
REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Bill Dixon, Leader of the Council

Responsible Director - Paul Wildsmith, Director of Resources

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To report the outcome of a recent review of Polling Districts and Polling Places for the Darlington and Sedgefield Parliamentary Constituencies.

Summary

2. Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced changes to the Representation of the Peoples Act 1983, which requires Councils to conduct a review of Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places on a four-yearly cycle. The last review was conducted in 2007, and therefore the Council is required to complete a new review by 29 November 2011.
3. The Council endorsed the structure of the review of Polling Districts and Polling Places, the timescales involved, and the suggested programme of consultation, its meeting on 21st July 2011. This report outlines the outcome of the subsequent review.

Recommendations

4. Council are requested to:-
 - (a) note that no changes are proposed to Polling Districts, and that the Electoral Register will be published on 1st December 2011 in its current format;
 - (b) endorse the recommendations of the Acting Returning Officers for the Darlington and Sedgefield Parliamentary Constituencies in relation to polling places and request the officers to implement the recommendations; and
 - (c) authorise the publication of the proposals for Polling Places.

Reason

5. To ensure that the Council meets the requirements of the Polling District and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006.

Paul Wildsmith,

Director of Resources

Background Papers

Electoral Commission Circular No. EC28/2007, dated 26th June 2007
Report to Council on 21st July 2011, entitled 'Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations'.

Paul Dalton: Extension 2387

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report does not have any direct impact on Crime and Disorder.
Health and Well Being	This report does not have any direct impact on Health and Well Being.
Carbon Impact	This report does not have any direct impact on Carbon Impact.
Diversity	This report does not have any direct impact on Diversity.
Wards Affected	All Wards.
Groups Affected	This report seeks to improve accessibility to Polling Places, but particularly for electors with any type of disability.
Budget and Policy Framework	This decision does not require a change to the budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	Not applicable.
Urgent Decision	Not applicable.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report contributes to the delivery of the objectives, and the ethos, of the community strategy by ensuring all residents have equal opportunity to participate in the electoral system.
Efficiency	Consideration has been given to ensuring value for money in relation to the placement and hire of Polling Places.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

6. Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced changes to the Representation of the Peoples Act 1983, which requires Councils to conduct a review of Parliamentary Polling Districts (the geographical sub-division of the electoral area) and Polling Places on a four-yearly cycle. Members will be aware that the last review was conducted in 2007, and therefore the Council is required to complete a new review by 29 November 2011.
7. In addition to the formal review process in 2007, Officers have also conducted light-touch inspections of Polling Places ahead of both the Parliamentary (General) Election in 2010, and the Local Elections in 2011.
8. The basic aim of the review is to ensure that all electors have reasonable access to a Polling Station. The emphasis of the review (as in previous reviews the Council has undertaken in relation to polling places) is on convenience of access for electors, but particularly for electors with any type of disability.
9. While the scope of this review allows for Polling District boundaries and Polling Places to be changed, Ward, County, Parish and Parliamentary Electoral boundaries cannot be changed through this review process. Parliamentary Constituency boundaries are currently being reviewed by the Boundary Commission for England, and a report elsewhere on the Agenda for this meeting outlines the consultation process. A Periodic Ward Boundary Review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which will review the Ward and Parish boundaries in Darlington, is scheduled for 2013.

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

10. A Notice advising of the Review was placed in the Main Reception area at the Town Hall and on the Council's website (see **Appendix A**) on 2 September 2011. All Members of the Council, local political parties, the Members of Parliament (MPs) for the constituencies of Darlington and Sedgefield, the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) for the North East Region, Darlington Association on Disability and a number of community groups were also advised that a Review was taking place, and that representations could be made accordingly.
11. In addition, all Presiding Officers, Polling Station Inspectors, Head Teachers and School Governors, and residents of the Borough were invited to comment. Representations were invited in writing, via e-mail, by completion of a 'Polling District and Polling Places Review Feedback Form', via the Council's on-line Discussion Forum, and via the Council's social networking profiles (Twitter and Facebook). Those submitting representations which objected to the current Polling Place were asked to suggest alternative venues within the Polling District.

Representations / Comments Received

12. Representations were received during the initial consultation period from four School Representatives, four Presiding Officers, five Elected Representatives, one Polling Station Inspector, and one MEP.
13. Two of the comments received from School Representatives expressed a willingness to allow their school to continue to be used as a Polling Place. The remaining two comments from School Representatives objected to school closure when polling takes place, however neither representation suggested an alternative venue. Officers have subsequently liaised with both of the Head Teachers concerned, with a view to keeping each school partially open on polling day, and to ascertain whether suitable safeguarding arrangements are implemented. Investigations remain on-going at this time.
14. Two of the comments received from Presiding Officers provided positive feedback in relation to two specific Polling Places (Harrowgate Hill CIU and the Learning Resource Centre, Education Village) which had been identified and used since the last Polling District and Polling Place Review. One comment outlined concerns regarding the number of Polling Stations within a specific Polling Place (Middleton St. George Community Centre), and one comment highlighted the difficulties of the placement of the Polling Place for Polling District CC.
15. One elected representative expressed concern regarding Polling Places in the Hurworth Ward, specifically in relation to the proximity of the appropriate Polling Place to the new housing development, 'The Pastures', and the use of Hurworth Primary School as a Polling Place. Ward boundaries will be reviewed as part of the forthcoming Boundary Review, and it is felt that it would be more prudent to await the result of such a review before re-allocating Polling Places, or re-drawing the Polling District boundaries, to accommodate such new developments. The Grange was also suggested as an alternative Polling Place to Hurworth Primary School, however The Grange is situated on the westernmost boundary of the Polling District concerned, and is some distance from the main residential area of the village, which the school serves closely.
16. Three elected representatives expressed concerns at the lack of facilities provided for tellers at the Polling Place at Northwood Primary School, however a Local Authority is not required to make provision for tellers. Two alternative Polling Places were suggested, however the location of both Northland Methodist Church and the Havelock Centre would not be appropriate for a dual station.
17. One elected representative and one Polling Station Inspector separately recommended that the Polling Place based at the Learning Resource Centre at the Education Village be moved to the newly opened Children's Centre on Salters Lane South. This would be more appropriate as the Polling Place would then be situated in the relevant Polling District.
18. The Member of the European Parliament responded to state that he no comments in relation to this review.
19. In accordance with the Regulations, the two Acting Returning Officers for the Parliamentary Constituencies within the Borough (Darlington and Sedgfield) were invited to comment on the current Polling Places, and their responses were published on the Council's website (see **Appendix B**), together with responses to the other representations received (see **Appendix C**). A further two week consultation was undertaken between 3rd and 14th October 2011 on

the Acting Returning Officers' recommendations, and one further response was received by the deadline of Friday, 14th October 2011.

