

COUNCIL
21 NOVEMBER 2019

Report of the Chief Executive

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, PLACES AND STATIONS 2019 – FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report provides information on the final stage of the Polling Review including comments received during the second consultation period and to the comments of the Returning Officer.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Council determines whether or not to approve each of the proposed changes to the Derbyshire Dales Polling Scheme detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.
2. That any changes to polling places, that are necessary before the next Review be delegated to the Head of Corporate Services, in consultation with the appropriate Ward Members.

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. BACKGROUND

- 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 2014.
- 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 2018 and 31 January 2020 (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.

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

3.1 The Council considered a report on 26 September 2019 that set out the progress of the Review and detailed the responses received in response to consultation on those proposals. The report also included the comments of the Acting Returning Officer and recommendations based on the evidence and comments presented during the Review.

3.2 At that meeting the Council resolved that

- **That the report be noted.**
- **That the Returning Officer's comments be the subject of a further period of consultation.**
- That final proposals for the amendment of the Council's Polling Scheme be reported to Council on 21 November 2019.

3.3 Following the meeting, the representations received and the comments of the Acting Returning Officer were published on the District Council's website and were deposited at the Matlock Offices.

3.4 The original Notice of Review included the dates for the second period of consultation, which was from 27 September 2019 to 25 October 2019. As part of Stage 2, an invitation was sent to all consultees as part of the original mailing with the process and dates for the various stages of the Review, which were explained in an accompanying letter, with an invitation to submit comments by 25 October 2019.

3.5 At Stage 2, comments were invited in response to the representations received and the comments of the Acting Returning Officer. The comments received are detailed in Appendix 1.

4. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE POLLING SCHEME

4.1 Proposed changes to the Polling Scheme are detailed in appendix 1 and relate to the following Polling Places or Districts:

Current Venue	Proposal	Reason
Ashbourne Portakabin – Shawcroft Carpark	Relocate to Ashbourne Library – dual use.	Elector convenience
Cressbrook Club	Relocate to new Polling Station – Cressbrook Church School Room.	Access
Cromford Institute	Relocate to Greyhound Hotel, Market Place, Cromford subject to further consultation.	Access
Curbar	Delete polling station in Curbar and redirect electors to Calver.	Access and cost per elector
Eyam Mechanics Institute	Relocate to new Polling Station Eyam Church Hall.	Access
Great Hucklow	Delete polling station in Great Hucklow and redirect electors at Great Hucklow, Little Hucklow and Grindlow to Foolow Redirect electors in Hazlebadge to Bradwell.	High risk of non- availability of venue
Mappleton Pavilion	Delete polling station in Mappleton and redirect electors to Thorpe.	Access
Sheldon	Delete Polling Station and redirect electors to Ashford.	High cost per elector
Ashbourne Hilltop	Re-draw polling district boundary of area BAS to incorporate nos. 26 to 58 Lower Pingle Road within Polling District BAH.	Elector convenience

5. FINAL STAGE OF THE REVIEW

- 5.1** The final decision on the Polling Scheme for Derbyshire Dales rests with the Council, which must determine whether or not to approve each of the proposed changes detailed in appendix 1, bearing in mind the considerations set out in paragraph 2.2.
- 5.2** Details of the final scheme and copies of any representations received will be published.
- 5.3** There is a right of appeal to the Electoral Commission on the following grounds
- That the local authority has failed to meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency

- That the local authority has failed to take sufficient account of accessibility to disabled persons of the polling stations within a polling place.
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6. INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS TO DEAL WITH UK PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

6.1 During the period of the Review a snap UK Parliamentary Election has been called placing the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) under a duty to organise an election and provide suitable polling stations throughout the Constituency at short notice. Without prejudice to the outcome of the review the ARO has, in consultation with the relevant Ward Members, decided to amend the polling scheme as follows for the 12 December event:

Polling Area	Polling Station
Ashbourne Parkside	Ashbourne Library, 2 Compton, Ashbourne
Cressbrook	St John the Evangelist Church Hall, Cressbrook
Mappleton	Thorpe Village Hall, Thorpe
Eyam	Church Hall, Eyam
Cromford	Greyhound Hotel, Market Place, Cromford

All other existing polling stations will be in use as per the current Polling Scheme.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

Legal

7.1 The legal provisions are contained within the main body of the report. The suggested amendments to polling places 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.

Financial

7.2 The costs of polling places can be contained within existing budgets. The financial risk is assessed as low.

8. 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.

