

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

INFORMATION REPORT TO COUNCIL

18 MARCH 2015

REPORT OF THE ELECTORAL RETURNING OFFICER

POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES & STATION REVIEW

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 administration of elections is the responsibility of the 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 is reviewed on an ongoing basis.
- 2.2 In addition the returning officer is required to formally review the provision of polling stations every four years.
- 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 four years of polling districts, polling places and polling stations within its area. The last full review was undertaken in 2011.
- 3.2 Notice of the review was published on the 7th November 2014 and representations were invited to be returned by 5th December 2014. Members of Bridgend CBC 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 the consultation was available to complete online if preferred. All comments/suggestions received by this date were then posted online for 10 days to allow for any further comments on the proposals received.
- 3.3 In addition, any relevant information from presiding officers and polling inspectors that had been gathered at recent by-elections and the European and PCC elections have been considered as part of this review.

3.4 Following the Brackla by-election representations on polling station locations were received from Brackla ward members and those comments have also been taken into account.

3.5 The changing of any County Electoral Divisions, Town or Community Council area did not form part of the review as this can only be done by statute.

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 (e.g. following new developments) and to ensure polling stations are 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. A number of the responses received did not require any further action as they simply confirmed suitability of existing arrangements. However, others did necessitate follow up and the outcome from the process is summarised in the table provided as Appendix 1.

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:

There are no significant financial implications to the authority arising from the actions that will be taken as a result of the review. Any additional costs will be met from within existing resources.

8. Recommendation:

8.1 Council is asked to note the outcome of the review and in particular the changes identified in appendix 1.

Darren Mepham
Chief Executive and Returning Officer
10 February 2015

Contact Officer: Julie Cooper
Team Manager, Electoral & Emergency Planning Services

Telephone: (01656) 643300

E-mail: Julie.cooper@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal Address Level 3, Civic Offices
Angel Street
Bridgend
CF31 4WB

Background documents:

None

Appendix 1

Electoral Division	Polling Station	Comments received	Outcome of Review	Action to be taken
Maesteg West (OS4)	Carmel Chapel, Commercial Street	Concern re the close proximity of three polling stations - following the relocation of the former polling station (Catholic Hall) suggesting a move toward the Llwydarth road vicinity.	There is no alternative venue in the lower end of the Maesteg west area. The Town Council would like to see a portacabin placed either on waste ground near Gills garage in Llwydarth Road or Standard Cooper site (owned by BCBC) near entrance to Oakwood Estate. The previous polling station for Maesteg West was just along the road, but was moved when the building became unavailable so the number of Polling stations remained the same.	No change.
Maesteg West (OS2)	Dylan's Nightclub	Concerns from Presiding Officers & staff over suitability of the premises. This relates to the suitability of the room used on Polling day.	An alternative site has been identified at Ysgol Cynwyd Sant, Old Caretakers House, in School Road. There is a fairly steep short ramp access to the property.	No change for the Parliamentary Election but further consultation will be undertaken to ensure suitability of the alternate site for future elections.
Porthcawl (BT1 & 2) (BR1 & 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest Bay Scout Hall • West Central, 	Porthcawl Town Council propose one polling station each in these four wards. Currently two wards have two	The existing polling stations in Porthcawl are considered to be a better option as there is little financial benefit in reducing	No change.

Electoral Division	Polling Station	Comments received	Outcome of Review	Action to be taken
(BM1 & 2) (BI1 2 & 3)	Victoria Avenue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nottage Church • Newton Institute 	polling stations and the Town Council believes that this is unnecessary	them in number and there is no evidence that this would increase voter turnout.	
Broadlands (BB3,4,5 & 6)	Maes yr Haul Primary School	Laleston Community Council suggests more provision is required for the western side of the Broadlands estate.	No suitable additional premises have been identified and the school was a new polling station at the European Elections because of difficulties in identifying other suitable sites.	No change.
Brackla (BA1)	Community Centre	The ERO has met with Brackla Town Councilors who have expressed concern using the Community Centre as a Polling Station for BA1 following a recent Town Council election. The area where a portacabin used to be sited as a Polling Station for BA1 has had a poor voter turnout for the last three elections (less than half that of the other polling stations in Brackla) and was the lowest turnout at a Polling Station for all Polling Stations at the European Elections with only a 12.9% turnout.	Alternative sites within the Polling area have been considered including the previous siting of a portacabin in Madoc Close, a community facility used by V2C, which is not suitable, and the grounds of the Welsh School, as well as the school itself, which would cause disruption. The low turnout for this Polling Station may be due to the removal of the portacabin and needs to be reinstated so that this can be tested.	The previous site of Madoc Close will be re-used to site a portacabin to be used as the Polling Station for BA1 for the Parliamentary Election to analyse voter turn-out.