

Review of Scheme of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2024

Report by Dr Grace Vickers, Chief Executive

Report for Decision

1 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Council:-

- (a) Adopt the Proposed Scheme of Polling Districts and Places as outlined at the Annex to Appendix B;
- (b) Agree to carry out the statutory procedures, in liaison with the Electoral Registration Officer, to publish the revised Scheme of Polling Arrangements to take effect from December 2024; and
- (c) Remit to the Chief Executive to continue to liaise with representatives of recognised Political Parties for any necessary further Scheme revisions.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

The Council is asked to agree a new Scheme of Polling Districts and Polling Places after taking into consideration the representations received, including those of the Returning Officer.

14 November 2024

Report Contact:

Alan Turpie, Legal and Governance Manager

Alan.Turpie@midlothian.gov.uk

3 Background/Main Body of Report

3.1 Local authorities are required to review their polling districts and polling places for UK parliamentary constituencies at least once every five years. The compulsory review must start and be completed between the period 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.

3.2 The public consultation period of the Review commenced on 23 September 2024 and has now been completed.

3.3 As part of the review process local authorities must:-

- Seek to ensure that all electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
- Seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable the polling places are accessible to those who are disabled; and
- When considering or reviewing the designation of a polling place, have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.

3.4 Accordingly, the Electoral Commission guidance stresses the importance that the needs of electors with a disability are met in so far as practical.

3.5 Prior to the commencement of the public consultation process (23 September 2024) the initial observations of the Midlothian Parliamentary Constituency Returning Officer were sought and her response is shown at Appendix B to this report.

3.6 Annexed to her report is the Proposed Scheme of Arrangements for Polling Districts and Places in Midlothian.

3.7 Subsequently the Review entered the consultation period. In addition to press advertisement, social media posts and details being posted on the Council's website, stakeholders including all Midlothian Councillors, the MP for the Midlothian Constituency, the Constituency MSPs, Community Councils and all Political Parties at a national level, were informed of the Review. Capability Scotland were also invited to comment.

3.8 The consultation process ended on 23 October 2024 during which time one email response was received as noted below:

"I have never understood why schools are used for polling when somewhere like the local library, community hall or leisure centre can be used instead. The inconvenience caused to parents and children missing another day of education. I am a grandparent now and this has been the case for years."

3.9 It should be noted that the use of schools is limited to those which do not have to be closed on Polling Day. Arrangements can be put in place for separate entrance/exit to the school to ensure no cross-over takes place between school activities and Polling Day activities.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

The overall number of Polling Places will reduce by one and it is not anticipated that there will be any significant additional resource implications to the Council.

4.2 Digital

There are no Digital issues arising from this report

4.3 Risk

Conducting this Review and implementing the recommendations will ensure that the Council meets its statutory duty in respect of reviewing its Scheme of Polling Districts and Polling Places.

Many of the premises used for polling purposes are in Council ownership and this mitigates the risk of venues becoming unavailable or unsuitable for polling purposes at short notice.

There is a greater danger that privately owned premises may become unavailable at short notice than Council owned premises. Accordingly, the increase in use of premises in private ownership will also increase the risk of resource implications eg – last minute hire of portakabins to replace unavailable private ownership polling places and reprinting and delivering poll cards intimating amended polling arrangements.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been carried out and available [online](#).

4.4 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

See Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B – Returning Officer Comments with Annex showing Proposed Polling Scheme

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Not applicable.

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- Holistic Working
- Hub and Spoke
- Modern
- Sustainable
- Transformational
- Preventative
- Asset-based
- Continuous Improvement
- One size fits one
- None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- One Council Working with you, for you
- Preventative and Sustainable
- Efficient and Modern
- Innovative and Ambitious
- None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

The report does not directly impact on Delivering Best Value

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Consultation has been carried out on this Review of Polling Places and Districts in accordance with the Electoral Administration Act 2013

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The report does not directly impact on Midlothian Council's performance and outcomes

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Not applicable

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Not applicable