

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2010
Meeting: FALKIRK COUNCIL
Date: 8 DECEMBER 2010
Author: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council is required by Section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983, as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006, to divide its area into polling districts for the purpose of Parliamentary elections for so much of any constituency as is situated in its area and to keep these polling districts under review. The last review of polling districts and polling places was carried out in 2007, with a report to Council on 5 December 2007.
- 1.2 Section 18B of the 1983 Act requires the Council to designate polling places for each polling district in a constituency, and to keep these under review. In so doing, the Council must:-
- (a) ensure that all electors in a constituency in its area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
 - (b) ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled;
 - (c) have regard to the accessibility to disabled persons of potential polling stations in any place which it is considering designating as a polling place or the designation of which as a polling place it is reviewing;
 - (d) ensure the polling place for a polling district is within the district, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the district; and
 - (e) ensure that the polling place for a polling district is small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station.
- 1.3 The 2006 Act requires polling districts and polling places to be reviewed at least once every four years. Falkirk Council's next review was scheduled for 2011 but concerns at a national level following the UK Parliamentary Election in May 2010 regarding the high allocation of electors to polling stations and the consequential queues in such polling places resulted in a recommendation being made by the Electoral Commission that all polling districts and polling places be reviewed without delay. A full review has now been undertaken and the purpose of this report is to present the proposals to Members in relation to both polling districts and polling places across the Falkirk Council area.

- 1.4 The current polling scheme, as used for the UK Parliamentary Election in May 2010, is appended hereto (Appendix 1), together with a summary of feedback from the consultation exercise undertaken as part of the review process and elected Member feedback following the informal consultation meetings (Appendix 2), a summary of the proposals drafted by officers following the consultation exercise and informal meetings with Members (Appendix 3) and a full set of maps demonstrating both the existing and proposed polling districts and the proposed places within each Council Ward (Appendix 4).
- 1.5 The purpose of this report is (a) to advise of the outcome of the review of polling districts and polling places and (b) to seek Members' approval of the proposed polling districts and polling places as detailed within both the report and the appended documentation.

2 THE REVIEW PROCESS

- 2.1 In terms of the Parliamentary Constituencies (Scotland) Order 2005, the Falkirk area comprises two Parliamentary Constituencies, namely (1) Falkirk, with an electorate (as at April 2010) of 81,869, and (2) Linlithgow and East Falkirk, with an electorate of 34,660 within the Falkirk Council area. The Chief Executive of Falkirk Council is Returning Officer for the Falkirk constituency and the Chief Executive of West Lothian Council is Returning Officer for Linlithgow and East Falkirk. Both officers have contributed to this review process.
- 2.2 A number of factors have informed the review. The increase in the proportion of postal voters (currently around 10%) and the falling turnout at elections (around 54% in the last Scottish Parliament and local government elections, but 63% in the 2010 UK Parliamentary election, including postal votes) means that it has been possible to consider larger polling districts, as fewer electors are expected to turn out in person to vote at elections. A beneficial effect of larger polling districts is likely to be a reduction in the cost of holding elections as fewer polling places will require to be hired and staffed and the logistics of setting them up, delivering and collecting polling booths, collecting ballot boxes at close of poll etc will be reduced.
- 2.3 In terms of polling places, there is a requirement to meet high standards of disabled access, which Falkirk Council has already addressed in its current polling places. There has also been a presumption that, where possible, the polling place should be located within the polling district it serves. Additionally, in recent years, Education Services have requested that schools should not be used if there are suitable alternatives, due to the disruption to children's education which elections cause as a result of school closures. These views have been reflected in the comments submitted by parents, PTAs and Parent Councils, as well as by elected Members.
- 2.4 The removal of the former Ward boundaries, at the introduction of Multi-Member Wards, provided an opportunity for historical polling district boundaries to be examined and, where appropriate, new or reformatted polling districts suggested. In addition, new and proposed housing developments have created the need for polling districts to be reviewed in an attempt to rationalise the allocation of electors to appropriate polling places.

