

City of Edinburgh Council

10am, Thursday, 10 February 2022

Revised Polling Places for the City of Edinburgh Council Election on 5 May 2022 to eliminate the use of schools

Executive/routine

Wards

Council Commitments

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1. Recommendations

1.1 It is recommended that the Council:

1.1.1 Agree to the amendments to current polling arrangements as outlined in Appendix 1, to cease the use of primary schools where possible;

1.1.2 Note that there are no changes to current polling district boundaries;

1.1.3 Delegate authority to the Chief Executive to make minor amendments to the polling arrangements for the 2022 City of Edinburgh Council Election should the availability of venues be impacted at short notice by Coronavirus or other issues; and

1.1.4 Note that the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) will make any necessary amendments to the Register of Electors.

Andrew Kerr

Chief Executive and Returning Officer

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Revised Polling Places for the City of Edinburgh Council Election on 5 May 2022 to eliminate the use of schools

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report seeks the Council's approval for proposed changes to UK Parliamentary polling places within the City of Edinburgh local government area. These changes are proposed to eliminate, where possible, the use of primary schools to minimise disruption to education.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 4 February 2021 Council approved polling arrangements for the City of Edinburgh which followed a statutory review of polling districts and polling places in the city.
- 3.2 That agreed set of polling places was used for polling at the May 2021 Scottish Parliamentary election in the six constituencies in Edinburgh. This included 19 primary schools.
- 3.3 While the facilities in place were appropriate to support polling, closure of these schools on polling day was a further disruption to education following extreme disruption over the previous year due to the pandemic's impact on schools. Council on 21 November 2019 agreed a motion requiring a review to consider the use of schools as polling places, seeking opportunities to reduce or eliminate their use in time for the 2021 Scottish Parliament and 2022 local government elections.
- 3.4 The Chief Executive therefore requested that the Election Team again review polling arrangements ahead the May 2022 polls to identify wherever possible alternative venues to replace the 19 primary schools currently in use as polling places.
- 3.5 The changes proposed would apply for the polls on 5 May 2022 and any subsequent elections. Section 18(c) of the Representation of the People Act 1983, as amended, places a duty on local authorities to review the UK parliamentary polling districts, polling places and polling stations in their area on a regular basis every fifth year. Following the review undertaken in 2020 the next full review is scheduled for October 2025.

4. Main report

- 4.1 Local authorities have a duty to divide their area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each district. The aim is to ensure the optimal facilities for voting in terms of location, accessibility and capacity of the building, to support turnout in electoral events. Arrangements should support participation in the political process.
- 4.2 The polling arrangements agreed by Council on 4 February 2021 were the result of a review of a range of data including:
- Experience of the current polling arrangements in recent electoral events;
 - Feedback from polling staff;
 - Comments and complaints from voters;
 - Advice from the ERO with respect to anticipated changes in the electorate;
 - Proposed housing developments in the City from the Housing Land Audit & Completions Programme 2019;
 - The request to review and minimise the use of schools as requested by the 21 November 2019 motion to Council;
 - Potential need for new school buildings; and
 - Cost of polling place hire.
- 4.3 The proposals were subject to public consultation and were also issued to a wide range of consultees including Elected Members, MP's, MSP's, Community Councils, local disability groups and parent councils in schools. Consultees were asked to comment on the existing polling scheme and on the draft proposals which were detailed in the consultation document. Comments received were used to inform the final proposals.
- 4.4 It was considered that the polling districts in the City of Edinburgh were reflective of the needs of voters in the local government area and therefore no amendments to the current boundaries were proposed.
- 4.5 Alternatives were considered for each of the primary schools that are currently used as polling places to take account of the 21 November 2019 Council Motion and it was then proposed to moving polling places out of 10 of the 35 primary schools that were used up to 2021. Since then alternatives were found for six other schools but that left 19 schools were retained as polling places where there are were no suitable alternative premises identified, in terms of access, location and capacity.
- 4.6 A review of the conduct and delivery of the Scottish Parliament Elections in Edinburgh undertaken by the Election Team following the 6 May 2021 polls found that the polling facilities used did support participation with a high level of turnout across the city. Polling was also a safe activity with the various controls such as ventilation, hand hygiene, limited capacity and one-way systems preventing

transmission of the virus. Public Health Scotland have confirmed that no outbreaks of the virus were linked to polling.