Proposals

20. As no representations or comments have been received regarding any of the Polling Districts within the Borough it is not intended to make any changes and the Electoral Register will be published on 1st December 2011, in the current Polling District format.
21. In relation to Polling Places, it is recommended that the recommendations of the two Acting Returning Officers (as detailed at Appendix B) be implemented.
22. Should the recommendations of this report be approved, the next Polling District and Polling Place Review will need to be undertaken prior to 24th November 2015, however in all likelihood this will be after the next Parliamentary (General) Election. If the Boundary Commission for England's proposals go ahead in relation to the Parliamentary constituency boundaries, and the Heighington and Coniscliffe and Hurworth Wards become part of the Darlington constituency, it would be the intention of this Council to use the Polling Places identified within this report for those Wards.



NOTICE OF REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

Under Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006, Darlington Borough Council is required to undertake a complete review of all Polling Districts and Polling Places.

This Review will commence on **Monday, 5th September 2011** and has to be completed by 29th November 2011.

Electors within Darlington Borough Council's area may make representations to the Returning Officer, but should, if possible, give alternative places that may be used as Polling Places.

Local political parties and Councillors will be consulted and views are invited from electors. The Council will also welcome comments and representations from any person or body with expertise in access for persons with any type of disability.

Initial representations should be submitted by **Friday, 23rd September 2011**. The Council will then prepare draft recommendations and interested parties can then comment between **Monday, 3rd** and **Friday, 14th October 2011**, before final recommendations are considered by Council on **Thursday, 24th November 2011**.

Information on the current Polling Districts and Places, and plans of individual Polling Districts can be obtained from the Elections Team at the address provided below, or by visiting www.darlington.gov.uk/democracy

Representations should be sent, in writing or by e-mail, to the following address:

**Elections Team,
Democratic Services,
Darlington Borough Council,
Town Hall,
Feethams,
Darlington,
DL1 5QT.**

Tel. 01325 388351

E-mail: elections@darlington.gov.uk

Website: www.darlington.gov.uk

Please note: In accordance with the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006, all correspondence received will be published on the Council's website.

Dated: Friday, 2nd September 2011.

APPENDIX B

COMMENTS FROM THE ACTING RETURNING OFFICER – DARLINGTON CONSTITUENCY

Hummersknott Ward

AA and AB - Carmel R.C College, (John Caden Hall), The Headlands, Darlington

The building is a good venue and disabled access is good. The Hall is totally separate from the main school buildings but located within the grounds, which allows the school to remain open on polling day. Limited disabled parking is available alongside John Caden Hall and additional parking on the tennis courts adjacent to the Hall is provided.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Carmel R.C. College.

Mowden Ward

BA and BB - Mowden Infant School, Bushel Hill Drive, Darlington

The school is in a good central venue within the Ward. The main entrance has disabled access into an entrance lobby off the main school hall. Currently the School Hall is used as the Polling Station. Limited disabled parking is available within the school grounds. The school presently closes on polling day.

No change is recommended for the venue of this Polling Place at Mowden Infant School.

College Ward

CA - Abbey Junior School, Abbey Road, Darlington

The school is a good venue. Car parking is available in the school grounds as well as on street parking adjacent to the polling station. The school presently closes on polling day, however, should representatives of the school be in agreement, it would be possible to use the newly-built Sports Hall, and possibly keep the school open.

No change recommended to this Polling Place, however, if possible, it is suggested that the Polling Station be relocated to the Sports Hall to allow the school to remain open.

CB - Arts Centre (Club Room), Vane Terrace, Darlington

The Arts Centre is a good venue, which has recently undergone major external

refurbishment and it now has designated car parking for the disabled within the grounds. The entrance is ramped allowing easy access for wheelchair users and the doorway is wide enough with automatic doors to the main entrance. There is level access within the building to the polling area. The polling station is well lit and there is adequate equipment / facilities within the building.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at the Arts Centre.

CC - Holy Trinity Youth and Community Centre, Pierremont Road, Darlington

The building is a good venue. On street parking is adjacent to the polling station. There is a dropped kerb approximately 3 metres from the gateway, which wheelchair users can use for access to the pavement. There is a ramp which appears to be of acceptable gradient. The main door comprises a double door allowing sufficient access for wheelchair users.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Holy Trinity Youth and Community Centre.

Pierremont Ward

DA and DC - Willow Road Community Centre, Willow Road, Darlington

The building is a good venue. There is on street parking but a bus stop directly outside the building, can hinder parking availability. There is one entrance at the front of the building, with both steps and a ramp to the doorway. The ramp is of an appropriate gradient, strong and has railings on either side. The front entrance consists of a double door, which would provide sufficient access for a wheelchair user.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Willow Road Community Centre.

DB - Reid Street Primary School, Reid Street, Darlington

The school is a good venue. There is on street parking and the paving leading to the Polling Place is adequate. The Polling Station is based at the rear of the school, with access via the nursery entrance on Hollyhurst Road. The school is compliant with disabled accessibility criteria, and the siting of the Polling Station at the rear of the school, together with the separate access, allows the remainder of the school to remain open during the day.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Reid Street Primary School.

Cockerton West Ward

EA and ED – Mount Pleasant SureStart Children's Centre, Newton Lane, Darlington

The Mount Pleasant SureStart Children's Centre is a good venue. The Polling Place is on a bus route (Newton Lane) and there are two bus stops in close proximity to the Polling Place. There is a car park at the Polling Place, and there is limited 'on street' parking. There are two designated disabled parking bays directly outside the Polling Place. The Polling Station is based in the Activity Room at the rear of the building, and access is via the rear entrance, which is both disabled accessible and can be isolated for safeguarding purposes. The siting of the Polling Station at the rear of the centre, together with the separate access, allows the remainder of the centre to remain open during the day. Additional signage is required to ensure voters use the correct access to the building.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Mount Pleasant SureStart Children's Centre.

EB - Branksome Community Centre, Eggleston View, Darlington

The building is a good venue. Car parking is available at the front of the building, but the access must be kept clear as it is ramped for wheelchair access. Paving is in good condition and a ramped access accommodates wheelchair users. The building is in use during the day, however as the Polling Station is in a separate room this is acceptable. Additional signage is required to ensure voters use the correct access to the building.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Branksome Community Centre.

