

PERTH & KINROSS COUNCIL

15 NOVEMBER 2021

APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY POLLING PLACES

**Report by the Chief Executive
(Report No. 21/213)**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report seeks the Council's views on several temporary changes to polling places through to December 2022.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The location of polling districts and places is the responsibility of Perth & 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.
- 1.2 On 24 February 2021, the Council approved temporary adjustments to the polling places for the following polling districts for the Scottish Parliament elections that took place on 6 May 2021 (Report No 21/24 refers).

Polling District Register	Original Polling Place	Temporary Polling Place
PBM	Coupar Angus Town Hall	St. Anne's Church Hall, Coupar Angus
PBT	Blairstown Town Hall	Blairstown Adult Resource Centre
PCW	St John's RC Church Hall	North Inch Community Campus (library), Perth
PDC	Upper Springlands	Gannochy Community Centre, Perth

- 1.3 As these adjustments were for the Scottish Parliament elections on 6 May 2021 only, this report seeks to put in place arrangements through to 31 December 2022 that will include the local government elections in May 2022. From 1 January 2023, it is anticipated that the five-year review of polling places and districts, required under statute, will have been undertaken.
- 1.4 In the preparation of this report, all elected members were consulted on Ward specific issues that they wished to raise. A number of the issues raised will

be considered in the five-year review referred to above and one issue is included below.

- 1.5 Elected members within the Wards affected have been involved in the identification of alternative venues.
- 1.6 Additionally, the role of Returning Officer, which has been undertaken by the Interim Chief Executive since 1 February 2021, will revert to the Chief Executive from 1 November 2021.

2. PROPOSALS

Coupar Angus Town Hall

- 2.1 In January 2021, the Council agreed that St Anne's Church Hall, Coupar Angus would be the temporary polling place for the PBM register for the Scottish Parliament elections in May 2021.
- 2.2 Coupar Angus Town Hall will be unavailable as a polling place for the foreseeable future due to essential property related works.
- 2.3 Feedback from May 2021 was favourable for this venue.
- 2.4 **ACTION:** The Council is asked to approve the use of St Anne's Church Hall for the PBM register through to 31 December 2022.

Blairgowrie Town Hall

- 2.5 During much of 2021, Blairgowrie Town Hall was repurposed as a community vaccination centre and therefore, in January 2021, the Council approved the use of Blairgowrie Adult Resource Centre for the Scottish Parliament elections in May 2021.
- 2.6 Blairgowrie Adult Resource Centre worked well as a polling place, however, to make use of this venue, one polling station was removed. The feedback from staff involved last May was that the polling place was busy, and it would be preferable to revert back to three polling stations.
- 2.7 It is anticipated that with sufficient forward scheduling, if Blairgowrie Town Hall is still required as a community vaccination centre over the longer term, the venue can be reinstated as the permanent polling place for the local government elections in May 2022 for the PBT polling district.

St. John's RC Church

- 2.8 St John the Baptist Presbytery Church in Melville Street, Perth have advised that they are unable to accommodate future election events. In January 2021, the Council agreed that the North Inch Community Campus (library) would be installed as a temporary polling place for the Scottish Parliament elections in May 2021.

- 2.9 On polling day in May 2021, proactive traffic management measures were put in place to minimise the disruption to pupils, parents, and the operation of the school. No negative feedback has been received from key stakeholders including school management, Culture Perth & Kinross, election staff and local elected members. Senior management from Education & Children's Services are content that the venue continues to be used as a polling place. Furthermore, as part of the consultation exercise in the preparation of this report, all four elected members attended a discussion on the use of the North Inch Community Campus (library). The consensus was that the venue had worked well and that, in the intervening period, no other suitable alternative venues had been identified.
- 2.10 **Action:** The Council is asked to approve the use the North Inch Community Campus (library) for the PCW register, and that this arrangement be made permanent.

Upper Springlands

- 2.11 Capability Scotland advised that Upper Springlands would be unavailable for the Scottish Parliament elections on 6 May 2021 in order to minimise the risk to their clients. Therefore, for the elections in May 2021, the PDC register was located in the Gannochy Community Centre.
- 2.12 Capability Scotland are keen for Upper Springlands to be reinstated as a polling place. On the basis that public health advice supports this at the time, it is proposed that Upper Springlands be reinstated as the polling place for the PDC register.