- 4.7 Measures taken to manage the occupancy of rooms did lead to some queues which were exacerbated in a handful of places by volumes of voters delaying their visit to the polling place until late in the day to avoid poor weather.
- 4.8 However there was concern following the polls that the closure of the remaining 19 primary schools to facilitate polling was an unfortunate further disruption to education especially given the turmoil faced by pupils over the previous 14 months. To limit further disruption and again taking account of the 21 November 2019 Motion the Chief Executive instructed the Election Team to identify wherever possible alternatives to those 19 schools.
- 4.9 Polling facilities have now been reviewed and alternatives identified for all those 19 schools. These are presented in Appendix 1. Due to the limited timescales there has been no opportunity for the usual public consultation around these proposals. However there has been informal consultation with ward councillors where possible.
- 4.10 In addition to the schools, replacement venues have also had to be identified for several other polling places which have now become unavailable due to building work or use for other purposes. These venues are noted in Appendix 1.
- 4.11 Any changes agreed will be the subject of a broad communications campaign ahead of the polls to ensure that voters are aware of the new polling locations. This will include the poll cards, social media work and posters at the old polling places with maps highlighting the new facilities.
- 4.12 The Election Team have also reviewed all polling places where there were queues in May 2021, especially where these persisted at close of poll. Capacity, number of stations, layout, marshalling and signage are all being reviewed to ensure that queues are prevented in May 2022.
- 4.13 There will also be a broad general communications campaign around polling ahead of the election ensuring that voters are aware of the option to vote by post and to be reassured that polling places are safe environments.
- 4.14 As a result of the Coronavirus conditions, the election team are having to review all polling facilities to ensure that polling can be undertaken safely, using guidance from the Electoral Management Board for Scotland and the Electoral Commission. As a result of this review there may be further changes required which will be reported to Council.
- 4.15 The Returning Officer's final recommendations for the designation of Polling Districts and Polling Places in the City of Edinburgh are contained in Appendix 1. This includes four where an alternative venue is yet to be finalised. For these places the Team will consult with ward councillors on options, but ultimately delegated authority is sought to allow the Chief Executive to make a final designation of polling place.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 If Council approves the proposals in Appendix 1 then these will be the designated polling places to be used in elections until the next formal review, scheduled for 2025. A decision is needed by the end of February to allow the ERO to produce poll cards in support of the scheduled City of Edinburgh Council Election on 5 May 2022.
- 5.2 In recognition of the pressures resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic the Election Team are continuing to review all polling facilities to ensure that they have the capacity to accommodate the required polling stations given the additional hygiene and physical distancing required. This is in the context of guidance from the Electoral Management Board for Scotland, the Electoral Commission and Public Health Scotland. The Election Team are also meeting regularly with the Director of Public Health for Lothian to inform the plans.
- 5.3 Council is asked to agree that the Chief Executive be given delegated authority to make amendments to the outlined polling arrangements for the 2022 City of Edinburgh Council election and subsequent polls, should the availability of venues be impacted at short notice by Coronavirus or other loss of premises. This will allow changes to be made quickly given that the tight timescale for the election would make a decision of Council impractical.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There may be a small increase in hire costs for venues resulting from the proposals contained in this report, where venues need to be hired to replace schools where the only costs are additional hours for the facilities support.
- 6.2 These costs are met by the Scottish Government or UK Government for all Parliamentary elections. The Council must meet the costs for local government elections including those in May 2022. Financial resources have been identified to cover these costs.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 There has not been opportunity for the usual consultation around these proposals as the changes need to be effected ahead of the 5 May election. The focus always is to ensure that there are optimum facilities available to support polling and promote turnout, with polling places well located, accessible and with adequate capacity. These principles have been considered with all changes proposed.
- 7.2 For all new polling places identified, ward councillors have been consulted given their local knowledge. There was a full review with public consultation in 2020 and, given the number of revisions involved in these proposals, it is intended that a further review with the usual statutory consultation activities will be undertaken following these elections. Given the volume of housing developments around the city this may also require some review of polling district boundaries.