- 2.5 The polling scheme attached at Appendix 1 provides details of all current polling districts and indicates the designated polling place and electorate for each as at May 2010. The existing arrangements are the result of work undertaken as part of the planning process in advance of each election from 2007 to 2010 inclusive. As part of the review process, with a view to a new polling scheme being prepared, a list of possible polling places was compiled using the Corporate Address Gazetteer (CAG) from the Council's GIS system. These were mapped and each one identified was considered in terms of its suitability for polling purposes. Although particular premises have been recommended in each case, there may be alternatives which could be considered and further suggestions would be welcomed, whether as part of the current exercise or the next review.

3 CONSULTATION AND FEEDBACK

- 3.1 In terms of the 2006 Act, the Council is required to publish notice of any review. Accordingly, a notice intimating the commencement of the review and inviting representations and suggestions for alternative premises was published in the local press in September 2010. It was also displayed on the Council noticeboards at the Municipal Buildings and was published on the Council website.
- 3.2 The following persons were required to be consulted and were entitled to make representations as part of the review:-
- Constituency Returning Officers
 - Electors within the constituencies falling within Falkirk Council (or parts thereof)
 - Persons with particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons with disabilities
- 3.3 In addition, MPs, MSPs, MEPs and elected Members representing the Falkirk Council area, as well as Central Scotland Police and Community Councils, were consulted. Submissions gathered over recent months on an ad hoc basis were also taken into account, including feedback following the UK Parliamentary election in May 2010.
- 3.4 An online survey was published on the Council website with a link from the home-page. This enabled views to be submitted in relation to polling places, including location, suitability, accessibility, parking, disabled access etc. The closing date for all consultation responses was Friday 22 October 2010.
- 3.5 From the online survey, 16 responses were received. Responses focused primarily on the polling places currently used; very few comments were received in relation to the polling districts.
- 3.6 Several emailed comments were received through the course of the consultation period, most of which endorsed the continued use of existing polling places. A small number of concerns were expressed, the majority relating to the use of schools and suggesting that alternative premises be explored with a view to reducing the number of schools used for polling purposes. In addition, the comments received following the UK Parliamentary election in May 2010 were taken into account and are included in the summary of responses. The summary, including a print-out of the survey findings, is attached at Appendix 2, for Members' information and reference.

- 3.7 On the basis of the feedback received, together with local knowledge gathered over recent months, proposals were then drafted by officers. All Members were invited to consultative meetings with the officers concerned in order that their views could be collated and factored into the final recommendations to Council.
- 3.8 Site visits were carried out on suggested potential polling places to determine their suitability for inclusion in this report. These visits focused primarily on accessibility, particularly in relation to disabled access both internally and externally, location and parking (again including disabled parking provision). Those places which were considered suitable for polling purposes have been included in the proposals being presented to Members.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

- 4.1 As previously stated, the summary of the comments received is appended hereto (Appendix 2). This provides an overview of all comments, together with supplementary remarks where appropriate. The feedback received from elected Members is also included.
- 4.2 Taking all feedback and relevant information into account, the following draft polling scheme has been prepared:

Ward 1 – Bo’ness and Blackness			
Polling District		Proposed Polling Place	Number of electors (as at May 2010)
LE101	Blackness	Blackness Community Hall	340
LE106	Carriden	Cowdenhill Community Centre	2,228
LE111	Bo’ness South East	Bo’ness Recreation Centre	2,883
LE116	Bo’ness Centre	Bo’ness Town Hall	1,175
LE121	Deanfield	Kinneil Bowling Club	1,046
LE126	Deanburn	Deanburn Primary School	1,991
LE131	Maidenpark	Kinneil Primary School	2,246
Total number of electors			11,909
Ward 2 - Grangemouth			
Polling District		Proposed Polling Place	Number of electors (as at May 2010)
FE201	Skinflats	Bothkennar Community Hall	258
LE206	Dalgrain	Dalgrain Community Hall	692
LE211	Newlands	Newlands Community Centre	3,555
LE216	Bowhouse	Bowhouse Community Centre	3,775
LE221	Inchyra	Dundas Resource Centre	1,854
LE226	Grangemouth Centre	Grangemouth Town Hall	3,562
Total number of electors			13,696