9. CONTACT INFORMATION

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10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Correspondence received in response to review held on file in CS team.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Comments Received at Stage 2 Review

Review of Polling District Places and Stations 2019

Appendix 1

Comments received in response to Stage 2 of the Review

Proposal to which comment relates	From	Comment
Ashbourne - Shawcroft Carpark	Ann Smith – Resident	This is a perfect location for me and my family.
Calver	Denise Hall – Calver Village Hall	Calver Village Hall is very suitable
Cressbrook	Jane Mooney – Honorary Secretary Cressbrook Club	<p>We have now discussed the location of the Polling station as a committee. It was agreed that we are unable to provide level access or toilet facilities with level access because of the nature of the site of the building- it is on the side of a hill and many hours have been spent over the years in trying to work out how we could improve access. We have had shallower steps and handrails put in but without major groundworks which would be very costly we are unable to improve on what we already have.</p> <p>The main advantage of the polling station being located in the club is that it is very central to the village.</p>
Cromford	Dawn Land – Clerk Cromford Parish Council	<p>Cromford Parish Council notes that DDDC is proposing to use the Community Centre for a polling station. We have no problems with the use of the ground floor room - which contains the bar - we understood that this ruled out its use as a polling station unless absolutely necessary.</p> <p>The present location is The Institute</p> <p>1) Disabled access is not good, but at one stage there was a ramp for the front door step (about 150mm) and there is level access to the site through the top gate (not via the steps).</p> <p>2) Parking on street, no special provision for disabled parking but cars can stop immediately outside and if so, looking "downhill" any disabled passenger gets out onto the pavement. Obviously if the car was travelling uphill on the other side of the road it could turn further up to drop off (it would have to turn anyway to go back the way it came).</p>

		<p>3) Internal space said to be good 40 Staff facilities - "full" but can be "cold & damp". Now that schools can no longer be used there are we think only 2 other options. Unless they have changed, they will not hold voting in licensed premises unless there is absolutely no other option? a) Community Centre - so only 1st floor over and sports hall could be used? (see above) 1) no disabled access to room over the bar - stairs only from ground floor or "sports hall " to rear, poor disabled access to sports hall (steep ramp up which can be a bit difficult for those a bit tottery on their feet in bad weather and potentially difficult to turn a car at the top of the slope) 2) Parking OK on site off road and in front of the building. 3) Internal space - bar room is fine, room over the bar - not applicable since no disabled access? "Sports Hall" - would have to use the door within the large opening on to the top of the slope. No draft lobby and the space is large and high and uninsulated - potentially very cold and draughty in all but the summer months. 4) Staff facilities "full" b) Methodist church hall 1) I think they have ramp access if necessary for disabled. Not great for access by pedestrians along section of Water Lane from Market Place - very narrow footpath, heavy traffic 2) parking on site 3) internal space good 4) staff facilities good Use would mean that preschool playgroup could not be held that day, which would inconvenience parents if election was in term time (all scheduled elections in May?) Overall, we think that the Institute - though definitely not ideal, is the best available venue.</p>
Cornford	Joyce Pawley - District Council, Masson Ward	No comments.
Cur bar	Mrs A. Stanley – Resident.	As a resident of Curbar for 28 years, I am writing to object to the proposed closure of the election polling station situated at the Wesleyan Church Meeting Room. The proposed move to the Calver Village Hall will make it impossible for Curbar

		<p>residents who do not have transport to exercise their democratic right to vote, as they will have no means of getting to the village hall in Calver.</p> <p>It will also force residents with cars to make an unnecessary journey to Calver, when, in the past, most residents in Curbar have walked to the polling station at the Wesleyan Chapel, and have not used cars.</p> <p>Access issues are never a problem because of this, and the small number who do drive have no problem parking for the few moments it takes to cast their vote.</p> <p>Surely the environmental cost of using a car to drive to a polling station far outweighs the less than £2 it costs to keep the Curbar polling station open.</p> <p>In these times of worry about climate change and carbon footprints it cannot be right to force residents to use their cars in order to vote! I'm sure Greta Thunberg would say, "How dare you."</p> <p>To summarize –</p> <p>1 – To close the Curbar polling station would cause great distress and would deny residents without cars their democratic right to vote.</p> <p>2 – Access issues have never been a problem.</p> <p>3 – Forcing Curbar residents to drive to the polling station in Calver would have an environmental cost which would outweigh the less than £2 it costs per voter to keep it open.</p> <p>It is not a 'green' option.</p> <p>Please, please keep our Curbar polling station open.</p>
Curbar	Kathryn Maltby – Resident	<p>This polling station should be kept open for the residents of Curbar. It is their right to vote & it is essential to be able to vote in your own village. Not everyone has cars & not everyone can walk to the Calver Village Hall especially the elderly & infirm. Please think about the villagers, they pay large council tax bills & should be able to use the Chapel to vote. It seems to be all about saving the DDDC money.</p>
Curbar	Thomas Cooper – Resident	<p>While I appreciate access to Curbar polling station could be improved, the proposal to redirect voters to Calver is unacceptable. The distance is short but there is no safe pedestrian route from Calver to Curbar. Voting would be restricted to car drivers. The closure would also breach electoral commission guidelines which state that the polling station for an electoral district should be within that district "unless special circumstances apply". I also fail to see how the authority would be meeting its legal obligations to ensure that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district.</p>