- 7.3 All polling places are surveyed to ensure that they are safe venues with specific attention now given to arrangements and facilities in the light of measures to control the coronavirus including adequate natural ventilation.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are:
- 8.1.1 [Schedule A1 of the Representation of the People Act 1983.](#)
 - 8.1.2 [Electoral Commission Guidance – Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations](#)
 - 8.1.3 [Motion by Councillor Lang to Council 21 November 2019 - By Councillor Lang - Use of Schools as Polling Places](#)
 - 8.1.4 [Report to Council 4 February 2021 - The Designation of New Polling Places as a result of a Statutory Review of Polling Places and Polling Districts](#)

9. Appendices

- 9.1 **Appendix 1** - City of Edinburgh Council Polling Scheme. proposed amendments to vacate schools and address other premises that are unavailable for this election.

Appendix 1 – City of Edinburgh Council Polling Scheme. Returning Officer’s comments and proposed amendments

Ward 1 Almond

Polling District Reference	Polling Place		
WW01A:	Queensferry Library tbc	NEW	Replacement for Echline PS
WW01B:	Queensferry Community Centre		
WW01C:	Dalmeny Parish Church Hall		
WW01D:	Kirkliston Community Centre		
WW01E:	Cramond Kirk Halls tbc	NEW	Replacement for Cramond PS
WW01F:	Holy Cross Episcopal Church Hall		
WW01G:	GTG Edinburgh tbc	NEW	Replacement for Hillwood PS
WW01H: WW01I:	Muirhouse Millennium Centre	NEW	Merge district due to North Edinburgh Arts Centre being refurbished.

Notes

The proposals allow the Returning Officer to vacate all primary schools used for polling in the ward. Alternatives have been investigated and surveyed and are assessed as suitable for safe and accessible polling.

Cramond Kirk Halls are a significant distance from the south of the polling district but will allow the school to be vacated minimising disruption to education. A review is planned to split the district for future polls with a new place in Barnton. With the registers already published the ERO advised that this split would not be easily possible at this point.

The North Edinburgh Arts Centre is currently being refurbished and with no suitable alternatives being identified the proposal is to merge WW01H and WW01I for this election.

Ward 2 Pentland Hills

Polling District Reference	Polling Place		
SWP02B:	Heriot-Watt University		
SWP02C:	Juniper Green Parish Church Hall		
SWP02D:	Clovenstone Community Centre		
SWP02F:	Gibson Craig Halls		
SWP02G:	Currie Library		
SWP02H:	Balerno Parish Church, St Joseph's Centre		
SWP02I:	Sighthill Primary School		No suitable replacement identified.
SWP02J:	The Bridge Community Café, Holy Trinity Church		
WP02A:	Ratho Community Centre		

Notes

No changes proposed. No practical alternatives identified for Sighthill Primary School.

Ward 3 Drum Brae/ Gyle

Polling District Reference	Polling Place		
SWW03G:	Lothian Valuation Joint Board Office		
SWW03H:	Mobile Polling Station		
WW03A:	East Craigs Church Centre		
WW03B:	Munro Community Centre		
WW03C:	Rannoch Community Education Centre		
WW03D:	Leonardo Edinburgh Murrayfield tbc	NEW	Replacement for Fox Covert PS
WW03E:	Craigsbank Church Hall		
WW03F:	St Thomas' Church	NEW	Replacement for Gylemuir PS

Notes

The proposals allow the Returning Officer to vacate all primary schools used for polling in the ward. Alternatives have been identified and surveyed and are assessed as suitable for safe and accessible polling. Both are well located and recognisable buildings that will be familiar to voters.