Ward 3 – Denny and Bonnybridge			
Polling District		Proposed Polling Place	Number of electors (as at May 2010)
FW301	Dunipace	Dunipace Church Hall	2,122
FW306	Denny Centre	Denny Westpark Church Hall	2,388
FW311	Denny South	Nethermain Primary School	3,991
FW316	Head of Muir & Dennyloanhead	Archibald Russell Centre	2,678
FW321	Banknock	Banknock (Bankier) Community Centre	2,427
FW326	Allandale	Allandale Bowling Club	277
FW331	Fankerton	Fankerton Village Hall	395
Total number of electors			14,278
Ward 4 – Carse, Kinnaird and Tryst			
Polling District		Proposed Polling Place	Number of electors (as at May 2010)
FE401	Airth	Airth Community Hall	1,817
FE406	Carronshore	Carronshore Sports and Social Hall	2,420
FE411	Carron	Stenhousemuir Sports Centre	3,027
FE416	Carron Dams	Stenhouse & Carron Church Hall	2,393
FE421	The Valley	Tryst Community Centre	1,972
FW426	Tryst	Stenhousemuir Primary School	2,304
FW431	Bellsdyke	Kinnaird Primary School	506
FW436	Carronvale Road	Dobbie Hall	8
Total number of electors			14,447
Ward 5 – Bonnybridge and Larbert			
Polling District		Proposed Polling Place	Number of electors (as at May 2010)
FW501	Inches	Kinnaird Primary School	1,089
FW506	South Broomage	Dobbie Hall	1,968
FW511	Larbert	Larbert Primary School	3,022
FW516	North Bonnybridge	Bonnybridge Primary School	3,060
FW521	South Bonnybridge	Bonnybridge Community Centre	3,204
Total number of electors			12,343

Ward 6 – Falkirk North			
Polling District		Proposed Polling Place	Number of electors (as at May 2010)
FW601	The Bog	Westfield Community Centre	1,831
FW606	Callendar Park	Leishman Tower Club Room	1,412
FW611	Victoria	Thornhill Community Centre	3,708
FW616	Falkirk Central	Falkirk Town Hall	2,498
FW621	New Carron	Bainsford Community Centre	4,070
FW626	Dawson	Dawson Centre	1,618
LW631	West Mains	Westfield Community Centre	1
Total number of electors			15,138
Ward 7 – Falkirk South			
Polling District		Proposed Polling Place	Number of electors (as at May 2010)
FW701	Hallglen/Lionthorn	Hallglen Sport Centre	3,502
FW706	Camelon West	Easter Carmuir Primary School	1,943
FW711	Camelon East	Carmuir Primary School	1,275
FW716	Camelon North East	Camelon Education Centre	1,168
FW721	Tamfourhill/Summerford	Tamfourhill Community Centre	1,410
FW726	Bantaskin	Bantaskin Primary School	1,629
FW731	Woodlands	Salvation Army Hall	3,496
FE736	Falkirk rural	Hallglen Sports Centre	71
Total number of electors			14,494
Ward 8 – Lower Braes			
Polling District		Proposed Polling Place	Number of electors (as at May 2010)
FE801	Laurieston	Laurieston Primary School	2,127
FE806	Polmont	Greenpark Community Centre	2,784
FE811	Polmont South	Polmont Sports Centre	2,622
FE816	Westquarter	Westquarter Primary School	1,371
FE821	Brightons	Grange Community Education Centre	496
LE826	Overton/Brightons	Grange Community Education Centre	516
LE831	Reddingmuirhead	Reddingmuirhead Community Centre	554
LE836	Beancross and Newlands	Laurieston Primary School	4
LE841	Battock	Greenpark Community Centre	2
Total number of electors			10,476

