COUNCIL

Report of: MONITORING OFFICER
Date: 11 December 2014

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICT, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

Background

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling stations and a review must be completed by 31 January 2015. The review is undertaken on behalf of the Council but the Returning Officer is required to make representations on the review. The representations of the Returning Officer were published on 15 September 2014.

In 2008, the County Council undertook a review of electoral arrangements in Pembrokeshire and identified those communities which were to be warded and set the level of representation for the community (and ward, where appropriate). The recent review did not identify any need to further revise electoral arrangements for town and community councils.

Each community is a separate Polling District and is coterminous with the community’s boundaries.

A polling place is defined as a designated area (e.g. a designated building) for a polling district in which polling stations are located. The objective of the review is to ensure that, as far as practicable in the circumstances, electors have such reasonable facilities for voting and, as far as is reasonable and practicable, that polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when designating a polling place, have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.

The criteria for Polling Stations adopted by the Council is:
(a) Wherever possible, the Polling Station will be located within the Polling District;
(b) The Polling Station will provide appropriate access and facilities for all electors;
(c) Licensed premises will only be used as a last resort;
(d) Places of Worship will be avoided (this does not include Church Halls etc, but refers to the actual place of worship).

During each election, each polling station will be considered and evaluated for suitability by inspections carried out by three separate Officers. The Electoral Services Manager, on behalf of the Council, reviews the suitability of polling stations when compiling the list of appropriate polling stations for a forthcoming election. In this regard, if a new polling station is required then the replacement premises will be physically inspected by the Electoral
Services Manager and a premises previously used for elections (and will have been inspected by the Electoral Services Manager previously) may also be re-inspected. He will also have the benefit of the audits compiled by Presiding Officers who were stationed at the polling station on previous elections and the Polling Station Inspectors’ reports on the suitability of the polling stations for election purposes.

The outcome of the review of polling districts and polling stations has been submitted to the Returning Officer, and he is satisfied that the arrangements for polling districts and polling stations is, as far as practicable in the circumstances, suitable for communities in Pembrokeshire.

Following the publication of the Returning Officer’s representations, an opportunity arose for organizations and people who have an expertise regarding access to premises or for facilities for persons with differing forms of disability to respond to the consultation on the review. Representations from the general public could also be submitted in response to the consultation. The consultation process commenced on 16 September and a Notice of the Review was published on the Council’s website. The consultation closed on 21 October 2014.

**Consultation**

The following organizations were specifically consulted: Political parties; M.P.s and A.M.s; town and community councils; County Councillors and the Access Forum. A schedule of the responses to consultation is attached to this report as Appendix A.

The majority of responses were supportive of the Returning Officer’s proposals. Where there were alternative suggestions these have been considered and a response to the consultation provided.

**Wolfscastle**

The suggested alternative venue has been inspected and it is in a suitable location and the facilities available are adequate. The premises is licensed and the Polling Station would be in close proximity to where alcohol is sold. However, with some temporary screens there are possibilities for future use.

**Milford Haven East**

A further consideration of premises in or near Steynton and The Mount has been considered informally, e.g. Pill Social Centre, North Road Baptist Church, the Horse and Jockey and the Church and Community Hall at Steynton. Although the locations may be considered more convenient to the two communities, the premises do not have the same accessibility as the Community Hall at Sandhurst Road.
Manorbier

The Village Hall at Manorbier is located in the centre of the village but parking, access and the facilities for the Polling Place are barely adequate and had not been used for several years for election purposes. However, the Skrinkle Community Centre is located in Skrinkle which forms a populous part of the village of Manorbier and is where Manorbier Community Council holds its meetings. It has ample parking, disabled friendly access and spacious accommodation for the polling station. Skrinkle Community Centre has been designated as the Polling District and Polling Place for the ward of Manorbier for Manorbier Community Council.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Schedule attached as Appendix B be adopted as the outcome of the Review of polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations in 2014.

Background Documents: None