Ward 4 Forth

Polling District Reference	Polling Place		
NN04C:	West Pilton Neighbourhood Centre		
NN04D:	Prentice Centre		
NN04E:	Royston Wardieburn Community Centre		
NN04F:	Granton Parish Church		
NN04G:	Wardie Residents Club		
NN04H:	Inverleith St. Serf's Church		
NN04I:	Newhaven Parish Church tbc	NEW	Replacement for Victoria PS
NN04J:	Summerside Bowling Club tbc	NEW	Replacement for Trinity PS

Notes

The proposals allow the Returning Officer to vacate both primary schools used for polling in the ward. Alternatives have been identified and surveyed and are assessed as suitable for safe and accessible polling.

Ward 5 Inverleith

Following this review we propose the following.

Polling District Reference	Polling Place		
NC05D:	The Village Hotel	NEW	Replacement for Fetlor YC (Unavailable)
NC05G:	St. Stephen's Comely Bank Church		
NC05H:	Stockbridge Library		
NC05I:	Bellevue Chapel		
NC05J:	Bristo Baptist Church Hall		
NN05F:	St. James' Episcopal Church Hall		
NW05E & WC05L:	Blackhall St. Columba's Church Hall		
WW05A: WW05B	Blackhall Library	NEW	Merge district Blackhall PS
WW05C:	Drylaw Neighbourhood Centre		

Notes

The proposals allow the Returning Officer to vacate all primary schools used for polling in the ward. Due to a lack of alternative buildings within the district the proposal is to merge districts WW05A and WW05B. The location of the library will provide a maximum of 12 minute walk from the district's furthest point and is therefore suggested as a suitable alternative.

Fetlor Youth Centre have confirmed their unavailability for the forthcoming election, with the nearby Village Hotel confirmed as a replacement.

Ward 6 Corstorphine/ Murrayfield

Following this review we propose the following.

Polling District Reference	Polling Place		
WC06D: NC06L: WC06C:	Murrayfield Parish Church Centre	NEW	Merge District due to unavailability of Holiday Inn City West
WC06G:	Saughton Crescent Scout Hall (also known as 150th Craigmmond Scout Hall)		
WC06H:	BT Murrayfield (Up and Under)	NEW	Replacement for BT Murrayfield (Crossbar)
WW06A:	Corstorphine St. Ninian's Church Hall		
WW06B:	St. Anne's Parish Church Hall		
WW06E:	10th Craigmmond Scout Hall		
WW06F:	Corstorphine Library tbc	NEW	Corstorphine Astoria Centre unavailable
WW06I:	Carrick Knowe Parish Church Hall		
WW06K:	Tesco Corstorphine tbc	NEW	Replacement for Gylemuir PS

Notes

The proposals allow the Returning Officer to vacate the primary schools used for polling in the ward. Other changes are due to the unavailability of the current polling places.

Alternatives have been investigated and surveyed and are assessed as suitable for safe and accessible polling. All are high profile and well recognised buildings.

Ward 7 Sighthill/ Gorgie

Polling District Reference	Polling Place		
SWC07D:	Gorgie War Memorial Hall		
SWC07E:	Gorgie Dalry Stenhouse Church		
SWC07F:	St Brides Centre		
SWP07A:	St. David's Church Hall		
SWP07H:	Sighthill Bowling Club tbc	NEW	Replacement for Murrayburn PS
SWP07J:	Saughton Park		
SWP07N:	Slateford Longstone PCH		
WP07B:	Carrickvale Community Education Centre		

Notes

The proposals allow the Returning Officer to vacate the single primary school used for polling in the ward. An alternative has been surveyed and it is assessed as suitable for safe and accessible polling.

Ward 8 Colinton/ Fairmilehead

Polling District Reference	Polling Place		
SP08D:	Charwood tbc	NEW	Replacement for Buckstone PS
SP08G:	Fairmilehead Parish Church Hall		
SWP08A:	St. Cuthbert's Episcopal Church Hall		
SWP08B: SWS08H	St. John's Colinton Mains Church		
SWP08E:	Dreghorn Loan Church Hall		
SWP08F: SWP08C:	Pentland Community Centre		

Notes

The proposal of Charwood allows the Returning Officer to vacate Buckstone Primary School. It has been surveyed and is assessed as suitable for safe and accessible polling. The building is well located and familiar to local voters.

