

The Highland Council
Communities and Partnerships Committee
10 December 2015

Agenda Item	16
Report No	CP 11/15

Amendments to the Scheme of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2015

Report by the Chief Executive

Summary

This report advises the Committee of a partial review of the current Scheme of Polling Districts and Polling Places, in light of experiences at the UK parliamentary Election in May 2015.

Background

- 1.1 Following the UK Parliamentary Election in May 2015, a number of electoral issues associated with Polling Districts and Polling Places were brought to the attention of the Election Office. The issues are outlined in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.6 below.
- 2.0 **Polling District Review**
- 2.1 Electors in part of Polling District C02A (Thurso) advised the Election Office that they had to walk past the Boys Brigade Hall in order to get to their allocated Polling Place at Mount Pleasant Primary School and suggested a change in the interest of electors convenience. It is therefore proposed that that part of the Polling District situated to the west of the River Thurso be transferred into Polling District C02C. Approximately 300 Electors are affected by this proposal
- 2.2 After the General election, two residents from Killen in Ward 10 (Black Isle) enquired if they could be moved from Polling District R10F (Findon Hall, Culbokie) to vote in R120L (Avoch Parish Church Hall). Local members have agreed to the suggestion. Both Avoch and Ferintosh Community Councils were consulted and offered no objections. It is therefore recommended that the Killen area be moved from R10F to R10L. Approximately 50 electors are affected.
- 2.3 In Ward 22 (Fort William and Ardnamurchan), electors in R22K vote at the Nevis Centre, An Aird. The premises are not available for use as a Polling Place at the Scottish Parliamentary Election on 5 May 2016. It is suggested that the Polling Place be permanently moved to the Shinty Pavilion Clubhouse. Local Members are in agreement with the proposal.
- 2.4 Again in Ward 22 (Fort William and Ardnamurchan), both Fort William Primary School (R22M) and Upper Achintore Primary School (R22N) have been closed. It is recommended that electors in both Polling Districts be allocated to vote at the new Lundavra Primary School for 2016 and to the new Council Offices in Fort William for the Council Election in 2017.

2.5 In Inverness (Ward 20 (Inverness South), there have been complaints regarding the lack of voting facilities in the Milton of Leys area. Polling District I20B (Inshes Primary School) is large – containing over 5,000 electors. It is proposed that a new Polling District be created, with electors being allocated to vote at the Milton of Leys Primary School. Local Members are in agreement with the proposal.

2.6 At the last review in December 2014, the closure of Advie Hall as a Polling Place in Ward 19 (Badenoch and Strathspey) was discussed. It was agreed that a further review of using this hall would be reviewed after the General Election. At the recent General Election, the combined Cromdale / Advie Polling Districts had an electorate of 414 and 235 electors voted on the day.

At earlier Elections, voting was as follows:-

Scottish Referendum: Cromdale – 260 out of 300 electors: Advie – 43 out of 46 electors

European Parliament - Cromdale – 85 out of 359 electors - Advie – 18 out of 54 electors

Cromdale and Advie Community Council were consulted and have responded in the following terms “During the discussions it was agreed that we should hold out to have Advie Polling station reinstated, Advie is a small community that is spread over many miles and has very minimal public transport. For many of the residence of Advie it maybe a 5 mile journey to get to the Advie hall but add to that a further 6 miles to get to the next station at Cromdale you could be looking around 20+ miles round trip to vote. Now I can’t see how this journey would encourage any members of the community to partake in the voting system. Not only is this making voting for the local community more difficult for some older less able members of the community but is also taking away a valuable use of the Advie hall. Many of the local residents in Advie feel that services are now been withdrawn from their community and instead of assistance to have the community expand and grow, it’s being forced to contract and be removed from the map.” Local Members have indicated that they want the Polling Place re-instated.

The Committee is invited to consider whether it wishes to re-instate Advie Hall as a Polling Place.

3.0 **Implications**

3.1 The Financial Implications of this Report may increase the cost of running election;

Legal Implications – The Council will meet its statutory responsibility to Review Polling Places.

3.2 There are no known specific equality; climate change/carbon clever; rural; risk or Gaelic implications arising from this Report.

4.0 Recommendation

The Committee is invited to:-

- (a) note the suggestions to amend Polling Districts and Polling Places as detailed in paragraphs 2.1 – 2.6 above; and
- (b) agree to continue to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Convener, Leader and Depute Leader of the Administration, Leader of the Opposition and appropriate Local Members, to make any necessary changes to the Scheme should circumstances arise prior to the next review.

Designation: Chief Executive

Date: 10 November 2015

Author: John Bruce, Elections Manager

Background Papers: Responses received to the Polling District and Polling Place Review, as published on the Council's website.