



Item: 4

Policy and Resources Committee: 18 February 2025.

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places.

Report by Corporate Director of Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions.

1. Overview

- 1.1. The Representation of the People Act 1983 places a duty on the local authority to review its UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places regularly.
- 1.2. Compulsory reviews must be started and completed within the period of 16 months that starts on 1 October of every fifth year after 1 October 2013. The last review of Polling Districts and Polling Places for Orkney was completed in January 2020.
- 1.3. Our most recent compulsory review, which required to be started and completed between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025, ran for a period of one month from 15 November 2024, closing on 16 December 2024.
- 1.4. The aims of the review are as follows:
 - i. To ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
 - ii. To ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled.
- 1.5. In response to specific issues raised during election events prior to the compulsory review, the consultation proposed that changes be made to Kirkwall East and West, South Isles, Harray and Sandwick, Evie and Rendall, South Ronaldsay and Burray and North Isles Polling Places, as detailed in Annex 3 to this report.
- 1.6. Twenty-nine representations were received either direct from organisations or individuals or through our electronic survey, The feedback received from the current review concludes that the electorate are generally happy with the existing arrangements and facilities for voting. Full details of the comments received are contained within Annexes 1 and 2 to this report.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that members of the Committee:
- i. Note the comments received from the most recent compulsory review of polling districts and polling places, as set out in Annexes 1 and 2 respectively to this report.
 - ii. Agree the undernoted changes to polling places:
 - The Pickaquoy Centre should be the new Polling Place for the Kirkwall East and Kirkwall West, and North and South Isles electorate.
 - The Milestone Kirk in Dounby should be the new Polling Place for the Harray and Sandwick electorate.
 - The Rendall Community Centre should be the new Polling Place for the Evie and Rendall electorate.
 - The Cromarty Hall should be the new Polling Place for the South Ronaldsay and Burray electorate.

3. Consultation

- 3.1. A notice of the review was placed on the Council's website and a public notice was placed in the Council Offices advising of the review and inviting comments. A press release was passed to the local media for reporting in the local press and radio station. Social media was also used to promote the consultation throughout the consultation period. The questionnaire was available both electronically and in paper format so as to encourage a good response.
- 3.2. Consultation took place with the following:
- i. The general public.
 - ii. Elected Members.
 - iii. The Member of Parliament.
 - iv. The Member of the Scottish Parliament.
 - v. Community Councils.
 - vi. Orkney Disability Forum.
 - vii. Voluntary Action Orkney.
 - viii. Returning Officer.
- 3.3. As part of routine Polling Station Inspection, mainland polling places were visited during the UK Parliamentary Election on 4 July 2024. The visits focused on electoral accessibility, particularly in relation to disabled access, both internally and externally, signage, parking location and facilities.

- 3.4. Observations from all Polling Place staff on Polling Day are also routinely sought following each election and any amendments included for the next electoral event.
- 3.5. In response to specific issues during previous election events prior to this review, the consultation proposed that changes be made to the following Polling Places:
- i. The St Magnus Centre was the previous Polling Place for all Kirkwall East and Kirkwall West Polling Places, as well as for any electorate wishing to vote in person on polling day for the South and North Isles. However, since COVID and the social distancing arrangements that were required, it was necessary to relocate to The Pickaquooy Centre and it is proposed to make this move permanent as this venue has been well received, provides greater parking availability and greater space for the number of polling stations required.
 - ii. Harray Community Centre was the previous Polling Station for Harray and Sandwick however due to the hall being unavailable a temporary move was made to the Milestone Kirk in Dounby. As the Kirk is located within walking distance of the village of Dounby, it is proposed to make this move permanent.
 - iii. Evie Church was the previous Polling Place for Evie and Rendall electorate, however, due to the building being unavailable for the foreseeable future, the Polling Place was relocated to Rendall Community Centre and it is proposed to make this move permanent.
 - iv. St Margaret’s Hope Primary School, Community Room, was the previous Polling Place for South Ronaldsay and Burray electorate, however due to the unavailability of the Community Room during the pandemic, the polling place was relocated to the Cromarty Hall and it is proposed to make this move permanent as it provides an easily accessible Polling Place with no disruption to the school.

