

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES IN THE FALKIRK COUNCIL AREA 2018/20

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

1 Introduction and Background

The Representation of the People Act 1983 places a duty on local authorities to review their UK parliamentary polling districts and polling places at least once every four years. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 subsequently introduced a new provision altering the timing of compulsory reviews to the period of 16 months beginning with 1 October 2013 and every fifth year thereafter. The current review is now underway and must be completed by 31 January 2020.

The location of polling districts and polling places is the responsibility of Falkirk Council. The location of the polling stations within the polling places is the responsibility of the Returning Officer. For the purposes of this exercise, however, all aspects of the process will be undertaken jointly.

2 Scope and Aim of the Review

The statutory duty is to review UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. However, as polling districts and polling places for other elections, ie Scottish Parliamentary and local government, are based on UK Parliamentary polling arrangements, the requirements of those other elections should also be taken into consideration as part of the Review.

Although it is Falkirk Council's Returning Officer who is the primary Returning Officer for the purposes of the Review and who has a statutory role to participate in it, all Returning Officers within the UK Parliamentary Constituencies in the Council area should be involved in the Review process. In Falkirk's case, this means the involvement of the Returning Officer at West Lothian Council, in relation to the shared constituency of Linlithgow and East Falkirk.

The scope of the Review does not cover changes to the UK or Scottish Parliamentary boundaries as these are the responsibility of the Boundary Commission for Scotland. Nor does it cover changes to the local government boundaries as these are the responsibility of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland. The Returning Officer will, however, make representations to the Boundary Commissions regarding any minor anomalies in the boundaries as required.

The aim of the Review is to ensure that every elector in the Falkirk Council area has such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable and to ensure that, as far as possible, the accessibility needs of those who are disabled have been taken into consideration when designating polling places.

As part of the Review process, the Council must:

- Comply with a number of legislative requirements, including designating a polling place for each polling district, unless the size or other circumstances of a polling district are such that the situation of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electors
- Seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in the Council area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
- Seek to ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

3 Consultation Timetable

The timetable for the Review is as follows:

Task	Date
Publication of Notice of Review and consultation documents, including existing polling arrangements and maps, sent to consultees and made available from the Municipal Buildings, public libraries and on the Council's website	Friday 9 November 2018
Consultation Period (Stage 1) – comments invited on the current polling scheme, including Returning Officers' comments (Falkirk and West Lothian Councils)	Friday 9 November – Friday 21 December 2018 incl.
Publication of draft proposals and the Returning Officer's submission	w/c 14 January 2019
Consultation Period (Stage 2) – invite comments on draft proposals and the Returning Officer's submission	w/c 14 January – Friday 15 March 2019 incl.
Report to Falkirk Council	Wednesday 8 May 2019
Publication of outcome of Review	w/c Monday 13 May 2019

4 Existing polling arrangements

The current polling scheme, last updated for the UK Parliamentary Election in June 2017, is available on request (see contact details below) and on the Falkirk Council website (www.falkirk.gov.uk) for reference and information, together with a list of the existing polling places. The polling scheme contains details of the current polling arrangements in each of the nine Wards in the Falkirk Council area. This scheme was approved by Council following a full review of polling districts and polling places in 2013/14, with the exception of a few minor amendments, primarily due to changes affecting some polling places (closure, reassignment of premises etc).

5 Proposed polling arrangements

Details of proposed changes to the existing polling arrangements will be published in January 2019, along with the Returning Officer's formal response to the existing polling arrangements.

6 The Review Process

Falkirk Council is required to publish a notice of the Review. This is available on the Council website – www.falkirk.gov.uk. It is also available to view at the Municipal Buildings, West Bridge Street, Falkirk FK1 5RS and in libraries throughout the Council area.

This consultation document, together with the current polling scheme and list of polling places, will be made available to:

- All elected Members of Falkirk Council, MPs and MSPs
- Community Councils
- Returning Officers in the constituencies wholly or partly in the Falkirk Council area
- Electoral Registration Officer, Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board
- Falkirk Council's Core Election Team
- Falkirk Council's Corporate Management Team (Chief Executive and Service Directors or equivalent)
- Local community and disability groups
- Keyholders of current polling places
- Police Scotland

In addition, a survey will be available on the Council website.

Any elector within the Falkirk Council area is welcome to make representations to the Council as to the designation of polling districts and polling places.

Representations made by the Returning Officers will be published within 30 days of receipt. Such representations received as part of the Review will be posted at the Municipal Buildings, West Bridge Street, Falkirk FK1 5RS, made available for public inspection and will be published on the Council website.

Representations will be invited from persons or organisations with expertise in access for people with any type of disability.

Any person or body making representations should, if possible, include proposals for venues that may be suitable for consideration as alternative polling places.

Any person or body wishing to email their representations should send them to elections@falkirk.gov.uk. Alternatively, representations may be sent to the address at the end of this document.

On completion of the Review, Falkirk Council must give reasons for its decisions and must publish:

- All correspondence sent to a Returning Officer in connection with the Review
- All correspondence sent to any person whom Falkirk Council considers to have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability
- All representations made by any person in connection with the Review
- The minutes of any meeting held by the Council to consider any revision to the designation of polling districts or polling places within its area as a result of the Review
- Details of the designation of polling districts and polling places within the local authority area as a result of the Review
- Details of the places where the results of the Review have been published

7 Definition of Terms

Polling District:

A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency for the purposes of a UK Parliamentary election. In Scotland, each electoral Ward must be divided into two or more polling districts unless there are special circumstances.

Polling Place:

A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be designated by the Returning Officer. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that the polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district.

Polling Station:

A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the local authority (Falkirk Council), polling stations are chosen by the relevant Returning Officer for the election.

8 Contact Information:

If you wish further information about this Review or if you wish to submit written representations, please contact:

Dale Robb
 Business and Members' Services Manager
 Corporate and Housing Services – Governance Division
 Falkirk Council
 Municipal Buildings
 Falkirk FK1 5RS

Tel: 01324 506111

Email: elections@falkirk.gov.uk

Kenneth Lawrie
 Chief Executive

9 November 2018