Ward 9 – Upper Braes			
Polling District		Proposed Polling Place	Number of electors (as at May 2010)
LE901	Limerigg	Limerigg Community Hall	205
LE906	Slamannan	Slamannan Community Centre	1,148
LE911	Avonbridge	Avonbridge Community Hall	598
LE916	Standburn	Drumbowie Primary School	204
LE921	California	California Community Centre	664
LE926	Whitecross	Whitecross Power Station Youth Club	646
LE931	Maddiston	Maddiston Community Centre	2,664
LE936	Rumford	Brightons Community Centre	1,528
LE941	Wallacestone	Reddingmuirhead Community Centre	1,164
FE946	Brightons South	Brightons Community Centre	969
FE951	Shieldhill	Shieldhill Welfare Hall	1,920
FE956	Lathallan	Brightons Community Centre	0
Total number of electors			11,710
TOTAL ELECTORS IN THE FALKIRK COUNCIL AREA			118,491

4.3 The following paragraphs provide a brief summary of the changes proposed in each Ward, together with a number of alternatives which have been suggested and **where a decision by Members is required**. The scheme is illustrated in the attached maps and details of each polling district, together with changes from the current scheme, are set out in Appendix 3 hereto.

4.3.1 Ward 1 – Bo’ness and Blackness:

A small number of minor changes is being suggested in order to allow voters to vote at the most convenient polling place since the constraints of the previous Ward boundaries no longer exist. Additionally:

- **Change of polling place from St Mary’s Primary School to Bo’ness Recreation Centre with some small consequential changes to allow electors to vote in the most convenient polling place.**
- **A move from Blackness Primary School to the adjacent Community Hall is being investigated.**
- **Proposal to cease using the Salvation Army Hall (467 electors) and amalgamate with the neighbouring polling district using Bo’ness Town Hall as the polling place**

An alternative whereby the Salvation Army Hall continues to be used has been suggested and a decision is required on whether this should continue.

4.3.2 Ward 2 - Grangemouth:

The only proposal is to **cease to use Oxbang School as a polling place and to divide the electors who currently vote there between the Dundas Resource Centre and Grangemouth Town Hall**, depending on which is the most convenient location.

An alternative whereby Oxbang School continues to be used as a Polling Place has been suggested.

4.3.3 Ward 3 – Denny and Banknock:

One minor change is proposed to allow electors to vote at the most convenient polling place. Additionally:

- **While Nethermains Primary School remains a proposed polling place, the option of using remaining sports facilities at the old Denny High School is offered.** These facilities are currently being refurbished and some completion works are required to ensure safe accessibility to the premises.
- **The possibility of using the new Banknock Sports Centre (adjacent to Bankier Primary School) is also offered as an alternative to using Banknock Community Centre.** The Sports Centre opened officially on 20 November 2010 and would provide accessible and suitable accommodation for polling purposes.

4.3.4 Ward 4 – Carse, Kinnaird and Tryst:

Several changes to polling places are being proposed including **using Stenhousemuir Sports Centre instead of Carron Primary School; Stenhouse and Carron Parish Church Hall for those currently voting in Tryst Community Centre; using Tryst Community Centre for those who currently vote in the Dobbie Hall; and using Kinnaird Primary School for those living on the north side of Bellsdyke Road.**

Several changes are also being proposed to allow electors to vote at the most convenient polling place since constraints of previous Ward boundaries no longer exist.

There is a small overlap between the Ward 4 boundary and the Falkirk West Scottish Parliament Constituency boundary in Carronvale Road, Larbert, where three new houses have been constructed. This necessitates the creation of a small polling district to ensure that the 8 electors concerned are allocated to the correct Ward and constituency.

An alternative proposal is to continue to use Carron Primary School, as requested through elected Member feedback.

4.3.5 Ward 5 – Bonnybridge and Larbert:

The following changes are proposed:

- **Electors in the Inches, Larbert to vote in Kinnaird Primary School**
- **Electors in South Broomage, Larbert to vote in Dobbie Hall**
- **Amalgamate the Torwood polling district with Larbert, using Larbert Village Primary School as there are no permanent alternative polling places. Members**

will be aware that Torwood Primary School has been closed for some considerable period of time and a temporary polling place requires to be brought to the site for polling purposes, to meet the requirements of the current polling scheme. This proposal would eliminate such action and associated costs.