EC - Cockerton Library, West Auckland Road, Darlington

The Library is a good venue located in a small village, and is on a main thoroughfare within the Borough (Woodland Road). The Polling Place is on a bus route, and a bus stop is situated approximately 15 metres from the entrance to the Polling Place. The free car park at the rear of the Polling Place contains two spaces designated for Disabled Badge Holders. These spaces are directly behind the Polling Place. There is a dropped kerb at the rear of the property to allow wheelchair user access from the car park, and there are two dropped kerbs at the front of the property. There is level access to the entrance of the Library.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Cockerton Library.

Cockerton East Ward

FA - Mobile Polling Station, The Brinkburn Public House Car Park, Brinkburn Road, Darlington

There is no suitable alternative venue located within this area of the Ward. A Mobile Polling Station is located within the car park of the Brinkburn Public House on Brinkburn Road. Parking is available within the public house car park.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at The Brinkburn Public House Car Park.

FB - R.A. Social Club, (Snooker Room). Brinkburn Road, Darlington

This building is a good venue that is located centrally within the Ward. There is no designated or reserved parking, but there is on street parking. There are two dropped kerbs near the entrance for use by wheelchair users. There are no steps to the entrance of the premises, and a ramp of appropriate gradient runs between walls. The front entrance consists of a double door, which would provide sufficient access for a wheelchair user.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at the R.A. Social Club.

FC – Holy Family R.C. (Aided) Primary School, Prior Street, Darlington

The school is a good venue that is located centrally within the Ward. There are no parking facilities within the school grounds, but there is on-street parking. There is a dropped kerb outside the school allowing wheelchair users access to the pavement and the paving approaching the Polling Place is in adequate condition. There are both steps and a ramp leading up to the entrance to the Polling Station and the ramp would appear to be of an appropriate gradient, strong, level and has railings at each side. The front entrance consists of a double door, which would provide sufficient access for a wheelchair user and there are double doors throughout the Polling Station. The Main Hall is presently used as the Polling Station. The school currently closes on polling day.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Holy Family R.C. (Aided) Primary School.

Faverdale Ward

GA and GB - Alderman Leach Primary School, Alderman Leach Drive, Darlington (now West Park Academy)

The school is a modern, disabled accessible building. There is a designated parking bay for disabled voters close to the Polling Place, with a dropped kerb to allow a wheelchair user access to the pavement, and this is clearly signposted. The school closes on polling day. The Polling Station itself is based in the Rainbow Room, which is situated on the far right-hand side of the school when viewed from the front of the building. The Rainbow Room is in part of the school which can be isolated and has its own entrance, and therefore use of this room allows the remainder of the school to open on polling day.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at West Park Academy.

Harrowgate Hill Ward

HA – Harrowgate Hill CIU. Ltd., Salters Lane North, Darlington

Salters Lane North is a main thoroughfare and forms part of a bus route, and therefore has good public transport links. Indeed, there are two bus stops in extremely close

proximity. There is a traffic island directly outside the Polling Place, which assists in crossing Salters Lane North, with a dropped kerb ensuring disabled access. The building is detached and is a prominent building in the locality. There are ample parking facilities at the rear of the premises, with six designated disabled parking bays in the car park. A purpose built ramp has been installed to provide access to the building, which has both a handrail and raised sides. The Main entrance has a set of double doors wide enough for a disabled person using a motorised wheelchair.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Harrowgate Hill CIU. Ltd.

HB - Harrowgate Hill Methodist Church Hall, Lowson Street, Darlington

The Church Hall is a good venue that is located centrally within the Ward. These premises have been refurbished and the room to be used is the room at the front immediately to the left of the entrance. There is disabled access to the building. There is a small amount of off-street parking at the rear of the premises (off Bowman Street) – room for approximately 3 or 4 cars. Any further parking would be on-street parking only.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Harrowgate Hill Methodist Church Hall.

HC - D.S.R.M. Social Club, Longfield Road, Darlington

The Social Club is a good venue that is located centrally within the Ward. Longfield Road forms part of a bus route and there is a bus stop directly outside the entrance to the Polling Place, so the premises also have good transport links. There are no designated disabled parking bays, but there is ample parking directly adjacent to the Polling Place. The front entrance consists of a double door, which provides good access for a wheelchair user. The room presently used is the Concert Hall.

No change recommended to this polling place at D.S.R.M. Social Club.

HD - Whessoe Village Hall, Harrowgate Village, Darlington

The Village Hall is DDA compliant with an entrance for wheelchair users to the side. Once in the building there is level access throughout. The building is well lit and has non-slip flooring throughout. There is enough space for a wheelchair user to move about easily.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Whessoe Village Hall.

North Road Ward

JA - St. Thomas Aquinas Church Hall, North Road, Darlington

The Church Hall is a good venue. There is no designated parking bay for the disabled, however there is adequate car parking within the grounds of the Polling Place. This is all on one level to allow a wheelchair user to access the pavement. Pedestrians

accessing this polling station may find that there is inadequate lighting along the drive way to the Church Hall during twilight hours.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at St. Thomas Aquinas Church Hall.

JB and JC - Northwood Primary School, Pendleton Road South, Darlington

The School is a good venue that is located centrally in the Ward, ideally placed to accommodate both Polling Districts JB and JC. There is a car park at the school, however this will be primarily used by teaching staff, but there is on-street parking close to the school with level access to allow a wheelchair user to access the Polling Place. There is a slight ramp to a level access at the entrance to the Polling Place.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Northwood Primary School.

JD - The Phoenix Centre, Eldon Street, Darlington

The Centre is a good venue. There is adequate car parking within the grounds of the polling station, and the entrance is level and wheelchair friendly.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at The Phoenix Centre.

Haughton West Ward

KA - St. Bede's R.C. Primary School, Kingsway, Darlington

The School is a good venue. No parking is available at the school, however there is adequate on street parking nearby. There is a lowered kerb approximately 20 metres from the entrance to the Polling Station, and the entrance to the premises is at ground level to enable disabled access. The pathway leading to the entrance of the Polling Station is generally in good condition. The entrance consists of a double door, which would provide sufficient access for a wheelchair user. The school closes on polling day.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at St. Bede's R. C. Primary School.

