

Electoral Commission

Questions / areas for response consideration

The Resolution

A resolution of Tynwald requires that in addition to reviewing the number and boundaries of constituencies (which will include the number of seats per constituency) the Electoral Commission must consider and produce a report to Tynwald on the following matters:

1. Accessibility of elections to voters;
2. The organisation of Pre-Election Meetings;
3. Postal voting procedures;
4. Proxy voting procedures;
5. Ability to vote at any polling station across a constituency;
6. The feasibility of setting up one or more "All Island" Polling stations;
7. Candidate campaign materials;

and in doing so shall have due regard to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures and to the potential costs of its recommendations.

Points for consideration

As approved by a Resolution of Tynwald, the Electoral Commission will produce a report for Tynwald, no later than 18 months after appointment, detailing their findings as a result of the following considerations, which should not be considered to be exhaustive.

Tynwald Resolution Focus Area	Outline discussion questions	Comments / Response
Review the number and boundaries of constituencies including the number of members per constituency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should there be a change to the number of constituencies? • Size and population of constituencies – are current boundaries appropriate? Is representation fair and equitable? • Do current constituency boundaries work – if not, why? • Should population be the sole guide to constituencies and boundaries? Are boundaries based on population or electors the most equitable way to set boundaries? 	<p>Douglas recently reduced the number of constituencies from 6 wards to 4 wards, and reduced the number of Members from 18 to 12.</p> <p>Yes, there should be a change to the number of local authority constituencies around the Island, merging smaller authorities together.</p> <p>The current Douglas Hall Council mirror the House of Keys Wards, and there are 3 Councillors representing each ward. There are approximately 3500 voters in each Ward</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the size of constituencies still relevant? If not, how best should they be adjusted? Are the number of allocated seats per constituency still appropriate? • Are two seat constituencies working? • Would single seat constituencies work better than constituencies having two or more seats? 	<p>which is based on population. The Council agrees that basing constituencies on population figures is the correct approach. It has been suggested that there should be an extension to the boundaries in Douglas South to include Clybane Rise, Clybane Manor, Ballacottier Meadows, Waverley Mews and Rosehill Mews. This would give a natural break to the Commercial side and keep all the residential properties within Douglas South.</p> <p>Single seat constituencies would be extremely difficult for Local Authority Members to manage as Local Authority Members stand on a voluntary basis often have a full time role elsewhere.</p>
<p>Accessibility of elections to voters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the 2021 General Election and how well it complied with the Equality Act? • Should there be any mandatory venue attributes identified for future voting locations? • Are there any additional accessibility measures which should be incorporated into future election planning and administration? • Issues identified with accessibility to voting – both in advance and at polling stations. • Barriers found and for which groups/individuals? • Examples of poor physical accessibility to polling stations. • How might accessibility be improved? • Accessibility issues around candidature. • Comments as to groups that may not be participating in voting process – e.g., low levels of registration within 	<p>The Council was not involved in the 2021 General Election, therefore unable to comment.</p> <p>Disabled access is extremely important, and whilst it should be mandatory, it is not always feasible in certain areas of Douglas. Accessible parking is also a top priority but again not always feasible. The Council and the Elections Unit are working together to establish a list of suitable polling stations in all Douglas Wards.</p> <p>The Council has had issues with disabled access in the past, including buildings that have disabled access but require users to walk further away or a longer route to access which does not comply with the Equality Act.</p> <p>The Douglas Town Hall has been used as a polling station in both general and local elections, and until a couple of</p>

