling places at Dalmonach and Westbridgend should be used for any unplanned elections until the new community centres are built.

UK Parliamentary Boundary Review 2018

- 4.9** In September 2018, the UK Parliament will consider recommendations by the Boundary Commission which among other things will propose that part of East Dunbartonshire Council's area (parts of Milngavie and North Bearsden) will form part of the new Dunbartonshire West County Constituency for future UK Parliamentary Elections, effective from the next scheduled UK General Election in 2022. Given that East Dunbartonshire Council has local knowledge and expertise in running elections in that area, it is my intention to use those polling districts and places as recommended by East Dunbartonshire Council for that part of the new UK parliamentary boundary. It is understood that East Dunbartonshire Council will carry out its statutory review of its polling scheme in 2019.

Impact of New Housing in West Dunbartonshire

- 4.10** An assessment of the impact on the polling scheme of the number of new properties being built in West Dunbartonshire has been undertaken with the assistance of officers from the Council's Planning Section. While there are a number of new housing developments planned and/or being proposed throughout West Dunbartonshire, there are only a few of significant size to have major impact on the proposed polling scheme. The Queens Quay development will be the most significant with approximately 1800 new houses being built over a period of time. It is proposed that the additional electors from this area will vote in Waterfront Church Hall which has an additional hall with the capacity to cope with up to four additional polling stations. The new housing development in the Castle Road/Castlegreen Street area of Dumbarton East is also significant but there is sufficient space within the large assembly hall in Knoxland Primary School to accommodate the additional polling station needed to cope with the increase in voters. There are also some provisional plans for housing on the Carless Site in Old Kilpatrick but it is not clear at this point whether that development will proceed or not. The Election Office will continue to monitor the situation and report back to Council if an interim review of the scheme is necessary. There are a number of other smaller housing developments which may have some impact of the polling scheme, the details of which are contained in Appendix 3.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 5.1** Having examined the polling districts and polling places for West Dunbartonshire, I am of the opinion that the proposed scheme is fit for purpose and that it takes due cognisance of the needs of electors and, in particular, disabled electors.
- 5.2** If the UK Parliament approves the proposed changes to the UK Parliamentary election boundaries, it is proposed that, subject to consultation, this Council adopts the recommendations of East Dunbartonshire Council following its review in 2019.
- 5.3** I welcome comments on the scheme and on these representations by local electors and interested individuals and organisations, particularly on disability and access issues.
- 5.4** I recommend that the Council adopts the contents of this report as its preferred polling scheme, subject to any improvements arising out of public representations.

Joyce White
Returning Officer
West Dunbartonshire County Constituency