4. Consultation Response

- 4.1. Representations to the Review were received with a full breakdown of these comments attached as Annex 1 to this report. A summary of the 29 responses received is as follows:

Consultation Feedback	Number of responses
No Concerns raised	21
Review of Polling stations in the Isles	3
Location accessibility for pedestrians	4
Choice of venue	1

- 4.2. The consultation was undertaken following the most recent election event which was held in July 2024 and saw the implementation of a number of changes to the UK electoral system arising from the Elections Act 2022. In addition, some voters across Scotland experienced delays in receiving their postal vote packs due to national issues with printing and delivery. As a result, the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee in the UK Parliament has launched an inquiry into the general election which will include arrangements for supporting postal voting.
- 4.3. The issue with some delayed postal vote packs experienced in the most recent UK Parliamentary election was not specifically referred to in the consultation responses, however three representations were received from North Isles constituents requesting the reinstatement of Polling Stations in the Isles.
- 4.4. The removal of polling stations from the isles was fully considered and agreed at the Policy and Resources Committee in November 2011 following a public consultation. The drivers for change in November 2011 which led to the decision to remove the isles are still relevant today. These include costs, staffing, risk and practicalities of running polling stations across the ferry linked isles. The opt in for a postal vote of the electorate on the ferry linked isles rose to 75% of the electorate and turnout in the subsequent elections has been good - better than the average turnout experienced in Scottish elections.
- 4.5. In terms of the accessibility for pedestrians, the change of venue for a polling station does result in it being further away from those who lived closer to the previous polling station venue and conversely closer to those who live beside the new venue. The new venues have each been identified to provide broader benefits in terms of wider accessibility inside the polling station and availability of venue within the specific polling district.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. It is concluded that, following consideration of the responses to the compulsory review as set out in Annexes 1 and 2 respectively to this report, the changes detailed on the list of proposed polling places as set out in Annex 3 to this report are recommended for approval.

For Further Information please contact:

Karen Greaves, Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions, extension 2202, Email karen.greaves@orkney.gov.uk

Implications of Report

1. **Financial:** None arising directly from this report.
2. **Legal:** Section 18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983 places a duty on the local authority to review regularly its UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places.
3. **Corporate Governance:** Not applicable.
4. **Human Resources:** Not applicable.
5. **Equalities:** An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Annex 4 to this report.
6. **Island Communities Impact:** An Island Communities Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Annex 5 to this report.
7. **Links to Council Plan:** Not applicable.
8. **Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan:** Not applicable.
9. **Environmental and Climate Risk:** Not applicable.
10. **Risk:** None directly related to the recommendations in this report.
11. **Procurement:** None directly related to the recommendations in this report.
12. **Health and Safety:** None directly related to the recommendations in this report.
13. **Property and Assets:** None directly related to the recommendations in this report.
14. **Information Technology:** None directly related to the recommendations in this report.
15. **Cost of Living:** None directly related to the recommendations in this report.

Annexes

Annex 1 – Feedback received during Consultation Process 2024.

Annex 2 – Smart Survey responses received during Consultation Process 2024.

Annex 3 – List of Recommendations/Proposed Polling Stations 2024.

Annex 4 – Equality Impact Assessment.

Annex 5 – Island Communities Impact Assessment.

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2024

Orkney Islands Area

Feedback Received during Consultation Process

	Electorate	Number of Responses received	Percentage of electorate
Orkney Mainland	15672	26	0.17%
Non linked Isles	2270	3	0.13%

Orphir Resident
Orphir Church
This was the first time I have ever voted in a church setting – staff were very helpful – increased illumination within the polling booths would be beneficial as church windows tend to block out nature light.
Elected Member
The Pickaquoy Centre
From my perspective I have no issue. The Pickaquoy Centre is the ideal option – accommodation space/parking etc. Simple....
Elected Member
The Pickaquoy Centre
I have no concerns about the polling stations in Kirkwall which I find adequate to meet the needs of the electorate.
Community Council
The Pickaquoy Centre
Members had no concerns regarding the proposal to permanently relocate the polling stations from the St Magnus Centre to the Pickaquoy Centre
Community Council
Holm Community Centre
In summary, no concerns with existing arrangements and use of Holm Community Centre, and there are no alternative buildings in the parish.
South Ronaldsay Community Association
Cromarty Hall, St Margaret's Hope
South Ronaldsay Community Association hosted the polling station for many years successfully and the building is fully accessible at Hope Community School. I understand by continuing to use the Cromarty Hall avoids distracting the school day. However, this is a loss financially to the community association.
Elected Member
I would like to see the physical restoration of polling stations in those islands that previously had them. I regard this <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) As an equalities issue, and 2) As a security issue (postal voting is not secure against coercion within a household)

	Q1. Please select your polling place:	Q2. With regards to your polling place:						Q3. Are there any other premises within your polling district which you think would be more suitable instead?	Q4. Any other comments:
		Q2.1. Are there enough signs to direct you to where to vote?	Q2.2. Do you think the building is suitable as a polling place?	Q2.3. If you are accessing on foot, is it easy to get to?	Q2.4. Is there disabled access if required?	Q2.5. Is there sufficient parking?	Q2.6. Once inside the building is it easy to access the voting area?		
Elector	Stromness Warehouse Buildings	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-
Elector	Holm Community Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-
Elector	Holm Community Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	There are no other buildings within Holm that are as well suited to holding elections than the Community Centre. Also, there are options within the Community Centre, with various rooms which can be used, depending on the circumstances of each election.
Elector	St Andrews Community Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Elector	St Andrews Community Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Happy with current polling station.
Elected Member	St Andrews Community Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	This building and location is just fine for all purposes.	This building and location is just fine for all purposes.
Elector	St Andrews Community Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-
Elector	St Andrews Community Centre	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	NO	I prefer a postal vote due to the distance from home to the polling station. Having said that Deerness has only one postbox which may restrict folks ability to vote if they lack access to transport.
Elector	St Andrews Community Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-
Elector	Firth Community Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Firth Community Centre is a good central location, it works well for voters and for polling staff.
Elector	Orphir Kirk	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-
Elector	Rendall Community Centre	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	It's a shame we can only get there by car. There is no public transport outside working hours for me to get to Rendall to vote. I can take the last bus from Evie to get there but then I can't get home. Luckily we both drive and have transport but that might not always be the case for others now or us in the future. It's a long walk but even if I was prepared to do it (if I had time I might in decent weather) the road has no pavement and is 60mph most of the way so not a safe option.
Elector	The Pickaquoy Centre	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	It was better where it used to be at the st Magnus centre	No
Elector	The Pickaquoy Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	-	-
Elector	The Pickaquoy Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	St Magnus Centre was our previous polling place, which had limited parking and had less resources available. Changing to the Pickaquoy Centre was an improvement.
Elector	The Pickaquoy Centre	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Somewhere closer to my home like the BB hut at Papdale so I don't have to travel as far (I have physical mobility difficulties and walking any distance can cause recurrent flare ups of pain and fatigue).	-

	Q1. Please select your polling place:	Q2. With regards to your polling place:						Q3. Are there any other premises within your polling district which you think would be more suitable instead?	Q4. Any other comments:
Elector	The Pickaquoy Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Living in Westray we have no choice but to use postal voting meaning that we MUST cast our vote in advance of polling day so I think a considerable number of islanders would be keen to have our local polling stations reinstated	-
Elector	The Pickaquoy Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-
Elector	The Pickaquoy Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No picky is grand	-
Elector	The Pickaquoy Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	St Magnus Centre worked just as well in the past. Kirkwall Grammar School if election happens to be held outwith term time.	-
Elector	The Pickaquoy Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-
Elector	The Pickaquoy Centre	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sanday School	Bring back polling stations in the Isles

ORKNEY ISLANDS COUNCIL – REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY POLLING DISTRICTS AND PLACES 2024

Polling District			Polling Place	Recommendation/ Proposed Polling Place	
Ward Name	Polling District Ref				
Kirkwall East	AA	1	Kirkwall East – Albert Street to Flett Park	The Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre was the previous Polling Place however since covid and the social distancing arrangements required we had to relocate to the Pickaquoy Centre and would now like to make this move permanent as provides greater parking availability and greater space for the number of polling stations required.
Kirkwall East	AA	2	Kirkwall East – Gairsay View to Peace Crescent	The Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre was the previous Polling Place however due to covid and the social distancing arrangements required we had to relocate to the Pickaquoy Centre and would now like to make this move permanent as provides greater parking availability and greater space for the number of polling stations required.
Kirkwall East	AA	3	Kirkwall East – Quadrant to Willowburn Road	The Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre was the previous Polling Place however due to covid and the social distancing arrangements required we had to relocate to the Pickaquoy Centre and would now like to make this move permanent as provides greater parking availability and greater space for the number of polling stations required.

Polling District			Polling Place	Recommendation/ Proposed Polling Place	
Ward Name	Polling District Ref				
Kirkwall West & Orphir	BA	4	Kirkwall West – Albert Street to Junction Road	The Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre was the previous Polling Place however due to covid and the social distancing arrangements required we had to relocate to the Pickaquoy Centre and would now like to make this move permanent as provides greater parking availability and greater space for the number of polling stations required.
Kirkwall West & Orphir	BA	5	Kirkwall West – King Haakon Street to Pipersquoy Terrace	The Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre was the previous Polling Place however due to covid and the social distancing arrangements required we had to relocate to the Pickaquoy Centre and would now like to make this move permanent as provides greater parking availability and greater space for the number of polling stations required.
Kirkwall West & Orphir	BA	6	Kirkwall West – Quanterness to Zetland Road	The Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre was the previous Polling Place however due to covid and the social distancing arrangements required we had to relocate to the Pickaquoy Centre and would now like to make this move permanent as provides greater parking availability and greater space for the number of polling stations required.
Kirkwall West & Orphir	BB	7	Orphir	Orphir Church	No change
Stromness & South Isles	CA	8	Stromness North	Warehouse Buildings, Stromness	No change
Stromness & South Isles	CB	9	Stromness South	Warehouse Buildings, Stromness	No change

Polling District			Polling Place		Recommendation/ Proposed Polling Place
Ward Name	Polling District Ref				
Stromness & South Isles	CC	10	Graemsay	Warehouse Buildings, Stromness	No change
Stromness & South Isles	CD	11	Hoy & Walls	The Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre was the previous Polling Place however due to covid and the social distancing arrangements required we had to relocate to the Pickaquoy Centre and would now like to make this move permanent as provides greater parking availability and greater space for the number of polling stations required.
Stromness & South Isles	CE	12	Flotta	The Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre was the previous Polling Place however due to covid and the social distancing arrangements required we had to relocate to the Pickaquoy Centre and would now like to make this move permanent as provides greater parking availability and greater space for the number of polling stations required.
West Mainland	DA	13	Firth & Stenness	Firth Community Hall	No change
West Mainland	DB	14	Harray & Sandwick	Milestone Kirk	The Harray Community Centre was the previous Polling Station however due to the hall being unavailable a temporary move was made to the Milestone Kirk. Due to the Kirk being located within walking distance of the village of Dounby it is proposed to make this move permanent.

Polling District			Polling Place		Recommendation/ Proposed Polling Place
Ward Name	Polling District Ref				
West Mainland	DC	15	Evie & Rendall	Rendall Community Centre	Evie Church was the previous Polling Place however, due to the building being unavailable for hire for the foreseeable future, the Polling Place was relocated to Rendall Community Centre and it is proposed to make this move permanent.
West Mainland	DD	16	Birsay	Birsay Community Centre	No change
East Mainland, South Ronaldsay & Burray	EA	17	St Andrews & Deerness	St Andrews Community Centre	No change
East Mainland, South Ronaldsay & Burray	EB	18	Holm	Holm Community Centre	No change
East Mainland, South Ronaldsay & Burray	EC	19	South Ronaldsay & Burray	The Cromarty Hall	St Margaret's Hope Primary School, Community Room was the previous Polling Place, however due to the unavailability of the Community Room during the Pandemic, we had to relocate to the Cromarty Hall and would now like to make this move permanent as it provides an easily accessible Polling Place with no disruption to the school.
North Isles	FA	20	Rousay, Egilsay, Wyre & Gairsay	The Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre was the previous Polling Place however due to covid and the social distancing arrangements required we had to relocate to the Pickaquoy Centre and would now like to make this move permanent as provides greater parking availability and greater space for the number of polling stations required.

Polling District			Polling Place		Recommendation/ Proposed Polling Place
Ward Name	Polling District Ref				
North Isles	FB	21	Shapinsay	The Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre was the previous Polling Place however due to covid and the social distancing arrangements required we had to relocate to the Pickaquoy Centre and would now like to make this move permanent as provides greater parking availability and greater space for the number of polling stations required.
North Isles	FC	22	Sanday	The Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre was the previous Polling Place however due to covid and the social distancing arrangements required we had to relocate to the Pickaquoy Centre and would now like to make this move permanent as provides greater parking availability and greater space for the number of polling stations required.
North Isles	FD	23	North Ronaldsay	The Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre was the previous Polling Place however due to covid and the social distancing arrangements required we had to relocate to the Pickaquoy Centre and would now like to make this move permanent as provides greater parking availability and greater space for the number of polling stations required.

Polling District			Polling Place		Recommendation/ Proposed Polling Place
Ward Name	Polling District Ref				
North Isles	FE	24	Stronsay	The Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre was the previous Polling Place however due to covid and the social distancing arrangements required we had to relocate to the Pickaquoy Centre and would now like to make this move permanent as provides greater parking availability and greater space for the number of polling stations required.
North Isles	FF	25	Papa Westray	The Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre was the previous Polling Place however due to covid and the social distancing arrangements required we had to relocate to the Pickaquoy Centre and would now like to make this move permanent as provides greater parking availability and greater space for the number of polling stations required.
North Isles	FG	26	Westray	The Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre was the previous Polling Place however due to covid and the social distancing arrangements required we had to relocate to the Pickaquoy Centre and would now like to make this move permanent as provides greater parking availability and greater space for the number of polling stations required.

Polling District			Polling Place		Recommendation/ Proposed Polling Place
Ward Name	Polling District Ref				
North Isles	FH	27	Eday	The Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall	St Magnus Centre was the previous Polling Place however due to covid and the social distancing arrangements required we had to relocate to the Pickaquoy Centre and would now like to make this move permanent as provides greater parking availability and greater space for the number of polling stations required.



Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to improve the work of Orkney Islands Council by making sure it promotes equality and does not discriminate. This assessment records the likely impact of any changes to a function, policy or plan by anticipating the consequences, and making sure that any negative impacts are eliminated or minimised and positive impacts are maximised.

1. Identification of Function, Policy or Plan	
Name of function / policy / plan to be assessed.	Polling Districts and Polling Places Review
Service / service area responsible.	Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions
Name of person carrying out the assessment and contact details.	Karen Greaves, Corporate Director of Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions
Date of assessment.	14 January 2025
Is the function / policy / plan new or existing? (Please indicate also if the service is to be deleted, reduced or changed significantly).	Existing – this review considers the suitability of the Council's present Polling Districts and Polling Places.

