

Agenda Item	22
Report No	RES/50/17

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: CORPORATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Date: 30 August 2017

Report title: Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2018

Report by: The Chief Executive

Purpose/Executive Summary

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a duty on all local authorities to review their UK Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places at least once every four years. The last compulsory review took place in 2013-14. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a new provision altering the timing of compulsory reviews. In terms of the 2013 Act the compulsory review periods are the period of 16 months beginning with 1 October 2013 and the period of 16 months beginning with 1 October of every fifth year after that. The next compulsory review is therefore scheduled for October 2018. This report outlines the proposed timetable to undertake a preliminary review ahead of the statutory review. The purpose of the preliminary review is to ascertain stakeholders' views and opinions and, in particular, undertake comparison between the original polling scheme used last in 2015-16 with the revised Highland Council Scheme which was employed in both the Council and UK Parliamentary elections held this year.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Agree the timetable for the review of polling districts and polling places.
- Provide any comments or feedback to inform future stages of the review.

1. Preliminary Review

1.1 In accordance with good practice and guidance provided by the Electoral Commission it is proposed to initiate a preliminary review ahead of next year's compulsory statutory review. This will have the benefit of having a longer period of consultation and will seek to identify and allow resolution of any potential issues ahead of the compulsory review. It is anticipated that such action will minimise objections and challenges to the subsequent review proposals.. The proposed timetable for this stage is outlined in 1.2.

1.2

Stage	Topic	Action	Date
1	Notification of the "preliminary" review	Publish notice of the preliminary review	Tuesday, 2 October 2017
2a	Administering the "preliminary" review	Undertake a review of current polling stations and districts	w/c Tuesday, 2 October 2017
		Hold meeting with Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross	
		Hold meeting with Ross, Skye and Lochaber	
		Hold meeting with Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey	
2b		Deadline for representations and comments on the existing and proposed arrangements for polling districts and places	Monday, 15 January 2018
3		PUBLISH Returning Officer's comments	Monday, 29 January 2018

1.3 Meetings with members have commenced to review the current scheme in each Ward. The outcome of the preliminary review will form the basis of the compulsory review outlined in 2.

2. Compulsory Review

2.1 The compulsory review period commences on 1 October 2018 and must be completed within a 16 month period. There is no minimum time frame for this review but it must follow certain stages. It is anticipated that the preliminary review will have dealt with many of the issues in advance of this stage.

2.2

Stage	Topic	Action	Date
4	Notification of the review	Publish notice of the review. Formal review to commence.	Monday, 1 October 2018

5	Consultation	Representations and comments on the proposed arrangements for polling districts and places.	Monday, 2 October to Monday, 11 December 2018 (10 weeks)
6	Concluding the review	After considering all of the representations, the results of the review to be reported to Committee.	February 2019
7	Publishing the conclusions	After approval has been sought, details of the new polling districts and polling places must be available to the public (to include reasons for choosing a particular Polling District or Place).	March 2019
8	Appeals Process	Following the conclusion of the LA review, representations can be made to the Electoral Commission.	April 2019 Final report to Highland Council

2.3 On completion of stage 8 and following a final report to Highland Council the new scheme will be in place for all elections after that date.

3. Implications

3.1 At this stage there are no identified implications which require to be highlighted. The preliminary review process will highlight any access or financial implications and these will be reported to Committee early in 2018.

Date: 31 July 2017

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Ref:

Background Papers: