COUNCIL
25 SEPTEMBER 2014

Report of the Chief Executive

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, PLACES AND STATIONS 2014

SUMMARY

The report informs Members of the progress of the review, comments received in response to initial consultation on the Council’s current polling scheme and the comments of the Returning Officer, which will be the subject of a further period of consultation.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the report be noted.

2. That the Returning Officer’s comments be the subject of a further period of consultation.

3. That final proposals for the amendment of the Council’s Polling Scheme be reported to Council on 20 November 2014.

WARDS AFFECTED

All

STRATEGIC LINK

The provision of accessible polling facilities contributes to the Council’s aims to provide excellent services and to lead the communities of the Derbyshire Dales.

1. REPORT

1.1. Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, local authorities are required to divide their area into polling districts, to designate polling places for those polling districts, and to keep their electoral arrangements under review.

1.2. The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced a duty for all polling districts and polling places to be reviewed every four years. The Council’s last Review was carried out in 2011.

1.3. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. A compulsory review must be completed between 1 October 2013 and 31 January 2015 (inclusive). Subsequent compulsory Reviews must be completed within the period of 16 months that starts on 1 October every fifth year after 1 October 2013.
1.4. **Explanation of Terms**

1.5. A **Polling District** is a geographical area created by the sub-division of an electoral area, i.e. a constituency, district ward or division into smaller parts.

1.6. A **Polling Place** is the building or area in which polling stations will be located.

1.7. A **Polling Station** is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place.

2. **PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW**

2.1. Each Polling District must offer reasonable facilities for voting for all its electors, as far as reasonably practicable in the circumstances.

2.2. In conducting the Review the Council must ensure that:

- all electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;

- polling places must contain buildings that are suitable for use as a polling station by all sections of the community;

- so far as is reasonable and practicable, all polling stations are accessible to all electors, including those with disabilities;

- polling places must be located in an area of the corresponding polling district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area that is wholly or partly outside the polling district.

3. **THE REVIEW PROCESS AND PROGRESS TO DATE**


3.2. The notice was posted in the Derbyshire Times, at the Council’s Offices and on the website.

3.3. The Acting Returning Officer for the parliamentary constituency within the District was consulted and asked to make representations on the existing polling districts, places and stations.

3.4. Representations were invited from MEP’s, MP’s, local Political Party Agents, County and District Councillors, Parish and Town Councils, electors and from persons with particular expertise in relation to access to premises for those with disabilities. Owners/managers of current Polling Station premises were also consulted.

3.5. A schedule of the representations received during the consultation period is attached at Appendix 2.

3.6. Comments from the Planning Policy Manager and the Peak District National Park point to the potential through development, for increased elector numbers throughout the District. The current polling arrangements are considered to offer suitable capacity to
deal with the growth in the short term and will need to be continually monitored alongside the electoral registration process.

3.7. The District Council did not propose any changes to the current Polling Scheme, except to confirm the minor amendments, made under delegated authority and already incorporated in the advertised scheme.

4. **ACTING RETURNING OFFICER’S COMMENTS**

4.1. The comments of the Acting Returning Officer are attached at Appendix 5, which incorporate recommendations to address known areas of concern, confirmed by a physical review of the Polling Places conducted at the most recent European Parliamentary Election. The comments also take account of the cost per elector ratio for the polling stations scheduled for commission in the 2015 elections, set out in Appendix 3.

4.2. The Acting Returning Officer acknowledges that the following polling stations are not fully accessible to people with disabilities but is satisfied that attempts to identify alternatives have been unsuccessful and, consequently, these facilities are the best practicable option to offer polling facilities to voters within the relevant polling districts.

- Bolehill Men’s Institute
- Bonsall Village Hall
- Cressbrook Social Club
- Middleton and Smerrill Village Hall
- Stanton Lees Chapel
- Tissington Village Hall
- Wesleyan House, Darley Dale

4.3. The recent inspection of the following polling stations has revealed access and privacy issues such that an alternative venue is proposed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Venue</th>
<th>Proposed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curbar Wesleyan reform Church</td>
<td>Calver Village Hall</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4.4. The Acting Returning Officer has also reviewed the comments received during the first period of consultation and any responses he has made to these are noted on the schedule at appendix 4.