KB – Learning Resource Centre, Education Village, Salters Lane South, Darlington

The sale of the land previously occupied by Springfield Primary School created some issues in terms of siting a Polling Station for Polling District KB. The options included siting a mobile unit on Nightingale Avenue, siting the Mobile Library at a central point, or moving to the Education Village, which is actually based in the Haughton East Ward. The Learning Resource Centre at the Education Village provided a secure space for a Polling Station and complied with disability access criteria, and therefore was selected accordingly. Feedback regarding the use of this Polling Place has been positive, however the newly-built Children's Centre on Salters Lane South falls within the Polling District, and offers the security and accessibility required of a Polling Place.

It is recommended that a change of Polling Place be made from the Learning Resource Centre at the Education Village to the Children's Centre on Salters Lane South.

Haughton North Ward

LA and LB - Whinfield Primary School, Augusta Close, Darlington

The school is a good venue that is located centrally within the Ward. There is no designated or reserved car parking for the disabled, however there is adequate car parking within the staff car park, or in the adjacent supermarket car park. The pavements around the school are tarmac and in good condition. There are two possible areas within the school that can be used as Polling Stations – the Infant School Hall and the Junior School Hall. Both have been used previously, however as access to the Junior School Hall is more appropriate, this has become the preferred option in recent years. The entrance to the Junior School Hall is at ground level, yet requires a large amount of signage to direct the electorate around the outside of the school building. The Junior School Hall has a double door, which would provide sufficient access for a wheelchair user, and the Hall has laminate flooring. The school closes on polling day.

No change is recommended for this Polling Place, however it is suggested that the Junior School Hall be continued to be used as the Polling Station in future Elections.

Haughton East Ward

MA - St. Anne's Church Hall, Welbeck Avenue, Darlington

This is a good venue. Car parking is available within the church grounds, with one disabled parking bay available. There is also on street parking available, with a dropped kerb allowing wheelchair access to the pavement. The paving approaching the Polling Station is generally in good condition. There are no steps to the entrance and there is a ramp, which appears to be of appropriate gradient, strong, level and has railings. The entrance consists of a double door, which would provide sufficient access for a wheelchair user.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at St. Anne's Church Hall.

MB - Red Hall Community Association, Headingley Crescent, Darlington

This building is a good venue. Car parking is available on Headingley Crescent or spaces could be reserved within the school grounds. Disabled parking bays are also located opposite the adjacent school. The building is fully compatible with disabled access legislation. Additional directional signs are required to be placed on Headingley Crescent and at the entrance to the adjacent school to assist the electorate in locating this Polling Station.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Red Hall Community Association.

Lingfield Ward

NA - Eastbourne Sports Complex, Bourne Avenue, (Off Hundens Lane) Darlington

The Sports Complex is a good venue that is located centrally within the Ward. Car parking is available at the front of the building, including disabled parking bays. The building is fully compatible with disability legislation. The building will be in use for other purposes but this will not impact on the Polling Station.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Eastbourne Sports Complex.

NB - Heathfield Primary School, The Broadway, Darlington

The school is a good venue that is located centrally within the Ward. On street car parking is available with dropped kerbs. There is an accessible entrance for the disabled that is clearly signed by use of arrows and 'Disabled Access only' poster. The Polling Station is located in the Hall adjacent to the main entrance. The Hall has a separate entrance and can be isolated, and therefore allows the school to remain open on polling day.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Heathfield Primary School.

NC - St Herbert's Church Hall, Yarm Road, Darlington.

The Church hall is a good venue that is located centrally within the Ward. There is no designated parking for the disabled, however there is parking on the road with a dropped kerb to allow a wheelchair user access to the pavement. The approach to the Polling Place is unobstructed and in good condition, with no steps into the entrance. There is also a ramp in place for disabled access and very good access available.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at St. Herbert's Church Hall.

Central Ward

OA - Gurney Pease Primary School, Dodsworth Street, Darlington

The school is a good venue that is located centrally within the Ward. There is on street parking. The new nursery is at the rear of the building and fully compatible with disability legislation. The school closes on polling day.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Gurney Pease Primary School.

OB - Borough Road Nursery School, Borough Road, Darlington

The Nursery School is a good venue that is located centrally within the Ward. There is a car park on Brunswick Street, which contains two disabled parking bays, which the electorate are able to use and there is also on-street parking. Entrance to the Polling Station is via the rear of the nursery building, where there is a 'soft ramp' leading to the rear doorway. The entrance consists of double doors, which provides sufficient access for a wheelchair user. The nursery school remains open on polling day.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Borough Road Nursery School.

OC - St. Augustine's Parish Centre, Larchfield Street, Darlington

The Parish Centre is a good venue that is located centrally within the Ward. There is a sizeable car park that contains several disabled parking bays. The paving around the Polling Station is in good condition. There are no steps to the entrance of the Polling Station. There is a ramp, which appears to be of appropriate gradient, strong and level, however has no railings. The entrance consists of double doors, which would provide sufficient access for a wheelchair user.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at St. Augustine's Parish Centre.

Eastbourne Ward

PA - St Teresa's R.C (Aided) Primary School, Harris Street, Darlington

The School is a good venue that is located centrally within the Ward. Parking is available within the school grounds. The paving around the school is in good condition. There is ramped access for wheelchair users. The school closes on polling day.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at St. Teresa's R. C. (Aided) Primary School.

PB - Firthmoor and District Community Association, Burnside Road, Darlington

The Community Centre is a good venue that is located centrally within the Ward. The Centre is a new building that complies with DDA and meets the requirements of electors with level access throughout. There are two disabled car parking bays in the adjoining car park, and there is a dropped kerb for wheelchair users.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Firthmoor and District Community Association.

PC - Community Centre, Pilmoor Green, Darlington

The Community Centre is a good venue. There are no parking facilities available other than on street parking. The paving is in good condition and ramped access is provided. The Polling Place is not easily visible from the road, as it is situated towards the rear of adjoining properties, so adequate signage is required from Westmoor Road to ensure voters are aware of the location of this Polling Place.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Community Centre, Pilmoor Green.

Lascelles Ward

QA - St. John's C.E. Primary School, Fenby Avenue, Darlington

The School is a good venue, located centrally within the Ward. There is designated disabled parking available, or alternative parking is available opposite the polling station at the rear of the disused public house. Internally the building is compliant with disability legislation. The school closes on polling day.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at St. John's C. E. Primary School.

