

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO COUNCIL

22 JANUARY 2020

REPORT OF THE ELECTORAL RETURNING OFFICER

POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES & STATION REVIEW 2019 - 2020

1. Purpose of Report:

- 1.1 To advise Council of the findings of the Polling Station review and of any proposed changes arising from the review.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities:

- 2.1 The overall administration of elections is the responsibility of the Returning Officer (operational responsibilities lie mainly with the Deputy Returning Officer.) This includes a presumed requirement to promote and encourage participation in elections. The condition and location of polling stations is an important factor in assisting electors to vote and as such, in practice, is reviewed on an ongoing basis.
- 2.2 In addition the Returning Officer is required to formally review the provision of polling stations every fifth year within an allotted 16 month timeframe.
- 2.3 The Returning Officer is accountable to the electorate for the operation of elections and as such there is no direct relationship between this report and the Council's corporate plan.

3. Background:

- 3.1 Under section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006, the authority has a duty to undertake a review every fifth year of polling districts, polling places and polling stations within its area. The last full review was undertaken in 2015. The scope of the review includes:
 - Giving public notice of the review of existing polling districts and polling stations.
 - Inviting representations from the public and other key stakeholders in Bridgend County Borough Council area.
 - Reviewing all polling districts and polling stations for suitability in relation to:
 - access for all electors including those with any disability
 - facilities for the required staff, tables, booths and notices
 - Developing proposals for any new changes to polling districts/ stations supported by reasons for the decision.
 - Preparing reference documents for public inspection.
 - Publishing the review results in line with statutory requirements

- 3.2 Notice of the review was published on the 7th October 2019 and representations were invited to be returned by 4pm on 8th November 2019. Elected Members of Bridgend County Borough Council were alerted to the start of the process and contact was also made with all Town and Community Councils, Assembly Members and Members of Parliament. Information was also placed on BCBC's website and Noticeboard outside the Civic Offices. The consultation was available to complete online if preferred.
- 3.3 All comments and suggestions received by this date were then posted online, displayed on the Electoral Notice Board, Civic Offices and sent to all Town & Community Council Clerks to allow for any further comments on the suggested proposals to be received by 4pm on 22nd November 2019. The information was also sent to Town & Community Councils at the same time. There was no further feedback on the initial comments received by the second deadline of 22nd November 2019.
- 3.4 In addition, any relevant information from Presiding Officers and Polling Inspectors that had been gathered at recent by-elections and the 2019 European election have been considered as part of this review.
- 3.5 The changing of any County Electoral Divisions, Town or Community Council area did not form part of this review as this can only be done by statute (Boundary Commission.)

4. Current situation / proposal:

- 4.1 The objective of the review is to have polling district boundaries which take into account the changes in population in certain areas (eg following new developments) and to ensure polling stations are both in the best location and in suitable premises with good access. The review requires the Council to seek to ensure that:-
- all the electors in each Parliamentary constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
 - so far as is reasonable and practicable the polling places are accessible to all electors and regard has been given to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.
- 4.2 Individuals that wanted to comment about existing arrangements or make representations such as suggesting alternative polling places were requested to complete a questionnaire and provide the relevant information.
- 4.3 A number of the responses received did not require any further action as they simply confirmed suitability of existing arrangements. The comments received are included in summary in the table provided as Appendix 1 (page 5.)

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules:

None

6. Equality Impact Assessment:

6.1 A key objective in undertaking the review is to consider the needs of individuals and ensure polling stations are accessible for all electors.

7. Financial Implications:

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from the actions that will be taken as a result of the review.

8. Wellbeing of Future Generations implications:

8.1 None.

9. Conclusion:

9.1 In conclusion, most comments received were in support of existing arrangements and the premises used with responses from Elected Members and a number of Town & Community councilors. Although concerns were raised on the future arrangements for Brackla when new wards are introduced for 2022, this relates to the Boundary Commission's review and are outside the remit of this internal Electoral review.

The Review required us to look at the criteria set (point 4.1) and the survey questions were designed to satisfy this purpose.

10. Recommendation:

10.1 Council is asked to note the outcome of the review and in particular the comments identified in Appendix 1.

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Chief Executive and Returning Officer

22nd January 2020

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Background documents:

None

Appendix 1 – Comments received from the Consultation period:

Electoral Division	Polling Station	Comments received	Action required
Nottage	St David's church Hall	Suitable	NONE
UNKNOWN		Any election costs tax payers money, stop wasting money and start saving	NONE
	Heol y Cyw Welfare hall	Suitable	NONE
	Scout hall Rest bay	Suitable	NONE
OX1	Sarn community Centre	Suitable	NONE
OX1	Sarn Lifelong learning centre	Sarn Life-long Learning Centre is disabled friendly and offers adequate parking facilities	NONE
OK2	Bryncoch Memorial Hall	Suitable	NONE
Morfa BJ 1	Wildmill Community Centre	Suggested using Litchard Mission Church as the polling station currently used is considered as adequate	Outside of ward for BJ1 electorate: where possible, any alternative suggestion needs to be in the ward area
	Newton Institute	Suitable	NONE
	The Masons (Public House) Bryncethin	Adequate	These premises have not been used for the last three Elections as alternative premises have been found.
	Old Nursery Wimbourne Rd Pencoed	Suitable	Not used for last few elections – alternative premises are used.

Electoral Division	Polling Station	Comments received	Action required
	St Johns Ambulance	Suitable	It's fine as it stands
Felindre ON 2	Salem chapel, Pencoed	Concerns regarding being able to park right outside the polling station. 'Go back to the Cricket Pavilion behind the swimming pool on felindre road'	The Polling station was moved to Salem Chapel as the cricket pavilion closed. There is a small car park at the rear of the chapel building accessible from the main road which can be used by any visitors to the polling station. Refurbishment and a Community Asset Transfer in the new year (2020) will mean once the Pavilion is back in use it can be reconsidered for use as a polling station.
Brackla BA1 BA2 BA3 BA4	there is more than one in Brackla	Review of Brackla electoral wards - need for a polling station in each new wards – Brackla West - Ysgol Bro Ogwr, but there will also be a need for a station within Brackla Community Centre as this new ward is approximately 2 miles from one end to the other. Brackla West Central - Brackla Community Centre Brackla East Central - Tremains Primary School Brackla East & Coychurch Lower - Hunters Lodge Pub (and another station in Coychurch)	These are the expected changes being introduced from the Boundary Commission review due to take effect for the scheduled 2022 local elections. Existing polling stations will be looked at to reflect any Boundary Commission changes at that time.
Brackla BA1	YGG Bro Ogwr	A Polling Station needs to be kept within the Brackla Meadows area and that this should be Ysgol Bro Ogwr to avoid the excessive costs of a portacabin, etc.	YGG Bro Ogwr is currently being used for scheduled elections.

Electoral Division	Polling Station	Comments received	Action required
Blaengarw OH1	William Trigg community Centre	Suggested using Blaengarw Primary School	<p>The alternative premises is very close to the existing building used as a polling station. There would be no reason to use the School as an alternative as it would provide no additional benefit.</p> <p>Where possible we actively try to avoid designating school buildings as polling stations unless there is no other suitable alternative in that area.</p>
Porthcawl		adequate	Both Polling stations in this area are adequate for use
Llangynwyd OQ1 OQ2 OQ3			No problems with the two polling stations in the ward area
Cefn Cribwr OM1			Support for the use of Cefn Cribwr Community Centre
Cefn Cribwr OM1			Also supports Cefn Cribwr Community Centre to be used as there are good facilities there.