

# PERTH & KINROSS COUNCIL

24 FEBRUARY 2021

## APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY POLLING PLACES

Report by Interim Chief Executive (Report No. 21/24)

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report seeks the Council's views on several temporary changes to polling places for the Scottish Parliament elections scheduled for 6 May 2021. The report also seeks to provide authority to the Interim Chief Executive to, in the event of unforeseen circumstances, make further adjustments to polling places. It also provides an update on Electoral Management Board Directions.

### 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 As the preparations for the Scottish Parliament elections have progressed, several existing polling places have intimated that they will be unavailable on 6 May 2021 as follows –

Polling District Register	Polling Station
PBM	Coupar Angus Town Hall
PBT	Blairstown Town Hall
PCW	St John's RC Church Hall
PDC	Upper Springlands

- 1.3 In light of this information, this report sets out proposals for the establishment of alternative temporary polling places for the Scottish parliament elections that are due to take place on 6 May 2021.
- 1.4 Elected members within the Wards affected have been involved in the identification of alternative venues.
- 1.5 The report also provides an update on the implications of Directions issued by the Convenor of the Election Management Board.

### 2. PROPOSALS

#### Coupar Angus Town Hall

- 2.1 There are several property related issues with regards Coupar Angus Town Hall that mean it will be unavailable for the Scottish Parliament elections.

- 2.2 It is proposed that St Anne's Church Hall, Coupar Angus is appointed as a temporary polling place for the PBM register.

### **Blairgowrie Town Hall**

- 2.3 Blairgowrie Town Hall has been repurposed as a Community Vaccination Centre for the foreseeable future.
- 2.4 An assessment was carried out of other alternatives including Blairgowrie Recreation Centre, Blairgowrie Life Plus Church, Blairgowrie Adult Resource Centre.
- 2.5 Following this assessment, it is proposed that Blairgowrie Adult Resource Centre is appointed as a temporary polling place.

### **St. John's RC Church**

- 2.6 St John the Baptist Presbytery Church in Melville Street, Perth have advised that they are unable to accommodate the booking for the Scottish Parliamentary Election.
- 2.7 An assessment was carried out of other alternatives including Bells Sports Centre, the Black Watch Museum, North Inch Community Campus (library), and the WASPS Centre.
- 2.8 Following this assessment, and working with officers from Education & Children's Services, it is proposed that the library within the North Inch Community Campus is appointed as a temporary polling place.

### **Upper Springlands**

- 2.9 Capability Scotland have advised that Upper Springlands will be unavailable for the Scottish Parliament elections on 6 May 2021 as they aim to minimise the risk to their vulnerable clients.
- 2.10 Previously, the PDC register was located in the Gannochy Community Centre, and it is proposed that this arrangement is reinstated for the Scottish Parliament elections on 6 May 2021.

### **Further Changes**

- 2.11 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 2021. If this situation does emerge, it is proposed that the views of Ward elected members be sought, and with this information, authority be delegated to the Interim Chief Executive to make the necessary adjustments to polling places. The changes will also be advised to all elected members for information.

## Electoral Management Board Directions

- 2.12 As is the case with major electoral events, the Electoral Management Board have issued Directions for the Scottish Parliament elections on 6 May 2021.
- 2.13 On 3 February 2020, a Direction was issued stating that “Returning Officers must allocate a maximum number of 800 electors, excluding postal voters to each polling station”. This Direction, along with the anticipated increase in the number of postal voters, has provided the opportunity to review the number of polling stations. This has no impact on the number of polling places but does provide the opportunity to rationalise the number of polling stations and therefore maximise physical distancing i.e. with less ballot boxes in a venue there should be more space to maintain distances.

### 3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 For a variety of reasons, several polling stations will be unavailable for the Scottish Parliament elections on 6 May 2021.
- 3.2 The Council is asked to:
- a. approve the following temporary polling stations:
    - St Anne’s Church Hall, Coupar Angus
    - Blairgowrie Adult Resource Centre
    - North Inch Community Campus (library)
  - b. note that Upper Springlands is unavailable and that the PDC register can be accommodated within the Gannochy Community Centre.
  - c. delegate authority to the Interim Chief Executive to make adjustments to polling places (only as a result of unforeseen circumstances) and in consultation with Ward elected members

#### Author(s)

Name	Designation	Contact Details
Scott Walker	Election Manager	<a href="mailto:elections@pkc.gov.uk">elections@pkc.gov.uk</a>

#### Approved

Name	Designation	Date
Barbara Renton	Interim Chief Executive	17 February 2021

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## 1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

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

### 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.

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

### 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 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**

- 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. **APPENDICES**

None