QB - Dodmire Sure Start Children's Centre, Rydal Road, Darlington

The Dodmire Sure Start Children's Centre is a good venue, located centrally within the Ward. There is no designated disabled parking, however there is ample on-street parking available. The approach to the Polling Place is in good condition with ramped access for wheelchair users.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Dodmire Sure Start Children's Centre.

Bank Top Ward

RA - Dodmire Sure Start Children's Centre, Rydal Road, Darlington

The Dodmire Sure Start Children's Centre is a good venue, located centrally within the Ward. There is no designated disabled parking, however there is ample on-street parking available. The approach to the Polling Place is in good condition with ramped access for wheelchair users.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Dodmire Sure Start Children's Centre.

RB - Community Centre in King William Street, Darlington

The Community Centre is a good venue. There is reserved parking but no designated disabled parking bay available. The approach to the polling station is in a good condition with ramped access for wheelchair users. There is on-street car parking with a dropped kerb to allow easy access for wheelchair users.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Community Centre in King William Street, Darlington.

RC - St Teresa's R.C (Aided) Primary School, Harris Street, Darlington

The School is a good venue that is located centrally within the Ward. Parking is available within the school grounds. The paving around the school is in good condition. There is ramped access for wheelchair users. The school closes on polling day.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at St. Teresa's R. C. (Aided) Primary School.

RD - Community Centre in Wesley Street, Darlington

This is a central polling station in the Ward. Although there is no designated disabled parking bays, parking is available at the side of the building and there is a dropped kerb close by to allow wheelchair users each access. The approach to the station is good with ramped access for wheelchair users.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at the Community Centre in Wesley Street.

Park East Ward

SA – Skerne Park Children's Centre, Coleridge Gardens, Darlington

The Polling Station is a central venue for the Ward. The room used can be sealed off from the rest of the school, which allows the school to remain open. The entrance to the buildings is at the rear and several complaints were received regarding the long walk to access the polling station. The Sure-Start Children's Centre has a room at the front of the building that would be suitable, and also has a separate entrance. The room can be sealed off, which would allow the rest of the school to remain open. The room itself is fully compatible with disability access legislation.

No change is recommended to this Polling Place at Skerne Park Children's Centre, Coleridge Gardens, Darlington.

SB and SC - St. Columba's Church and the Clifton Centre, Clifton Avenue, Darlington

The polling station is a good venue. Parking is on street only, however there is a dropped kerb directly outside the premises to allow access for disabled users. The paving leading to the premises is adequate with a paved ramp leading to the entrance. There is a ramp with railings at each side for assistance. The entrance comprises a double door, which would provide sufficient access for a wheelchair user.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at St. Columba's Church and the Clifton Centre.

SD - St Augustine's R C (Aided) Primary School, Beechwood Avenue, Darlington

The polling station is a good venue. There are car parking facilities available within the school grounds, with designated disabled car parking available and dropped kerbs to paths. Paving leading to the school gate is generally in good condition, as is the paving within the school grounds. The Polling Station is based within the school hall, which is

accessed on Polling Day via the Emergency Exit. There is a ramp to the entrance. The Emergency Exit consists of a double door, which would provide sufficient access for a wheelchair user. The access is poorly lit in the evening. The school closes on polling day.

No change recommended to this polling place at St. Augustine's R. C. (Aided) Primary School, however it is suggested that temporary lighting be installed for polling days which occur in the Autumn or Winter months.

Park West Ward

TA - Abbey Infant School, Cleveland Terrace, Darlington

The Polling Station is a good venue. There is no designated or reserved parking for the disabled, but there is a staff car park, which may be used for parking. The street paving approaching the school is generally in good condition. The path from the street to the school is in good condition and has a gradual incline to the entrance. The entrance has double doors allowing sufficient access for a wheelchair user. The school closes on polling day.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Abbey Infants School.

TB - All Saint's Millennium Centre, Ravensdale Road, Darlington

The Polling Station is a central venue for the Ward. There is no designated parking bay for disabled people, however there is adequate car parking close to the Polling Place with dropped kerb close to allow a wheelchair user to access to pavement.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at All Saint's Millennium Centre.

TC - Elm Ridge Methodist Church Hall, Carmel Road South, Darlington

This is a good venue. There is no designated parking for disabled people but there is more than adequate parking for all, with excellent access to the main entrance which is all on one level.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Elm Ridge Methodist Church Hall.

Northgate Ward

UA and UB - Corporation Road Community Primary School, Corporation Road, Darlington

This is a central location within the Ward. There is a car park to the rear of the school, off Bartlett Street, however there are no designated disabled or reserved parking spaces. There is on street parking available, with a dropped kerb, for wheelchair users. The paving outside the school is in an adequate condition. The entrance to the Polling Station (Junior Hall) is the nearest entrance to the street in the Junior Block and has both steps and a ramp to the doorway. The ramp is strong, level and has raised sides

and railings. The entrance has double doors allowing sufficient access for a wheelchair user. The school partially closes on polling day.

No change is recommended to this Polling Place at Corporation Road Community Primary School.

UC - Reid Street Primary School, Reid Street, Darlington

This is a central location within the Ward. There is on street parking and the paving leading to the Polling Station is adequate. There are no steps up to the entrance of the Polling Station and there is a ramp of appropriate gradient, which has raised sides and railings. The entrance has double doors allowing sufficient access for a wheelchair user. The school partially closes on polling day.

No change recommended to this Polling Place at Reid Street Primary School.

COMMENTS FROM THE ACTING RETURNING OFFICER – SEDGEFIELD CONSTITUENCY

Hurworth Ward

VA - Hurworth Primary School, Westfield Drive, Hurworth on Tees

The school has good accessibility for electors, but the main entrance is through a housing estate. Pedestrian access is also available to the school along a footpath, however this is without adequate street lighting. There is no designated parking bay for the disabled but there is adequate car parking in the grounds close to the Polling Place. There is also on street parking available, with a dropped kerb allowing wheelchair access to the pavement.

VB – Linden Court, Linden Drive, Hurworth Place

There are thirteen marked bays, with two bays for disabled parking. On-street parking is also available. The building is well lit and there is also street light near the entrance. There are double doors which are used to access the main communal room.

VC - Elm Ridge Methodist Church Hall, Carmel Road South, Darlington

This is a good venue. There is no designated parking bay for the disabled, but there is adequate car parking in the grounds close to the polling station with level access to allow a wheelchair user to access the Polling Place.