Ward 9 Fountainbridge/ Craiglockhart

Polling District Reference	Polling Place		
SWC09D:	Tollcross Community Centre		
SWP09I:	Kingsknowe Golf Club		
SWS09A:	O2 Academy Edinburgh (Newmarket Suite)	NEW	Replacement Corn Exchange Baron Suite
SWS09B:	St Michaels Church Hall		
SWS09C:	Fountainbridge Library		
SWS09E:	Boroughmuir Rugby & Community Sports Club		
SWS09G: SS09H	Craiglockhart Parish Church Hall		

Notes

The change is to a new suite within the same building complex and should not impact on turnout.

Ward 10 Meadows/ Morningside

Polling District Reference	Polling Place		
EC10E: SS10G:	German Speaking Congregation Church		NO CHANGES
SP10K:	St. Fillan's Church Hall		
SS10B:	Polwarth Parish Church Hall		
SS10C:	Morningside United Church Hall		
SS10F:	Church Hill Theatre - Studio		
SS10H:	Merchants Golf Club		
SS10I:	Morningside Parish Church Halls		
SS10J:	Greenbank Church Hall		
SWC10D:	Barclay Viewforth Church		
SWS10A:	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints		

Notes.

No changes are required in Ward 10.

Ward 11 City Centre

Polling District Reference	Polling Place		
EC11G:	Lauriston Halls		
EC11H:	City Chambers Customer Hub		
EC11J: EE11K:	Waverley Court, City of Edinburgh Council HQ		
EC11L:	Novotel Edinburgh Centre		
EC11M:	Braidwood Community Centre		
NC11A:	Yotel Edinburgh tbc	NEW	Replacement for Assembly Rooms (Unavailable)
NC11B: NC11C:	St Paul's and St George's Church tbc	NEW	Replacement for Café Camino (Unavailable)
NC11E:	Walpole Hall		
SWC11F:	Tollcross Community Centre		
WC11D:	Palmerston Place Church		

Notes

In the City Centre Ward, two venues are unavailable. St Paul's and St George's is very close to the Café Camino and again a building familiar to local residents.

The Yotel replaces the Assembly Rooms which are unavailable and brings polling facilities within the polling district.

Ward 12 Leith Walk

Polling District Reference	Polling Place		
EN12H: EN12K	Norton Park Conference Centre		
NN12A:	Edinburgh & Leith Boys Brigade		
NN12B:	Ebenezer United Free Church Hall		
NN12C:	Royal Navy & Royal Marine Association & Club		
NN12D:	Drivers' Sports & Social Club tbc	NEW	Replacement for Broughton Nursery
NN12E:	Pilrig St Paul's Church		
NN12F: EN12G	Out of the Blue		
NN12I:	McDonald Road Library		
NN12J:	Holyrood Evangelical Church tbc	NEW	Replacement for Leith Walk PS if possible

Notes

The proposals allow the Returning Officer to vacate all primary schools currently used for polling in the ward.

Ward 13 Leith

Polling District Reference	Polling Place		
EN13E:	Leith St Andrews Church tbc	NEW	Replacement for Hermitage Park PS
NN13A	The Heart (formerly Victoria Primary School building)	NEW	tbc
NN13B:	North Leith Parish Church Hall		
NN13C:	Leith Dockers' Club		Replacement for St. Mary's (Leith) R.C. Primary School
NN13D:	South Leith Parish Church Halls		

Notes

The proposals will allow the Returning Officer to vacate all primary schools used for polling in the ward. Replacements for two of the venues are yet to be finalised.

Leith St Andrews Church offers level access from Lochend Road and is well positioned to replace Hermitage Park Primary School 450m away.

The Heart is the scheduled operational name for the former Victoria Primary School building on Annfield. The location has long been used as a polling place. The site is no longer populated by school children. However access is still to be arranged, dependent on when ownership of the property is taken by its new operators from City of Edinburgh Council.

