

**REPORT TO:** East Lothian Council

**MEETING DATE:** 25 October 2016

**BY:** Depute Chief Executive (Resources & People Services)

**SUBJECT:** Interim Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To inform Members of an impending interim review of polling districts and places, now required as a result of The East Lothian (Electoral Arrangements) Order 2016 which requires Council ward boundary changes to be made.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note that formal public consultation for this review will commence on 18 October 2016. Given the time pressures that apply in respect of the forthcoming publication of the Electoral Register, members are also asked, upon completion of the review, to delegate final approval of the proposed new polling scheme to the Chief Executive (Returning Officer) in consultation with the Leader/Depute Leader of Council and the Leader of the Opposition.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 East Lothian Council ward boundaries have been changed by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland, as a result of their Fifth General Review of Electoral Arrangements. The number of wards has been reduced from 7 to 6 and the number of councillors has been reduced from 23 to 22. This necessitates an immediate review of polling districts and polling places.

- 3.2 New Wards are as follows:

Ward 1: Musselburgh 4 councillors

Ward 2: Preston, Seton and Gosford 4 councillors

Ward 3: Tranent, Wallyford and Macmerry	4 councillors
Ward 4: North Berwick Coastal	3 councillors
Ward 5: Haddington and Lammermuir	4 councillors
Ward 6: Dunbar and East Linton	3 councillors

- 3.3 Although electoral ward boundaries, names and numbering have been changed, **it should be noted that no physical change to polling districts and polling places is proposed. Voters will still vote where they have been accustomed to in recent years.** There is no requirement to change any existing arrangements in a polling place review; however, any change or decision to make no change must be supported by a reason.
- 3.4 The first stage of the review is publication of the authority's intention to conduct a review and invite comments on the proposals. The Returning Officer must submit a report on the suitability of existing and any proposed new polling places, as part of the reference documents required for this review.
- 3.5 As a comprehensive statutory review was carried out in 2013, involving visits to all polling places, with supporting assessments against existing Capability Scotland and Electoral Commission standards as well as Equalities Impact and Fire Risks, it is not intended to repeat these on this occasion. The next statutory review is due in 2018.
- 3.6 Other reference documents necessary to assist with the review include:
- A set of large scale maps
  - A Polling Place Scheme
  - A list of elector numbers broken down into wards and polling districts.
  - Any records on responses from polling place inspectors and polling station staff on the condition and accessibility of the currently used polling places.
  - Any comments or complaints regarding the current arrangements from the public, elected members and other bodies.

## 4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report.

## **5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

## **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Financial – any costs associated with the review will be contained within the approved Elections budget
- 6.2 Personnel - the review will be carried out by members of the Council's Election Team
- 6.3 Other – none at this stage

## **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1 The East Lothian (Electoral Arrangements) Order 2016
- 7.2 Electoral Registration Office notes on required changes

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