VD and VE - The Reading Room, Neasham

This is the only public building in Neasham. There is no designated parking bay for the disabled and no dropped kerb on the roadside to allow a wheelchair user to access the Polling Place.

Middleton St. George Ward

WA and WB - Middleton St. George Community Centre

This is a good venue. There is no designated parking bay for the disabled but there is adequate car parking in the grounds close to the Polling Place. There is also on street parking available at the front of the premises.

Sadberge and Whessoe Ward

XA/, XB and XC - St Anne's Church Hall, Welbeck Avenue, Darlington

This is a good venue. Car parking is available within the church grounds, with one disabled parking bay available. There is also on street parking available, with a dropped kerb allowing wheelchair access to the pavement. The paving approaching the Polling Station is generally in good condition. There are no steps to the entrance and there is a ramp, which appears to be of appropriate gradient, strong, level and has railings. The entrance consists of a double door, which would provide sufficient access for a wheelchair user.

XD - Village Hall, Brafferton

There is no designated parking bay for the disabled and car parking is available on the road which has no dropped kerb to allow a wheelchair user access to the pavement. There are also steps to the polling station entrance.

XE and XF - Village Hall, Sadberge

This is a good venue. There is one designated parking space for the use of disabled. There is ample car parking spaces near to the entrance which has level access. There are no steps, the entrance is wide enough for wheelchair access and there is level access once within the Polling Place.

XG and XH - Village Hall, Great Stainton

There is no designated parking bay for the disabled but there is adequate parking on the road although this does not have a dropped kerb to allow a wheelchair user to access the Polling Place. There is also a 3" step in the main entrance to the polling station and no alternative entrance. There is use of the car park at the nearby public house.

XJ - Village Hall, Bishopton

There are steps up to the main entrance and no ramp available but there is an alternative accessible entrance that could be used. There is no designated parking bay for the disabled but there is adequate parking on the road with a dropped kerb to allow a wheelchair user to access the Polling Place.

XK and XL - Whessoe Village Hall, Harrowgate Village, Darlington

The Village Hall is DDA compliant with an entrance for wheelchair users to the side. Once in the building there is level access throughout. The building is well lit and has non-slip flooring throughout. There is enough space for a wheelchair user to move about easily.

Heighington and Coniscliffe Ward

YA - Village Hall, Heighington

There is no designated parking bay for the disabled but there is adequate parking on the road with a dropped kerb to allow a wheelchair user to access the polling station.

YB, YG and YK - Walworth Castle Hotel, Walworth

There is a designated parking bay for the disabled close to the polling station with dropped kerb close to allow a wheelchair user to access the pavement and this is clearly signposted.

YC - Alderman Leach Primary School, Alderman Leach Drive, Darlington (now West Park Academy)

The school is a modern, disabled accessible building. There is a designated parking bay for disabled voters close to the Polling Place, with a dropped kerb to allow a wheelchair user access to the pavement, and this is clearly signposted. The school closes on polling day. The Polling Station itself is based in the Rainbow Room, which is situated on the far right-hand side of the school when viewed from the front of the building. The Rainbow Room is in part of the school which can be isolated and has its own entrance, and therefore use of this room allows the remainder of the school to open on polling day.

YD and YE - Church Hall, High Coniscliffe

There is no designated parking for the disabled however the access road outside the Church Hall can be utilised and the Village Green can be utilised on Election day. The approach to the polling station is unobstructed but is on a slight incline that may cause some difficulty. There are steps to the entrance, however there is level access that is slightly ramped to the side that can be utilised if required. The entrance door is wide enough for a wheelchair and access is level once within the building.

YF - Piercebridge Hall, Piercebridge

There is no designated parking for the disabled but there is on road parking, however this is not dropped kerb into the Hall courtyard. The approach to the polling station is unobstructed and in good condition however there are steps up to the entrance. The Church Hall has their own ramp. The door to the entrance is wide enough for a wheelchair and once in the building there is level access.

YH and YJ - Village Hall, Summerhouse

There is no designated parking for the disabled however there is adequate car parking facilities that provide ample spaces within easy access to the entrance. The entrance is unobstructed and in good condition and there is a ramp entrance to the side of the building providing ideal use as a main entrance if required. Once within the building there is level access.

The Acting Returning Officer for the Sedgefield Constituency stated that they had no comments to make.

APPENDIX C

Representations Received and Comments of the Acting Returning Officer

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments	Acting Returning Officers Comments
Head Teacher – Corporation Road Community School	5 th September 2011 (1)	I am happy for our school to continue to be a Polling Station.	It is pleasing to note the comments in relation to the use of this Polling Place.
Presiding Officer (Harrowgate Hill WMC)	5 th September 2011 (2)	This Polling Station is very well suited to holding elections. The electorate have been very positive over the last two elections, especially when you consider the temporary Polling Stations that have been used for this Ward in the past. The staff of the Working Men’s Club have also made us very welcome.	It is heartening to receive the positive feedback in relation to this Polling Place. As alluded to in the comments, in the years since Beaumont Hill School was demolished a temporary Polling Station (porta-cabin) had been sited on Polling Day. Harrowgate Hill WMC has been used since May 2010, and it is good to note that that the change in Polling Station has been well-received.
Presiding Officer (Learning Resource Centre, Education Village)	5 th September 2011 (3)	I was the Presiding Officer for this Ward at last year’s general election. The access was good for the public. The welfare facilities were good for officers. The voting area was in a screened off section of an open plan class room, but there were no issues with noise or disruptive children. A massive improvement on the porta-cabin we previously used on the old school site.	Once again it is pleasing to note the feedback in relation to this Polling Place. As with comment (2), in the years since Springfield Primary School was demolished a temporary Polling Station (porta-cabin) had been placed at various sites on Polling Day. The Learning Resource Centre at the Education Village was used for the first time in May 2011. It is positive to note the good feedback regarding the facilities offered at this Polling

