
REVIEW OF POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

Report by Director Corporate Governance

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

25 APRIL 2024

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report details the outcome of the Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations approved by Council on 26 October 2023.**
- 1.2 Since approval to carry out the review was given consultation has been carried out with all stakeholders and all polling places have been contacted and asked to complete a detailed questionnaire to assess their suitability for continued use. A public consultation was also carried out via the Council website. While polling places are in a variety of venues across the Borders, overall, they are in reasonable condition, fit for purpose and supported by their local community.
- 1.3 In light of the responses received and the review of the existing polling places and polling districts no changes are proposed.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that the Council agrees:-**
 - (a) to note the responses received to the consultation from the various stakeholders and public as detailed in the report and Appendix 1; and**
 - (b) that no changes are made to the polling places of Scottish Borders Council.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 It was reported in October 2023 that, in terms of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, the Council was required to undertake a review of its current polling districts, polling places and polling stations. As part of this review a consultation process was required to be undertaken to seek the views of all stakeholders on the existing situation and to ask for any suggested changes which could be made.
- 3.2 The consultation process ended on 12 February 2024 and had been widely publicised including directly to Councillors, Community Councils, and disability groups. Public consultation had been carried out via Citizens Space on the Council's website.

4 OUTCOME OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 4.1 A total of 52 responses were received to the website consultation and these are summarised in Appendix 1 to the report. The majority support the retention of their existing polling place. No responses were received which indicated that individuals faced barriers to voting. Some comments were received regarding the requirement to travel to a polling place, however due to the rural nature of those locations there is a lack of viable alternatives. Comments were also received which indicated a desire that polling places should be retained to continue to allow people to vote in their local area.
- 4.2 In addition to the public responses 3 Community Councils responded. Their comments outlined that communities wished to see polling places remain open in their local area.
- 4.3 One Member of Parliament and one Scottish Borders Council Elected Member provided a response. The comments expressed a preference that the people of the Scottish Borders could continue to vote in their communities and that no polling places were closed.

5 FURTHER INFORMATION AND PROPOSED CHANGES

- 5.1 The Chief Executive, in his capacity as Returning Officer, provided his views on the polling places of the Scottish Borders. Those comments outlined that the current provision was adequate in their geographical spread and their condition allowed people with disabilities access to vote. The Returning Officer was satisfied that the number of polling stations at their respective polling place was satisfactory, suitable and convenient to the electorate.
- 5.2 In light of the review and the responses received there are no changes proposed at this time. Alternative polling places could be employed at future elections where unforeseen circumstances arise.

6 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

No risks have been identified.

5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

An integrated impact assessment has been undertaken. There is no impact or relevant to the Equality Duty or Fairer Scotland Duty for this report.

5.4 Sustainable Development Goals

There are no direct economic, social or environmental issues with this report.

5.5 Climate Change

There are no direct carbon emissions impacts as a result of the report.

5.6 Rural Proofing

A Rural Proofing check is not required.

5.7 Data Protection Impact Statement

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

5.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

No changes are required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Chief Executive, the Director (Finance & Procurement), the Director (Corporate Governance), the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Name

Title

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
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Background Papers: Consultee Responses and Polling Place Survey Documents

Previous Minute Reference: Scottish Borders Council 26 October 2023.

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Declan Hall can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Scottish Borders Council, Council Headquarters, Newtown St. Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0SA 01835 826556.