Ward 14 Craigentinny/ Duddingston

Polling District Reference	Polling Place		
EE14A:	St. Ninian's R.C. Church Hall		
EE14B:	Craigentinny Community Centre		
EE14C:	Wilson Memorial United Free Church of Scotland		
EE14D: EN14L:	Meadowbank Church		
EE14F:	Willowbrae Parish Church		
EE14G:	Northfield/Willowbrae Community Centre		
EE14H:	Duddingston Kirk Hall		
EE14M: EN14K	Restalrig Lochend Community Hub	NEW	Merge District from Meadowbank Church

Notes

The only change proposed in this ward is to merge the two polling districts of EE14M, already served by the Restalrig Lochend Community Hub and EN14K. This is to rationalise the local arrangements and reduce potential congestion most recently seen in Meadowbank Church at the November 2020 by-election, where EN14K shared the church with other districts. The Community Hub is a well-known local facility and is more easily accessed by the residents of EN14K - Lochend Butterfly Way, Hawkhill Close, West Kilnacre than the current location.

Ward 15 Southside/ Newington

Polling District Reference	Polling Place		
EC15A:	Southside Community Centre		NO CHANGES
EC15C:	Nelson Hall Community Centre		
ES15H:	Cameron House Community Education Centre		
SS15D:	St. Catherine's Argyle Church		
SS15F:	Marchmont St. Giles' Parish Church		
SS15G:	Mayfield Salisbury Church Hall		
SS15I:	Reid Memorial Church Hall		
SS15J:	75th Braid Scout Hall		

Notes

There are no changes to polling places proposed for this ward.

Ward 16 Liberton/ Gilmerton

Polling District Reference	Polling Place		
EE16L: SE16D:	Goodtrees Neighbourhood Centre		
SE16F:	Alnwickhill Road Army Reserve Centre		
SE16G:	Gracemount Leisure Centre		
SE16H:SS16E:	Liberton Kirk Halls		
SE16I:	Liberton Northfield Church Hall		
SE16J:	Valley Park Community Centre		
SE16K:	Gilmerton Community Centre		
SS16A:	Liberton Rugby Club tbc	NEW	Replacement for St. John Vianney R.C. PS
SS16B:	St. Gregory's R.C. Church Hall		

Notes

Moving from St John Vianney Primary School to the Rugby Club will remove the final school used for polling in the ward. The rugby club has been surveyed and assessed as suitable for safe and accessible polling. It is well located, and a familiar local facility sited on Double Hedges Road close to its junction with Robert Burns Drive. The club have agreed to install a single step ramp to its north eastern entrance to facilitate direct access to their hall area for voters.

Ward 17 Portobello/ Craigmillar

Polling District Reference	Polling Place		
EE17A:	Portobello Community Centre		
EE17B:	Yellow Bamboo Yoga tbc	NEW	Replacement for St. John's R.C. PS
EE17C:	Portobello and Joppa Parish Church		
EE17D:	Bingham Community Centre		
EE17E:	St Martin Church		
EE17G:ES17M: SE17L	East Neighbourhood Centre		
EE17J:	Hays Business Centre		
EE17K	Cuddie Brae tbc	NEW	Replacement for Newcraighall PS

Notes

The proposals allow the Returning Officer to vacate all primary schools used for polling in this ward. Alternatives have been identified and surveyed and are assessed as suitable for safe and accessible polling. Both are well located and familiar local facilities.

The Yoga studios are less than 500m from the two polling station school they would replace. They are made up of two studios each of a sufficient size to house one polling station in each. Each have their own exit points and can be accessed from a single foyer area; it is the ideal layout for a one way flow of voters. Ample on street parking lies outside with the entrance off a well-lit pedestrian courtyard.

Cuddie Brae have agreed to locate Newcraighall Primary School's single polling station in their conservatory area on the western side of the premises. The area can be cordoned off from the main bar and restaurant and has its own access and egress keeping voters away from the function of the building.