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments	Acting Returning Officers Comments
			Place, and the use of a separate entrance also ensured relevant safeguards were in place which allowed the school to remain fully open throughout the day.
Presiding Officer (Middleton St. George Community Centre)	5 th September 2011 (4)	<p>Apparent that on many occasions there are multiple stations housed within one building. An example is Middleton St. George Community Centre.</p> <p>Allocation of voters is not evenly split and more than 2 per building is confusing for the voters, despite the professional endeavours of the staff on duty. It would be better to have a maximum of 2 and incentivise the PO's (Presiding Officers) & Clerks to accommodate the additional workload. In some wards/districts, the same argument can be made for managing votes through use of a single PO/Clerk arrangement. I have based this comment on over 3 decades of involvement, principally as a PO.</p> <p>The potential for voters to miss out because the resource cannot deal with the potential volume of voters is recognised but not an issue in this area. I know it has caused difficulty in some large metropolitan areas in one or two exceptional cases but our review should feature our circumstances to promote best practice and efficiency.</p>	<p>Unfortunately, as with many rural communities, there is a lack of suitable community venues located centrally in the Polling District. This is the case with Middleton St. George, and therefore both Polling Districts (WA and WB) vote at the same Polling Place.</p> <p>Due to the large population of Polling District WB, this register is split on polling days, which does create a third Polling Station within the Polling Place. The Electoral Register for Polling District WB is split as evenly as possible, with WB (1) having 1478 electors at the Local Elections in May 2011, compared to 1428 electors in WB (2). Polling District WA had 582 electors, which may give the impression of an uneven split, however the Electoral Registers for each Polling District must remain separate. Presiding Officers are now supported with additional Poll Clerks on election day to assist with votes.</p>

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments	Acting Returning Officers Comments
			<p>Fortunately, Darlington Borough Council has not experienced the issues other authorities have in relation to excessive volumes of voters alluded to in the comment, however in part it could be argued that this is due to the fact that that the Electoral Registers for large Polling Districts are split, and appropriate staffing levels allocated.</p>
<p>Presiding Officer (Holy Trinity Youth and Community Centre)</p>	<p>6th September 2011 (5)</p>	<p>I refer to the above and wish to make a comment regarding College Ward and the use of Holy Trinity Community Hall in Pierremont Road as a polling station.</p> <p>I receive comments, particularly from residents in Pierremont Road and Orchard Road, that they cannot use Holy Trinity as their Polling Station. It is closer to where they live than their designated ones.</p>	<p>Unfortunately there are no suitable accessible venues for a Polling Place in Polling District CC (College), and therefore the Polling Place for this Polling District is situated at the Holy Trinity Youth and Community Centre in Pierremont Road, which is actually in Polling District DB in the Pierremont Ward.</p> <p>Electors resident in Polling District DB actually vote at Reid Street Primary School.</p> <p>Whilst acknowledging that the Holy Trinity Youth and Community Centre would be more convenient for residents of Pierremont Road and Orchard Road, siting the Polling Place at this location would be disadvantaging the majority of residents who reside in the eastern section of this Ward.</p>

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments	Acting Returning Officers Comments
			<p>A further option could be to split the DB Electoral Register between the east and west of the Ward, however this would incur additional costs in terms of staffing an additional Polling Station at Holy Trinity Youth and Community Centre, and potentially cause further confusion for the residents of the DB Polling District.</p>
<p>Councillors – Northwood Primary School</p>	<p>9th September 2011 (6)</p>	<p>At the last local elections in May in the ward tellers had to stand in the open outside the gymnasium / hall at Northwood Primary School. We consider that this is unsatisfactory because the weather was chilly and at one point during the day it rained heavily.</p> <p>We are asking you, if you are considering using Northwood Primary School for future elections, to accommodate tellers inside the gymnasium / hall by erecting temporary screens to segregate them from the Polling Station.</p> <p>If this is not possible, we suggest that either the Havelock Centre or Northland Methodist Church is used as an alternative polling station for this part of North Road ward.</p>	<p>The Local Authority is not required to make any provision for tellers, and guidance issued by the Electoral Commission states that tellers ‘should stand outside the polling stations or polling places’.</p> <p>It would not be appropriate to erect temporary screens for segregation purposes in the gymnasium / hall at Northwood Primary School as, even if this was undertaken, the tellers would be positioned within the Polling Station or Polling Place, which is against Electoral Commission guidance.</p> <p>Northwood Primary School is a dual Polling Station servicing both Polling Districts JB and JC, and is therefore based centrally between the two. Unfortunately there is a lack of</p>

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments	Acting Returning Officers Comments
			<p>suitable community venues located in the Polling District JB, and Northwood Primary School provides the nearest suitable venue in Polling District JC.</p> <p>Northland Methodist Church is on the boundary of the Polling District (JC) and not at a central point for the electorate of that Polling District.</p> <p>The Havelock Centre may be suitable as a Polling Place for Polling District JC, however an inspection would need to be conducted to ensure that the venue was DDA compliant. Unfortunately, the Havelock Centre would be too far away from Polling District JB. An alternative option to the current arrangement would be to have a Polling Place situated at the Havelock Centre for Polling District JC and a Polling Place situated at Northwood Primary School for Polling District JB, however this would obviously incur additional cost in relation to room hire and staffing.</p>
School Business Manager – Hurworth Primary School	19 th September 2011 (7)	Hurworth Primary is willing to remain as a polling station but only on the understanding that due to safeguarding issues, we remain closed to pupils as in previous years.	It is pleasing to note the comments in relation to the use of this Polling Place, however the Elections Team are keen to further work with the school to ascertain whether it would be

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments	Acting Returning Officers Comments
			possible to keep the school fully or partially open following its refurbishment.
Councillor	23 rd September 2011 (8)	<p>I understand why this report is carried every four years but I question the timing. It would be far more useful to do this a year before an election rather than straight after one. Areas and wards change significantly in four years, for instance in my ward of Hurworth, a new housing estate called 'The Pastures' was not there four years ago. During the May election, this year, these residents had to travel two miles to the polling station they had been allocated. I am sure the idea of travelling 2 miles to vote at Elmridge Methodist Church put an awful lot of people off voting all together. This is not good enough, especially as there was a community facility on their doorstep. The Skerne Park Community Centre is within easy walking distance to these residents and yet it was not even considered. In my opinion they were not given equal consideration, and their democrat right to vote was compromised. This would not have happened if this review cycle coincided, with better timing, to our four year election process.</p> <p>I welcome the review but doubt whether a solution is going to be found to why: Nine schools still had to close causing disruption to 2,600 Parents on that day. Again in my ward, Hurworth Primary school was closed despite 'The Grange' being classified as a good polling building in the last review. It was also down as a polling station on the Darlington Council Website right up until two months before the election. Why it was not used has not adequately been explained.</p> <p>The 2007 review did not go far enough in find solutions and perhaps the fact that a Polling Station (other than a school) cannot be found for a district is Endemic of another problem that being: There are insufficient Community facilities for people of that area. I think this report is an excellent opportunity to</p>	<p>Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced changes to the Representation of the Peoples Act 1983, which requires Councils to conduct a review of Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places every four years. The last review was conducted in 2007, and therefore the Council is required to complete a new review by 29th November 2011. There will be an opportunity in the Boundary Review, scheduled for completion in 2013, to look at the positioning of new housing developments and the Wards in which they are situated.</p> <p>Although this Review is taking place following the Local Elections 2011, a light touch inspection of all Polling Places was conducted in late-2010 / early-2011 by the Democratic Services Section, ahead of the Local Elections themselves, to ensure that all Polling Places remained fit for purpose. Indeed, this light touch inspection gave rise to the consideration of a number of alternative community venues as possible Polling Places, and visits were conducted accordingly. Work</p>