2. Initial Screening	
What are the intended outcomes of the function / policy / plan?	To ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and To ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled.
Is the function / policy / plan strategically important?	The function is strategically important in making the facilities for the electorate accessible to all.
State who is, or may be affected by this function / policy / plan, and how.	Individuals residing in Orkney who are eligible to vote.

<p>How have stakeholders been involved in the development of this function / policy / plan?</p>	<p>A consultation with the general public, Elected Members, the MP, MSP, Community Councils, the Orkney Access Panel, Orkney Disability Forum and Voluntary Action Orkney has been undertaken.</p>
<p>Is there any existing data and / or research relating to equalities issues in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. consultations, national surveys, performance data, complaints, service user feedback, academic / consultants' reports, benchmarking (see equalities resources on OIC information portal).</p>	<p>Mainland polling stations were visited during the UK Parliamentary Election on 4 July 2024. The visits focused on electoral accessibility, particularly in relation to disabled access, both internally and externally, signage, parking location and facilities.</p>
<p>Is there any existing evidence relating to socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. For people living in poverty or for people of low income. See The Fairer Scotland Duty Guidance for Public Bodies for further information.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>Could the function / policy have a differential impact on any of the following equality areas?</p>	<p>(Please provide any evidence – positive impacts / benefits, negative impacts and reasons).</p>
<p>1. Race: this includes ethnic or national groups, colour and nationality.</p>	<p>Positive impact. The proposals in the report ensure accessibility to polling stations for all voters.</p>
<p>2. Sex: a man or a woman.</p>	<p>Positive impact. The proposals in the report ensure accessibility to polling stations for all voters.</p>
<p>3. Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.</p>	<p>Positive impact. The proposals in the report ensure accessibility to polling stations for all voters.</p>
<p>4. Gender Reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender to another.</p>	<p>Positive impact. The proposals in the report ensure accessibility to polling stations for all voters.</p>

5. Pregnancy and maternity.	Positive impact. The proposals in the report ensure accessibility to polling stations for all voters.
6. Age: people of different ages.	Positive impact. The proposals in the report ensure accessibility to polling stations for all voters.
7. Religion or beliefs or none (atheists).	Positive impact. The proposals in the report ensure accessibility to polling stations for all voters.
8. Caring responsibilities.	Positive impact. The proposals in the report ensure accessibility to polling stations for all voters.
9. Care experienced.	Positive impact. The proposals in the report ensure accessibility to polling stations for all voters.
10. Marriage and Civil Partnerships.	Positive impact. The proposals in the report ensure accessibility to polling stations for all voters.
11. Disability: people with disabilities (whether registered or not).	Positive impact. The proposals in the report ensure accessibility to polling stations for all voters.
12. Socio-economic disadvantage.	Positive impact. The proposals in the report ensure accessibility to polling stations for all voters.

3. Impact Assessment

Does the analysis above identify any differential impacts which need to be addressed?	No.
How could you minimise or remove any potential negative impacts?	Not applicable.
Do you have enough information to make a judgement? If no, what information do you require?	Yes.

4. Conclusions and Planned Action

Is further work required?	No.
What action is to be taken?	Implementation of Council decision.

Who will undertake it?	Corporate Director of Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions
When will it be done?	Implemented at next election event.
How will it be monitored? (e.g. through service plans).	Not applicable.

Signature:



Date: 14 January 2025

Name: KAREN GREAVES

(BLOCK CAPITALS).