5. **STAGE 2 OF THE REVIEW**

5.1. The comments of the Acting Returning Officer will be published on the Council's website and will be added to the files held at the Council's Offices on 30 September 2014.
5.2. All consultees have been advised of this and provided with an additional form for any observations they wish to make in response to the comments of the Acting Returning Officer. The deadline for these comments is 7 November 2014.

5.3. Following consideration of all representations a final report to Council on 20 November 2014 will include recommendations for any changes to the Polling Scheme that arise from the findings of the Review.

5.4. Approved changes will be incorporated into the Register of Electors to be published on 1 December 2014.

5.5. A final report on the review and copies of all representations received will be published as the conclusion of the review.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1. Legal

6.2. The legal provisions are contained within the main body of the report. The suggested amendments to polling areas and stations seek to address elements of risk in terms of accessibility and enhance the voting experience in the more rural areas. The legal risk is therefore assessed as low to medium.

6.3. Financial

6.4. There are no financial risks arising from this report.

7. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has also been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equalities, environmental, climate change, health, human rights, personnel and property.

8. CONTACT INFORMATION

Sandra Lamb, Head of Democratic Services. Tel. 01629 761281 Email sandra.lamb@derbyshiredales.gov.uk
Christine Laver, Democratic Services Team Leader. Tel. 01629 761300 Email chris.laver@derbyshiredales.gov.uk

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Review of Polling Districts, Places and Stations 2014

10. ATTACHED

Appendix 1 – Notice of Review of Polling Districts, Places and Stations
Appendix 2 – Comments Received at Stage 1 of review
Appendix 3 – Comments from Planning Policy Manager
Appendix 4 – Comments from Peak District National Park
Appendix 5 – Acting Returning Officer’s Comments
Appendix 5a – Schedule of Polling Stations and cost analysis
Appendix 1

NOTICE OF REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, PLACES AND STATIONS

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires a review of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places to be completed between 1 October 2013 and 31 January 2015. The Review for the Derbyshire Dales Parliamentary Constituency will take place between 30 June and 1 December 2014.

The Returning Officer for the Constituency of Derbyshire Dales will be consulted to make formal comments on the existing Polling Stations and on any suggested changes resulting from the initial consultation stage of the Review. No changes to the existing arrangements are being put forward by the District Council at present.

Representations and comments are invited from electors within the District, elected Members (MEPs, MPs, county, district and parish councillors) and local political parties. Representations from organisations that have particular expertise in relation to access to premises for people with different forms of disability, in relation to the authority’s proposals or any other relevant matter, are particularly welcome.

Persons or bodies making comment may propose alternatives to the Polling Stations proposed by the Authority.

Representations should be submitted in writing to the Head of Corporate Services, Derbyshire Dales District Council, Town Hall, Matlock DE4 3NN or by email to electoral@derbyshiredales.gov.uk by 15 August 2014.

Details of the existing polling districts and polling places and a list of polling stations can be viewed in person at Derbyshire Dales District Council’s Offices at The Town Hall, Matlock DE4 3NN or on the Council’s website: www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk/your-council/consultation

The Returning Officer’s comments and proposals on the polling districts, places and stations will be available for inspection at the above address and on the Council’s website from 30 September 2014. Any representations on these comments and proposals must be sent to the above address by 7 November 2014.