Curbar	Prof ADH Crook CBE – Resident	I object in the strongest possible terms to the proposed closure of Curbar polling station (NB I live in Curbar). I have three reasons for objecting: 1. Many voters in Curbar do not drive and the alternative walk to Calver Village Hall is dangerous: down (and back up) a steep hill with no footway and once at the bottom of the hill, involves crossing a main road which carries a lot of heavy lorry traffic with no pedestrian crossing. 2. This almost certainly means the numbers voting in elections living in our village will fall because those without cars (especially the elderly) will not want to risk life and limb getting to Calver to vote. 3. Hence the proposal violates a key aspect of representative democracy: the ability of all voters to get a polling booth accessible to them.
Curbar	Brian Rice – Resident	The Council has a responsibility 'so far as is reasonable and practicable, all polling stations are accessible to all electors, including those with disabilities. The closure of Curbar polling station would prevent many elderly and immobile members of the Curbar community from voting. Given that there is no public transport between Curbar and Calver, then access becomes a real problem for local people. The reason given for closure is the cost of £2 per voter which is much less expensive than in other areas. The closure of this station would prevent those with disabilities and transportation issues from practicing their democratic rights and in our current political climate is completely unacceptable.
Curbar	Jane Taylor – Resident	I am surprised at the idea to stop Curbar having a polling station. The costs per head appear relatively low on your table. The implication of travelling to the polling station in Calver are high, involving a steep hill and roads without pavements, making access without a car difficult. This cannot be the ideal way to encourage voter turnout.
Curbar	Charlotte Cooper – Resident	I think it would be a very serious blow to the village to take away our polling station. The distance to Calver may look small on paper but we have a very steep hill between us and there and as a large number of our residents are elderly and so not drive I believe they would not be able to vote. Less than £2 per person to vote is not excessive to my mind.
Curbar	Mr D. J. Muligan – Resident	I understand there is an intention to withdraw the polling station facility at Curbar Wesleyan Church. This location is within walking distance for most Curbar residents, and represents a convenient means of casting their vote. The requirement to attend Calver Village Hall to vote, would be more difficult for anyone

		<p>without access to a car, and could lead to voter apathy. Most political parties welcome a good turnout from voters, reduced numbers would not be desirable, especially considering the low cost per voter of below two pounds. For the reasons stated above, I would like to register my objection to the closure of Curbar Polling Station.</p>
Curbar	<p>Sarah Nicholas – Clerk Curbar Parish Council</p>	<p>The initial review was carried out between 1st August and 2nd September which is the one month of the year that very few parish councils meet. DDDC then compound this poor consultation by holding the 2nd Stage of the consultation between 27th September and 25th October. Similarly many parish councils including Curbar PC only meet bi-monthly and again Curbar PC missed the opportunity to comment at a regular meeting. However to overcome the problem, and given the importance to residents, Curbar PC has now held an Extraordinary Parish Council on 21st October. Curbar PC wish to object in the strongest terms to your proposal to close the Wesleyan Church Vestry as a polling station. Curbar parish has an aging population many of whom cannot drive, there is no bus services of any kind which might enable them to go to Calver Village Hall. The road down to Calver is steep with no footpath and it is unrealistic to expect anyone to walk to the polling station in Calver. The polling station in Curbar is in the centre of the village and very accessible. We have a number of disabled residents in the village who do manage to access the current polling station. Curbar had an excellent turnout in the European Elections with 111 electors casting their vote at the polling station along with 69 postal votes giving a total turnout of 69.5%. The report which went to DDDC Council meeting on 26th September has a table giving the justifications for closing the polling station as being access and cost. Curbar PC disagree with this statement on both accounts. Whilst there may be a slope on the path to the vestry door the surface is smooth tarmac all the way from the road to the vestry a distance of approximately 20 metres, there are no steps or curbs to negotiate. The location is excellent being in the centre of the village. Secondly on the question of cost there are 89 parish councils in DDDC of which 44 have higher costs than Curbar which is £4.62 based on the 42% turnout, The cost per elector in Curbar is £1.94 but there are 44 parishes listed in the report as having a cost per elector of over £2.00 or more with 12 parishes over £5.00.</p>