	<p>minority or youth groups. How to improve this engagement?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do elections engage a sufficiently broad representation of the Island community? • Views on how more groups might be encouraged to vote 	<p>years ago was not accessible, so it has been modified to have disabled access.</p> <p>Examples of poor access – Cronk Y Berry School, the room that is provided (secure from the remainder of the school) is only accessible by stairs. The 1st Douglas Scout Group Hall on Desmesne Road has a ramp but requires users to walk around the building to access, thus travelling further than other voters using the stair entrance. Noble’s Park Pavilion, to use the disabled access, users must walk around the front of the building on a longer route.</p> <p>For Douglas local elections, if issues have been encountered, the presiding officer and clerk have assisted people to vote.</p> <p>Consideration to alleviate some of the issues could be to hold elections during half terms which may open up access to more schools and better locations within the schools with adequate access.</p> <p>Consideration could also be given to the day of the week that voting takes place. Weekends may increase the turnout at local elections, and opening the polling stations for a longer duration (i.e. over multiple days) may improve the accessibility for voters.</p> <p>In relation to accessibility issues around candidature, the Council has not encountered any issues.</p> <p>Suggestions for encouraging voters – engage with the schools to encourage 16 year olds to vote. Run mock elections, invite schools to view local political meetings.</p>
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<p>The organisation of Pre-Election Meetings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should Government be involved with/lead pre-election meetings? • Optimum number, frequency and timing of pre-election meetings? • Who should chair these meetings? • Where should these meetings take place (links with above to be considered) Effectiveness of pre-election and requisition meetings • Awareness of meetings held/attendance levels 	<p>An authority, whether that be Government or Local Authorities, should be involved with pre-election meetings.</p> <p>There should be at least one mandatory pre-election meeting per general election constituency. Local authority pre-election should not be mandatory, as it could be considered a disincentive for candidates that are standing for a voluntary position.</p> <p>An experienced chair should lead on the meeting, such as a Captain of the Parish. Any Chair should be non-political. Pre-election and requisition meetings are important for voters, and may encourage a higher turnout on the day.</p>

		Requisition meetings that Douglas has been involved in have generally been very well attended.
Alternative to in-person voting – postal and proxy voting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was postal voting successful during 2021 General Election? Were the systems clear? • Understanding of electorate as to ability to access alternative vote? • Is this facility necessary? • Could this process be improved? • Should postal votes be permitted to be counted prior to election date? • Views on the need for verification of postal votes • Potential for fraud. Current/future risks? • Non availability of advance voting / certifying officer role – impact? 	The Council was not involved in postal voting for the 2021 General Election, however, the Council welcomes the postal vote replacing the absent vote, and this may increase turnout, widen the demographics of voters and makes it more accessible to all. The Council’s only concern is the current requirement to verify the votes as the count commences. This has the ability to significantly delay the counting process. The Council agrees that verification is a requirement to avoid any potential risks, but would support the verification of postal votes taking place earlier in the day on polling day.
Ability to vote at any polling station across a constituency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should the Douglas (South) pilot scheme be rolled out across all the constituencies? • Should live activity data be made public so voters could view how busy each polling station is? • Are polling districts required? Should voters be able to vote at any polling station within their constituency? • Should there be an all-Island polling stations for any voter to access? • Digital accessibility issues and inclusivity? • Benefit of options to those with accessibility needs 	<p>The Council would support the pilot scheme to be rolled out across the constituencies, if the software used by the Government could be shared with the Council. Live data may be of use to voters and could encourage people to vote.</p> <p>The Council believes that polling districts are still required, but voting in any polling station within a constituency could be managed with the correct software. The Council would not support an all-island polling station, the likelihood of error would increase and the integrity of the election could be in question.</p>

Feasibility of All-Island voting stations;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should there be a facility for votes to be cast for any constituency in various locations around the island? • Would transferring ballot boxes around the island pose any significant risk to the integrity of the electoral process? 	<p>The Council would not support an all-island polling station, the likelihood of error would increase and the integrity of the election could be in question. Logistically the Council is not sure how this could be an option.</p>
Candidate Campaign Materials:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could the authority to display campaign materials be streamlined? • Is there clear and appropriate guidance on campaign materials and their display? • Is there consistent and effective enforcement of campaign material rules? Problems? • Candidate manifestos • Application of rules for campaign materials 	<p>The guidance about candidate campaign materials is not clear and the Council has had a number of issues raised with us in past elections.</p> <p>Local authority candidates are expected to cover the cost of the campaign materials. For Douglas each candidate has the expense of campaign material for approximately 3,500 constituents. Consideration could be given to provide funding support for local authority candidates (e.g) to cover the cost of one letter drop to constituents in their ward.</p>
Any other commentary?		

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