Please sign and date this form, keep one copy and send a copy to HR and Performance. A Word version should also be emailed to HR and Performance at hrsupport@orkney.gov.uk

Island Communities Impact Assessment

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2025

Preliminary Considerations	Response
Please provide a brief description or summary of the policy, strategy or service under review for the purposes of this assessment.	Compulsory review of the current Scheme of Polling Districts and Polling Places.
Step 1 – Develop a clear understanding of your objectives	Response
What are the objectives of the policy, strategy or service?	<p>The aims of the review are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. • To ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled.
Do you need to consult?	Yes.
How are islands identified for the purpose of the policy, strategy or service?	<p>Islands can be identified as the collective Orkney Islands (of around 20 inhabited islands), as a group (ie North Isles, South Isles, ferry-linked isles) or individually (ie Westray, Sanday, Stronsay etc).</p> <p>Islands will be considered in accordance with the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 as a “formed area of land surrounded on all sides by the sea (ignoring artificial structures such as bridges) and above water at high tide”.</p>
What are the intended impacts/outcomes and how do these potentially differ in the islands?	To remain with the status quo – which is that there are no polling stations on the islands, however provision is made on mainland Orkney and the electorate are encouraged to consider a postal vote.
Is the policy, strategy or service new?	No

Step 2 – Gather your data and identify your stakeholders	Response
<p>What data is available about the current situation in the islands?</p>	<p>At present the outer island electors have 3 options for placing their vote:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They can apply for a postal vote; or • They can appoint a proxy to vote on their behalf; or • A polling station is always available on the Mainland for those that wish to cast their vote in person on Polling Day. <p>The decision to introduce postal votes for the outer isles was taken in November 2011 following a public consultation and has worked well since this introduction with the majority (over 80%) of electorate applying for postal votes as well as some attending on the day of poll for casting their vote in person on the Mainland.</p> <p>The drivers for change included:-</p> <p>Higher turnout/return rate for postal votes compared with turnout for fixed polling stations;</p> <p>Speed of Declaration – postal packs returned are processed at the start of the Count as opposed to wait until early hours of the morning to count and then declare;</p> <p>Increasing popularity of the postal vote – the uptake in postal votes continues to remain high and along with the high return rates gives a better reflection of the preferences of Orkney’s electorate;</p> <p>Mainland Polling Station – a ballot box is always available on the Mainland for any of the outer isles electorate who still prefer to vote in person on polling day;</p> <p>Staffing – the availability of staff for all the island polling stations can be quite problematic, along with training with regards to the different legislation now applied. At present all polling staff are experienced Council staff and training and the time taken arranging for suitable</p>


	<p>staff to attend on the islands would mean two nights subsistence on top of their fees. This can obviously prove very problematic if any members of staff are off sick at short notice on the week of the Election. The current fees for staff attending a Polling Station is in the region of £555 per polling station for one Presiding Officer and one Polling Clerk. The fees for providing polling staff for all outer isles would mean a cost in the region of £5,500 with travel and subsistence on top.</p> <p>Harbour Launches – the cost of hiring harbour launches in order to collect the ballot boxes from each of the islands would be in excess of £2100 for first 4 hours following by hourly rate of £530.62. For both the North and South outer isles we would require 2 launches therefore a cost in excess of £6,000.</p> <p>Risk – Weather related delays, unavailability of harbour launches, due to visiting tankers, and risk of handling ballot boxes at piers have to be noted and taken as “red” risks, which could ultimately delay the security and counting of the votes into the next working day.</p> <p>Budget – The cost of running Scottish and UK Parliamentary Elections are mainly centrally funded although any Local Government Election is through our own budget and with continuing budgetary constraints it would place additional financial strain in order to increase the cost of running the Election to take into consideration the large financial cost of staffing and logistics for collection of the ballot boxes following close of polls.</p> <p>Hire of suitable Polling Stations – The use of suitable premises to hold a polling station often becomes the local school and therefore this disrupts the running of the school and often means closing the school for the day of poll.</p>
Do you need to consult?	Yes