30 June 2014
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Acting Returning Officer’s Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Councillor Colin Swindell – Agent for Labour Party</td>
<td>No complaints about current Polling station arrangements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bakewell Town Council</td>
<td>The Town Council discussed the review on 21 July and resolved to recommend retention of the current arrangements in relation to Bakewell’s Polling Stations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Councillor Andrew Lewer</td>
<td>No comment at this stage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Over Haddon Village Hall Management Committee</td>
<td>Over Haddon Village Hall is a first class facility designed to allow ease of access and use by all the community including anyone with a disability. An outdoor platform lift is installed to allow access from street level to the village hall site. The facilities are fully up to date with baby changing and disabled toilet facilities. Car parking has recently been increased with an extension to the existing car park. If required, the hall could easily handle more than the current electorate numbers using the facility on a polling day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Councillor Judith Twigg</td>
<td>Having had a brief look at the report on Bakewell Town Hall the address is incorrect – it should be The Square, Bakewell DE45 1BT. The Bath Street entrance is a service entrance not generally used by the public and certainly not used for access to the Polling Station.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Councillor Gary Purdy</td>
<td>Will report any comments from Parishes within my Ward</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>From</td>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>Acting Returning Officer’s Comment</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Matlock Town Council</td>
<td>Upland Drive, which currently falls within the Matlock boundary should be included in Darley Dale</td>
<td>Agreed. This is an anomaly where house numbers 3,5,6,7 and 8 are located in Matlock Town whereas the other properties on Upland Drive, and the streets forming the larger development off Moorledge are in Darley Dale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nether Haddon Parish Meeting</td>
<td>Having consulted the Parish meeting only one query is raised: is there disabled access to Stanton-in-Peak Reading Room where Nether Haddon cast their votes? Nether Haddon does not, at present, need disabled access, but may in future. There are steps and we have never seen a ramp available. Possible alternative polling place – can only think of the school</td>
<td>The comments of the Head teacher are noted. Efforts to find alternative accommodation have been unsuccessful. The room provided in June 2011 was not the one identified on the booking confirmation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rowsley Parish Council</td>
<td>No comment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mappleton Parish Council</td>
<td>Comment re the Okeover Arms as a Polling Station – it is convenient for villagers and, as it is on the flat, is fine for disabled users. The poll clerk and her senior officer seemed quite pleased with the venue! I think the Okeover Arms provides adequate accommodation for polling. I think that it is wheelchair accessible (including the toilets), well lit and safe. Comments from two Mappleton Parish Councillors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Curbar Parish Council</td>
<td>Perfectly happy with present polling districts and location and layout of polling station</td>
<td>The recent inspection of polling stations has revealed that the building does not have a level access; the internal arrangements are quite tight and uneven, and that secrecy provisions may be compromised</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>From</td>
<td>Comment</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>John Youatt, outgoing co-ordinator for Derbyshire Green Party</td>
<td>As outgoing co-ordinator and sometime agent I'm not aware of any call for change. When you have any proposals please let me know and I'll ensure a response by your deadline of 7 November</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Councillor Irene Ratcliffe</td>
<td>Wirksworth Memorial Hall has good access and toilet facilities as does (if you enter from the car park at the rear of the building) Middleton Village Hall. However, Bolehill, I believe, has steps leading into the Men’s Institute etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Mike Hase, Planning Policy Manager DDDC</td>
<td>See letter etc attached at appendix 3</td>
<td></td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Peak District National Park Authority</td>
<td>See letter attached at appendix 4</td>
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Appendix 5

Acting Returning Officer’s comments on Review of Polling Districts, Places and Stations 2014

I have been asked to contribute to the current Review of Polling Districts, Places and Stations in my capacity as Acting Returning Officer for the Derbyshire Dales County Constituency.

Derbyshire Dales currently has 132 Polling Districts served by 95 Polling Stations (split station at Wirksworth), as detailed on the attached list. The majority of these are housed in village halls, most of which have improved their access and facilities considerably over the past few years. The high number of polling stations reflects the rural nature of much of the District. However, the cost per elector in some of the rural areas is significantly higher than the average throughout the District. Proportionate cost is therefore seen as a reasonable factor to consider and the following changes are therefore proposed.

- Sheldon – Delete polling place and redirect voters to Monyash
- Atlow – Delete polling place and redirect voters to Hognaston

I have considered the information provided for the Review and agree that where no changes are proposed, the Polling Places, offer the most reasonable and practicable voting facilities available. However, in doing so, I acknowledge that the following Polling Places are not fully accessible but am satisfied that, despite efforts to identify better alternatives, they remain the best available option in their vicinities. These locations will be kept under Review, outside the current process, and better options will be brought forward as and when they become available.

- Bolehill Men’s Institute
- Cressbrook Social Club
- Cromford Institute
- Middleton and Smerrill Village Hall
- Tissington Village Hall
- Wesleyan House, Darley Dale

Following a recent inspection, the polling place at Curbar was found to have access issues externally and internally which, together with the potential for compromised secrecy and above average cost per elector, I propose the following amendment:

- Delete Curbar polling place and transfer electorate to Calver Village Hall

I have also considered the response to the public consultation and endorse the proposal relating to the following Polling District

- Uplands Drive (Polling District) – move properties 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 to Darley Dale polling area SHE.

Dorcas Bunton