

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

25 FEBRUARY 2015

REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY POLLING DISTRICTS AND
POLLING PLACES

Report by the Head of Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report seeks the Council's views on the proposed temporary change to the parliamentary constituency polling place for parliamentary polling district PCP following a review of the facilities at Caputh Village Hall.

1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 (EAA 2006) introduced a duty on all local authorities to review their UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places at least once every four years. The first such review had to be completed by the end of 2007.
- 1.2 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 (ERA 2013) introduces a new provision altering the timing of compulsory reviews. The compulsory review period was the period of 16 months beginning with 1 October 2013 and the period of 16 months beginning with 1 October every fifth year after that. Perth and Kinross Council conducted and completed a statutory review of polling districts and polling places in December 2013.
- 1.3 Reviews of local government polling arrangements are conducted simultaneously with a review of polling districts and polling places for UK Parliamentary elections. The aim of any review is to ensure that every elector in Perth and Kinross had such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable, and to ensure that so far as possible, the accessibility needs of persons with a disability have been considered when designating polling places.
- 1.4 The location of proposed polling districts and places is the responsibility of Perth and Kinross Council and the location of polling stations is the responsibility of the Returning Officer. However, for the purpose of this report, all aspects of the process have been undertaken jointly.
- 1.5 Following the Elections in May and September this year, complaints were received on the condition and safety of Caputh Village Hall as a polling place. A risk assessment was carried out in July 2013 when it was noted that although electrical equipment appeared to be in a reasonable condition a fire risk assessment should be carried out. It was also noted that the kitchen provided basic needs and the toilets were in a poor condition.

- 1.6 In May 2014 polling station staff reported the hall was cold on arrival but this was resolved by the hall keeper. There was no running hot water or a microwave available for use and the external lighting was not working. Following the election these issues were raised with the hall keeper.
- 1.7 In September 2014 polling staff once again reported the hall was cold on arrival however, on this occasion, there was not a resolution. Arrangements were made for a temporary heater to be provided however, as the only electric socket in the hall was an old round pinned socket, an extension cable was fitted up to enable the heater to be plugged into the square pinned socket on the stage. The outside light was still broken and the indoor lighting poor with broken lights. The feedback from the Polling Station Inspector was that, in his opinion, the hall was not fit for purpose.
- 1.8 In light of these complaints a risk assessment was carried out in November 2014. One of the Council's electricians was in attendance and requested that an Electrical Safety Inspection Certificate be provided. The owner advised that he was aware the hall required re-wiring and didn't feel it was worth paying for a Certificate to confirm this. In the absence of the Certificate the electrician considered it unacceptable to continue to use the Hall until such time as re-wiring and some remedial work had been carried out.
- 1.9 In view of the above, it was considered appropriate to review the provision of Caputh Village Hall as a polling place and to examine the options for a temporary change pending works being undertaken.
- 1.10 There is an electorate of approximately 511 within the parliamentary polling district of PCP with about 81 of these opting to vote by post.

2. OPTIONS

2.1 Option 1 - Session House, Caputh Church

With this option we would continue to have a polling place within Caputh. The Session House is large enough for the number of voters and has all the facilities required for polling staff with the kitchen adjacent to the Session House. There is a large car park to the side and rear. A temporary ramp would require to be provided for access as the one currently used by the Church is wooden and is likely to become slippery when wet. It should be noted that access to the Session House and toilets will be along the back of the pews within the main body of the Church.

2.2 Option 2 - Spittalfield Hall

Although just over a mile from Caputh Hall, the Spittalfield Hall itself is upstairs and therefore does not meet our accessibility needs. There is however a small area as you enter the building which could be considered for the purposes of voting. A toilet is located within this area which reduces the available space with the kitchen upstairs via concrete steps. Although the access is flat the fire exit to the rear has a number of steps. There is a small

car park to the side of the hall although uneven with a large pothole. With no internal door between the area and the street the door will require to remain open all day. With only one small wall heater it would be very difficult to provide sufficient heating for polling staff working throughout polling day. Security may also be a problem with no barrier between the pavement and the voting area particularly when a member of staff is in the kitchen.

2.3 Option 3 - **Spittalfield Bowling Club**

The Bowling Club has also been visited, however with multiple groupings of steps with insufficient gradient for the purpose of providing temporary or permanent ramps it does not meet our accessibility needs.