Bertha Park

- 2.13 Bertha Park currently sits within the SBB polling district and residents vote at Luncarty Memorial Hall. There are no direct public transport links between Bertha Park and Luncarty, and this issue has been raised both by local elected members and other stakeholders as an impediment to voting.
- 2.14 The consensus reached with Ward 5 elected members was that with the increase in the number of voters, along with the transport issues, consideration should be given to creating a new polling district for the Bertha Park community. A public consultation was undertaken between 15 September and 27 October 2021. During the consultation, all feedback was positive with no formal objections raised.
- 2.15 To that end, a community facility has been identified within the vicinity of Bertha Park High School that can provide a suitable polling place in the area.
- 2.16 **Action:** The Council is asked to approve the creation of a new polling district for the Bertha Park area and that a community facility in the vicinity of Bertha Park High School be designated as the polling place for the residents.

Caputh Village Hall

- 2.17 Up until 2016, Caputh Village Hall worked well as a polling place. However, in 2016, the Council was made aware of several property issues relating to the hall. In response to this information, on 14 December 2016, the Council approved the permanent appointment of Caputh Session House as the polling place for PCP polling district (Report No. 16/565 refers).
- 2.18 Recently, Caputh Village Hall has undergone significant property improvements which could facilitate its reinstatement as a polling place. The Hall Committee are supportive of this and have approached the Council to understand if this is something it might consider.
- 2.19 **Action:** The Council is asked to approve the appointment of Caputh Village Hall as the permanent polling place for the PCP polling district.

Future Adjustments

- 2.20 Ordinarily, elected members would approve all adjustments to polling places. However, there is a small risk that circumstances change, and operators / committees decide to not make their venues available for the elections in May 2022. If this situation does emerge, it is proposed that the views of Ward elected members be sought.
- 2.21 If the Committee timetable permits, proposals will be considered by Council at the appropriate meeting. However, if there is insufficient time to seek approval at a formal meeting, authority be delegated to the Chief Executive to make the necessary adjustments to polling places. The changes will also be advised to all elected members for information. This arrangement was also put in place in the lead up to the Scottish Parliament elections in May 2021, but fortunately was not required.
- 2.22 **Action:** The Council is asked to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with Ward elected members, to make adjustments to polling places (only as a result of unforeseen circumstances and where timescales do not permit formal consideration by the Council).

Other Feedback

- 2.23 As set out above, sessions were offered to all elected members to discuss any local issues. To that end, sessions were held with elected members from Wards 10, 11 and 12.
- 2.24 A number of issues were identified for the following polling districts:
- Fairfield
 - Scout Hall / Oakbank Community Centre
 - Railway Staff Club

- 2.25 Early engagement will be undertaken with all elected members, and particularly those in Wards 10,11 and 12 so that local views can be incorporated in the statutory five year consultation on polling districts that the Council is due to undertake by 2023. However, realistically, this work will not commence until after the local government elections in May 2022.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 For a variety of reasons, a number of temporary adjustments were made to polling stations for the Scottish Parliament elections in May 2021. This report provides an update on those adjustments and proposes a way forward for the local government elections in May 2022. The report also proposes the creation of a new polling district for the Bertha Park area.

- 3.2 The Council is asked to approve:

- i) the use of St Anne's Church Hall for the PDM register through to 31 December 2022.
- ii) the permanent use of the North Inch Community Campus (library) for the PCW register.
- iii) the creation of a new polling district for the Bertha Park area and that a community facility in the vicinity of Bertha Park High School be designated as the polling place for the residents.
- iv) the appointment of Caputh Village Hall as the permanent polling place for the PCP polling district.
- v) the delegation of authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with Ward elected members, to make adjustments to polling places (only as a result of unforeseen circumstances and where timescales do not permit formal consideration by the Council).

Author(s)

Name	Designation	Contact Details
Scott Walker	Election Manager	elections@pkc.gov.uk

Approved

Name	Designation	Date
Thomas Glen	Chief Executive	2 November 2021

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

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	
Consultation	
Internal	
External	
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 2018 - 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 2018 - 2023.

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.

- 3.2 The proposals in this report have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA)

Legal and Governance

- 3.3 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)

Risk

- 3.4 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 the Wards affected were consulted in the development of this report.

External

- 4.2 None.

5. Communication

- 5.1 These adjustments will be communicated as part of wider election engagement.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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. APPENDICES

None