

MEETING :	THE COUNCIL
DATE:	5 MARCH 2020
TITLE:	REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES
PURPOSE	TO SEEK THE COUNCILS APPROVAL OF THE RESULTS OF THE REVIEW
RECOMMENDATION:	THAT THE COUNCIL APPROVES THE RESULTS OF THE REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES IN THE ARFON AND DWYFOR MEIRIONNYDD PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES
CABINET MEMBER:	COUNCILLOR NIA JEFFREYS, MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SUPPORT, CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL SERVICES
AUTHOR:	IWAN EVANS – HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES

1. THE DECISION SOUGHT

1.1 To approve the results of the review of polling districts and polling places in the Arfon and Dwyfor Meirionnydd parliamentary constituencies following a consultation period.

2. REASON FOR SEEKING A DECISION

2.1 Local Authorities are required to divide their areas into polling districts for parliamentary elections and to designate polling places for these polling districts. Under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006 the Council must also undertake a full review of these arrangements every five years.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 A Polling District is the area within the electoral area, ward or district within which a polling place can be designated, which is convenient for voters. A Polling Place is the building or area in which Polling Stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer.

3.2 As far as is reasonable and practicable the authority must designate places that are accessible to electors with disabilities. However, the authority must consider the needs of all electors and should not designate a place that is so far away from most electors in the polling district as to be inconvenient for them to reach it.

3.3 It should be noted that the review of polling places is a continuous process and that there is nothing to prevent changes being made at any time before the

next statutory review. The situation will therefore continue to be monitored, and any changes will be made in consultation with the local member.

3.4 Members will be aware of the proposed changes to local government electoral arrangements following the recent review by the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales. When these changes are implemented a further review of the polling arrangements will be required in advance of the 2022 Local Government Elections.

4. THE REVIEW

4.1 As part of the review, a public notice of the review was published, together with details of the current polling districts and polling stations, and copies were sent to potential interested parties, such as councillors, town and community councils, political parties and other stakeholders. The representations of the county's Access Groups were also sought, as persons with particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability. When contacting these parties it was explained that it would be helpful, where concerns are expressed about a particular polling station, that suggestions are also made for an alternative venue.

4.2 The (Acting) Returning officer must comment during any review on the polling stations. These comments were included with the information published and sent out and can be seen in Appendix 1.

5. RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

5.1 Six responses were received to the consultation. Concerns were put forward in relation to two polling stations as they were not ideal from the point of view of access for disabled electors. These were the polling station at Tal- y Bont (Capel Bethlehem) and Ysgol Santes Helen, Caernarfon. However those who raised the concerns also acknowledged the current lack of suitable alternatives. In relation to Ysgol Santes Helen, it has subsequently been confirmed that arrangements are in place for a ramp to be used to assist entry. The other responses received (from community councils) confirmed that they were happy with the current arrangements.

5.2 As a result of the review no changes are recommended to the polling districts at the moment. Two new polling stations have replaced ones that were no longer available or suitable, and were used in the recent elections. The continued use of one station is subject to the future uses of the building where it is situated.

6. THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

6.1 The report was presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on 13 February 2020 and it resolved to accept the results of the review and recommend it to the Full Council.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached as Appendix 2. No material negative impacts were found in relation to the recommendation.

8. RECOMMENDATION

8.1 That the Council approves the results of the review of polling districts and polling places in the Arfon and Dwyfor Meirionnydd parliamentary constituencies.

Local member's views

Not relevant

Opinion of the Statutory Officers

Monitoring Officer:

Legal Services have prepared the report. I have no comments to add in relation to propriety.

Head of Finance:

Nothing to add to the report from a financial propriety perspective.