		<p>Moving the polling station will inevitably disenfranchise many people and result in less people voting.</p> <p>Curbar PC believes that the above completely justifies keep our polling station open.</p>
Curbar	Clive Osborn – Resident	<p>With the current proposal to close our local polling station in Curbar. I would like to say this is an ill thought out plan, as most of the residents of Curbar are old and have no means being able to travel further for their RIGHT to vote. What this proposal does is separate and segregate the vulnerable ones within our community, in the name of saving a few pounds. We have already had cuts to the mobile library, the polling day is the only day left of this village community.</p>
Curbar	Peter Kirkby – Resident	<p>The present arrangements should not be changed as they work very well for the majority of Curbar residents, being convenient and within easy walking distance for most voters. The proposed move to Calver involves a significantly longer distance including a very steep hill, probably entailing those with cars choosing to drive there (with associated pollution and parking issues) whilst those without transport will have to rely on neighbours or family/friends to take them to (and return from) the polling station in Calver.</p>
Curbar	Carol and David Nash – Residents	<p>I write in favour of keeping the polling station open at Curbar.</p> <p>There are people in the village who don't drive (some elderly) and would struggle to get elsewhere. Equally both my husband and I work and it makes voting simple as we do this on our way home. I have personally worked in a polling station for the council and some of the larger stations had few people coming in the vote and many no doubt are not cost effective. The cost of voting should be shared equally across all stations as a ratio and not done on each stations individual merit as this would result in penalising the people who live in more remote areas, favouring those who live in larger areas.</p> <p>I hope that you are aware that the Curbar community are passionate about keeping the station open and they are not penalized for being a small community as this would impact on some elderly people and if the weather is not good people can at least take a walk to the station.</p>
Edensor	Iona Garstang – Chatsworth Settlement Trustees	No comments.

Great Hucklow	Deborah Stansfield – Clerk Great Hucklow, Little Hucklow and Coplowdale Parish Council	The Parish Council is concerned that should the Nightingale Centre become unavailable it is proposed to move the villages' polling station to Foolow, which would be of considerable inconvenience, particularly to older residents. We suggest that the schoolroom at the Old Chapel (Unitarian) is considered as an alternative. It is within the village of Great Hucklow, has disabled access and toilet facilities and provides a little more space. There is also a small kitchen area which would be useful for election staff.
Mappleton	Caroline Grindey – Resident	I would like to inform you that at least half if not more of the households <input type="checkbox"/> eligible to vote are senior citizens and without access to vehicles to vote outside the village with no public transport service, so if polling station moved all are not able to access their local polling station when moved.
Mappleton	Fiona Raistrick – Clerk to Mappleton Parish Council	Mappleton Parish Cllrs would like some clarity on the proposal to delete the polling station at Mappleton and send parishioners to vote at Thorpe. There is a public house in Mappleton which has been used in the past for elections. According to residents it is wheelchair accessible. There is parking close by and there are facilities available on site. In addition, if ramps are required, the Social Club can supply this if requested. There is no direct bus service to Thorpe from Mappleton - several elderly residents do not drive, and have said they will not bother voting if they can't vote in Mappleton, as they will be reliant on neighbours to take them to the polling station. They will not be able to exercise their democratic rights. Cllrs look forward to hearing from you.
School based polling stations	Sally Simpson	Why are we still closing schools and using them as polling stations? We fine parents for not sending children to school then close them ourselves for voting!! There must be alternative options in the area that can be used with a bit of imagination.
Sheldon	Wendy Neilson – Chair of Sheldon Village Meeting	I write on behalf of Sheldon Village to object strongly to the proposed closure of Sheldon's Polling Station. Sheldon voters have seen a steady decline in local authority services. We have now lost the mobile library, the bus service, cleaning of toilets used by the public in the Village Hall, priority gritting in the winter, lack of adequate maintenance of the highway, these are all perceived as services no longer provided by "the Council" with little differentiation as to which layer of local government is responsible. To close our polling station will be another loss of service to add to an already long list prompting further criticism of the local authority.

		<p>It is known that reducing the opportunity for people to vote locally disproportionately affects disadvantaged communities i.e. rural communities such as Sheldon which has NO public transport, and within those communities, it further disproportionately affects the disadvantaged and vulnerable ie, elderly, disabled, isolated people. To close a polling station in these circumstances is a profoundly anti-democratic act.</p> <p>On behalf of the village of Sheldon, I urge you to keep the polling station in Sheldon open.</p>
Sudbury	Marlene Weston – Resident	<p>Access into the building is via a very steep ramp which propels people into the wall at the end unless they are very careful. The road to it is a narrow cul de sac and has a doctors' surgery opposite the entrance path which leads to a lot of congestion.</p>
Tansley – Village Hall	Chris Lightfoot – Secretary and Manager	<p>Thank you for the information. I have no further comment on Tansley Village Hall as Tansley's polling station.</p>