How does any existing data differ between islands?	The uptake of postal vote applications within the outer isles has remained high around 80% with a similar return rate of over 80%.
Are there any existing design features or mitigations in place?	<p>At present the outer island electors have 3 options for placing their vote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They can apply for a postal vote; or • They can appoint a proxy to vote on their behalf; or • A polling station is always available on the Mainland for those that wish to cast their vote in person on Polling Day.
Step 3 – Consultation	Response
Who do you need to consult with?	<p>A Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places requires a public consultation. In addition to the General Public, the following were consulted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected Members. • The Member of Parliament. • The Member of the Scottish Parliament. • Community Councils. • Orkney Disability Forum. • Voluntary Action Orkney. • Returning Officer.
How will you carry out your consultation and in what timescales?	The compulsory review ran for a period of one month from Friday 15 November 2024 closing on Monday 16 December 2024.
What questions will you ask when considering how to address island realities?	Consultees were asked a series of questions about the accessibility of their polling station and also if there were any other locations

	suitable and an invitation for any other comments they had in connection with polling.
What information has already been gathered through consultations and what concerns have been raised previously by island communities?	The previous compulsory review, undertaken in 2020 received no responses from the public consultation. In 2011, a consultation on the removal of the polling stations was undertaken and 30 responses were received – 20 (67%) were in favour of the removal and 10 (33%) were against.
Is your consultation robust and meaningful and sufficient to comply with the Section 7 duty?	Yes
Step 4 – Assessment	Response
Does your assessment identify any unique impacts on island communities?	No additional impacts from the current policy.
Does your assessment identify any potential barriers or wider impacts?	No additional barriers or impacts – see above mitigations.
How will you address these?	Not applicable.
<p>You must now determine whether in your opinion your policy, strategy or service is likely to have an effect on an island community, which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities). No.</p> <p>If your answer is No to the above question, a full ICIA will NOT be required and you can proceed to Step 6.</p> <p>If the answer is Yes, an ICIA must be prepared and you should proceed to Step 5.</p> <p>To form your opinion, the following questions should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the evidence show different circumstances or different expectations or needs, or different experiences or outcomes (such as different levels of satisfaction, or different rates of participation)? • Are these different effects likely? • Are these effects significantly different? 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could the effect amount to a disadvantage for an island community compared to the Scottish mainland or between island groups? 	
Step 5 – Preparing your ICIA	Response
In Step 5, you should describe the likely significantly different effect of the policy, strategy or service:	N/A
Assess the extent to which you consider that the policy, strategy or service can be developed or delivered in such a manner as to improve or mitigate, for island communities, the outcomes resulting from it.	N/A
Consider alternative delivery mechanisms and whether further consultation is required.	N/A
Describe how these alternative delivery mechanisms will improve or mitigate outcomes for island communities.	N/A
Identify resources required to improve or mitigate outcomes for island communities.	N/A
Stage 6 – Making adjustments to your work	Response
Should delivery mechanisms/mitigations vary in different communities?	No
Do you need to consult with island communities in respect of mechanisms or mitigations?	No
Have island circumstances been factored into the evaluation process?	Yes
Have any island-specific indicators/targets been identified that require monitoring?	No
How will outcomes be measured on the islands?	N/A
How has the policy, strategy or service affected island communities?	The uptake on postal voting has increased to over 80% of electorate.

How will lessons learned in this ICIA inform future policy making and service delivery?	N/A
Step 7 – Publishing your ICIA	Response
Have you presented your ICIA in an Easy Read format?	No
Does it need to be presented in Gaelic or any other language?	No
Where will you publish your ICIA and will relevant stakeholders be able to easily access it?	On the Council's website
Who will signoff your final ICIA and why?	Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions

ICIA completed by:	Fiona Ratter
Position:	Team Manager Business Support/Elections
Signature:	
Date complete:	13 January 2025

ICIA approved by:	Karen Greaves
Position:	Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions
Signature:	
Date complete:	21 January 2024