2.4 Option 4 - **Murthly Village Hall**

Murthly Village Hall is currently designated as a parliamentary polling place and could quite easily accommodate the additional electors from parliamentary polling district PCP, who currently use Caputh Village Hall. There is adequate parking and good disabled access. Equipment, heating and lighting are all in good condition. Although Murthly Village Hall is outwith the PCP parliamentary polling district there is the option to allocate two polling stations within the polling place to facilitate separation of the elector registers. Postal voting would be available for those electors who are unable to attend the polling place.

2.5 Option 5 – **Glendelvine Primary School**

Although the Council has taken a decision not to use schools wherever possible, Glendelvine Primary School has also been considered in this instance to establish whether a shared arrangement could be put in place which would avoid shutting the school on polling day.

Whilst the gym hall is suitable, the access to it from outside is not very good. Entry would be via the fire door which has no handles and would require to be pushed open from inside and wedged open all day. This is similar to Spittalfield Hall where it would be difficult to provide heating with the door wedged open all day. There is also a step into the hall from outside and the pathway very slippery with moss and leaves. There are no kitchen facilities other than to use the kettle and fridge in the Head Teacher's office with the adjacent staff toilets being utilised.

Facilities for one disabled parking space could be identified within the school but with no other parking facilities available, electors would require to park outside the gates of the school along with parents on a fast, busy road.

The traffic management outside the school on polling day would be a major concern as there are safety issues at the moment with parents parking on the main road at the start and end of the school day. There is very little parking available, with bus stops outside the school gates and no facilities for cars to

execute a U-turn. This would be exacerbated with the addition of electors voting at the school throughout the day.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 With option 1, we can continue to provide the polling place within Caputh although access to the Session House is via the Church itself.
- 3.2 It is considered that the entrance area to Spittalfield Hall, Option 2 is too small and the facilities available for staff are inadequate for the purposes of a polling place.
- 3.3 Option 3, Spittalfield Bowling Club does not meet our accessibility needs and is therefore not suitable as a polling place.
- 3.4 Option 4 provides an excellent venue as a polling place but is located outwith the PCP parliamentary polling district.
- 3.5 The traffic management and safety of the children at Glendelvine School, Option 5 is paramount and is therefore not considered suitable as a polling place,
- 3.6 It is recommended that the Council -
- (i) agree Option 1, Session House, Caputh Church, be allocated as the temporary polling place for parliamentary polling district PCP until such time as Caputh Village Hall is brought up to standard.
 - (ii) agree a review of Caputh Village Hall be undertaken in November 2015 to determine the progress made in respect of the re-wiring and other remedial works required.

Author(s)

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Approved

Name	Designation	Date
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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The undernoted table should be completed for all reports. Where the answer is 'yes', the relevant section(s) should also be completed. Where the answer is 'no', the relevant section(s) should be marked 'not applicable (n/a)'.

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	NO
Workforce	No
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	No
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	No
Strategic Environmental Assessment	No
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	No
Legal and Governance	Yes
Risk	No
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	No

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 The proposals set out in this report support the delivery of all of the priorities in the Perth & Kinross Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement 2013/2023.

Corporate Plan

- 1.2 The proposals set out in this report support the achievement of all of the objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan 2013/2018.

2. Resource Implications

- 2.1 There are no resource implications.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

The proposals in this report have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcomes:

- The proposals to combine parliamentary polling districts allocated to the same parliamentary polling place comply with the relevant legislation in relation to accessibility
- In relation to the proposals not to allocate individual electors or very small groups of electors to a polling place outwith their electoral ward, it is acknowledged that some electors may experience inconvenience but there will be publicity in advance of any election/referendum to promote the availability of postal voting as an alternative to voting in person.

3.2 Legal and Governance

The legal framework for this report is contained within the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (EAA 2006) and the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 (ERA 2013)

3.3 Risk

There are no key risks associated with the proposals which have not been addressed elsewhere in the report.

4. **Consultation**

Internal

- 4.1 Elected members for Ward 5 have been consulted in the development of this report and are supportive of the polling place being retained within Caputh and therefore recommend Option 1.

External

- 4.2 Representations were invited from Spittalfield and District Community Council. The Caputh representative's view is that the Caputh residents expect to vote in Caputh and not Murthly.

5. **Communication**

- 5.1 A communications plan is included within the Project Plan for the project.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 2.1 The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (and not containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

Representation of the People Act 1983 Schedule A1
The Review of Polling District and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006
Electoral Administration Act 2006
Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 (ERA 2013)

3. Photographs of the polling place options are available on CHIP and from members' services or Brenda Lackie.