- **Amalgamate the High Bonnybridge polling district with South Bonnybridge using Bonnybridge Community Centre instead of Antonine Primary School.**

4.3.6 Ward 6 – Falkirk North:

The main change proposed is to **amalgamate the polling districts which currently use Woodlands Games Hall, St Francis Xavier Church Hall and Bantaskin Primary School – 2,498 electors in total – and to use Falkirk Town Hall as an alternative polling place.** The exception is the electors who currently vote in the Games Hall living east of Cow Wynd who would vote instead in Leishman Tower Club Room.

An alternative of retaining Greenbank Court Meeting Room as a Polling Place has been put forward.

4.3.7 Ward 7 – Falkirk South:

The following changes are proposed:

- **Cease using Greenbank Court Meeting Room – 539 electors – and divide the electors who currently vote there between the Tamfourhill Community Centre and Bantaskin Primary School, depending on which is the most convenient location.**
- **Cease using Glen Village Bowling Club and reallocate electors to Hallglen Sports Centre, together with voters from the Lionthorn estate in Falkirk who currently vote in the Salvation Army Hall.**
- **Cease using Woodlands Games Hall and reallocate these electors to the Salvation Army Hall.**

For the Scottish Parliament elections in May 2011, electors in the rural south area will continue to vote in Shieldhill but for subsequent elections they will vote in Hallglen Sports Centre.

An alternative proposal is to continue to use Woodlands Games Hall instead of the Salvation Army Hall, as suggested through elected Member feedback.

4.3.8 Ward 8 – Lower Braes:

The following changes are proposed:

- **Amalgamate the two polling districts covering Laurieston.**
- **Use Polmont Sports Centre in place of St Margaret's Primary School.**
- **Use Grange Community Education Centre as a polling place for residents of Brightons in the Ward and the new development at Overton.**

Several minor changes are also being proposed to allow electors to vote at the most convenient polling place since constraints of previous Ward boundaries no longer exist.

An alternative of retaining the two polling districts in Laurieston has been put forward.

4.3.9 Ward 9– Upper Braes:

The following changes are proposed:

- **Change of polling place in Avonbridge to the Community Hall**
- **Change of polling place in Whitecross from the Primary School to the Power Station Youth Club on Station Road**
- **Change of polling place in Shieldhill from the Primary School to the Welfare Hall**
- **Wallacebrae estate to vote in Reddingmuirhead Community Centre**
- **Split the polling district which currently votes in Maddiston Community Centre and merge the southern part with the polling district which currently votes in Maddiston Old Folks’ Hall, using Maddiston Community Centre as the polling place, with the northern half voting in Brightons Community Centre which is closer.**

4.4 On completion of this review, the Council is required to publish representations made by the Returning Officer for the purposes of the review by posting a copy of them at the Council Offices and at least one conspicuous place in the Council area, as well as placing a copy on the Council website. This will be undertaken by relevant officers at the conclusion of the review process and will include publication of the following:-

- (a) all correspondence sent to the Returning Officer in connection with the review;
- (b) all correspondence sent to any person whom the authority considered to have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons with different forms of disability;
- (c) all representations made by any person in connection with the review;
- (d) the minutes of any meeting held by the authority to consider any revision to the designation of polling districts or polling places within its area as a result of the review;
- (e) details of the designation of polling districts or polling places within its area as a result of the review; and
- (f) details of the places where the results of the review have been published.

4.5 In terms of the 2006 Act, a further review of polling places will require to be undertaken within the next 4 years. During this period, polling places will be reviewed as a matter of course in advance of proposed elections and any necessary changes will be reported to Council for consideration.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Members are invited to:-

- a) note the terms of the Report and the comments received in response to the public consultation process;
- b) decide which of the options contained within paragraphs 4.3.1 - 4.3.9 should be implemented, with a particular focus on the highlighted text which provides options for Members' consideration, and
- c) approve the proposed polling scheme as detailed within Section 4 of the Report, for use at future elections.

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Chief Executive

Date: 11 November 2010

**Contact Officers: Dale Robb, Business and Members' Services Manager (ext 6111)
Jennifer Boag, Senior Practitioner (Policy and Research) (ext 6016)**

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1 Report to Falkirk Council on 5 December 2007 – Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places.
- 2 Legislation referred to within the Report.

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone 01324 50611 and ask for Dale Robb