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments	Acting Returning Officers Comments
		<p>locate the lack of adequate provision in a given area and priorities problem neighbourhoods. "Joined up thinking" being the catchphrase that comes to mind.</p>	<p>was conducted with a number of schools to ensure that they remained partially or fully open. In terms of the use of Hurworth Primary School, efforts were made to locate a suitable alternative venue ahead of the Local Elections 2011, and the Head of Democratic and Customers Services and the Elections Officer inspected Hurworth Village Hall on Monday, 31st January 2011. Whilst the location of Hurworth Village Hall would have been suitable, as it is fairly central to the main residential area of Hurworth-on-Tees, unfortunately the Hall did not comply with the disabled accessibility criteria for a Polling Place.</p> <p>The Grange, which is situated between Hurworth-on-Tees and Hurworth Place, has previously been used to serve as a Polling Place for Polling District VB (Hurworth Place), whilst Linden Court was being refurbished. When Linden Court re-opened, the Polling Station returned to this more appropriately placed venue. Despite being identified as a good Polling Station, The Grange is situated on the westernmost boundary of Polling District VA (Hurworth-on-Tees) and is some distance from the main residential area of the</p>

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments	Acting Returning Officers Comments
			village, which the school serves closely.
Polling Station Inspector – Learning Resource Centre, Education Village	23 rd September 2011 (9)	The polling station for KB (Houghton West) is currently situated at the Learning Resource Centre, Education Village, which is outside of the ward. Can I suggest that we use the new SureStart Centre on Salters Lane South as it is located within the ward (Houghton West).	Despite the positive feedback received regarding the use of the Learning Resource Centre at the Education Village as a Polling Station, this Polling Station is not situated within the relevant Polling District (KB), and the subsequent opening of the Children’s Centre within the Polling District would appear to provide a more appropriate Polling Place. Other Children’s Centres across the Borough are used (Mount Pleasant Children’s Centre and Dodmire Children’s Centre) and provide good facilities for a Polling Place.
Head Teacher – Federation of Mowden Schools (Mowden Infant School)	23 rd September 2011 (10)	<p>Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the use of Mowden Infant School as a polling place. The school has been used as a polling place for both local and national elections. The use of this site causes a number of difficulties for pupils, parents and carers, which are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the closure of the school results in over 180 pupils losing a day’s education; • the unscheduled closure of the school necessitates parents / carers having to pay for additional child care or having to take time off work to look after their children, causing difficulties for both employees and employers alike; • the school site is open plan, which creates problems regarding 	<p>This is the first detailed response outlining concerns in relation to the use of schools as Polling Places, and the resultant closure of a school on Polling Day.</p> <p>Where possible, other suitable venues are used as Polling Places, with schools being used where there are no other suitable alternatives available.</p> <p>It is not necessary for a school to close in every case, and the Elections Team work</p>

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments	Acting Returning Officers Comments
		<p>safeguarding – thus making it extremely difficult to use part of the building.</p> <p>For the above reasons, we are totally opposed to the continued use of Mowden Infant School as a polling place and look forward to further dialogue on this issue.</p>	<p>closely with all schools in an attempt to keep the school fully or partially open, where suitable safeguarding arrangements can be implemented. As previously mentioned, this close working enabled nine out of the 18 school premises used in the Local Elections in May 2011 to remain fully or partially open.</p> <p>The Law provides that a Returning Officer may use any room maintained by a local authority for holding a poll. In order to ensure that sufficient polling stations with appropriate access arrangements are available for an election to be held in all wards, the Returning Officer often requires the use of school rooms. These tend to be chosen because they are community facilities with full disabled access.</p> <p>Specifically in relation to Mowden Infant School, this Polling Place is situated at the centremost point for the electors within the Mowden Ward, where the only alternative suitable accommodation would be Mowden Junior School, or possibly the Mowden Rugby Club. Concerns similar to those already expressed would be experienced at Mowden Junior School, whilst Mowden Rugby Club is</p>

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments	Acting Returning Officers Comments
			<p>situated along the westernmost boundary of the ward and would therefore severely disadvantage those electors residing at the eastern side of the Ward.</p> <p>Whilst acknowledging that an unscheduled closure can cause concerns, the Elections Team do attempt to provide as much notice as possible regarding forthcoming Elections. In terms of Local Elections, which have a fixed date, Polling Stations are generally booked over three months in advance. In terms of Parliamentary (General) Elections, the recently introduced Fixed-Term Parliaments Act 2011 will enable the Elections Team to provide greater notice in relation to these elections.</p>
<p>Head Teacher – Federation of Abbey Schools Academy Trust</p>	<p>23rd September 2011 (11)</p>	<p>As a Head Teacher in Darlington, I would like to ask that where possible, could other venues be used as polling stations so that children’s learning is not disrupted? It is not possible to keep our school open for the children and members of the public at the same time due to the layout of the buildings which impacts on safeguarding issues.</p> <p>As we are now an academy, do the same regulations apply? We hold the lease on the land and buildings and do not come under local authority control. Can the directors of the company now make a decision on the use of the buildings?</p>	<p>As highlighted in (10), where possible, other suitable venues are used as Polling Places, with schools being used where there are no other suitable alternatives available.</p> <p>In terms of the application of the law regarding Academies, the following paragraph in the Representation of the People Act 1983 applies:</p>

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments	Acting Returning Officers Comments
		<p>While not wanting to be unhelpful, it is paramount that we keep schools open for the children. In our own particular case we have a sports hall which could possibly be offered for both wards adjacent to the site, as that could be annexed, rather than use the two separate buildings.</p>	<p><i>Use of schools and public rooms</i> <i>22(1) The Returning Officer may use, free of charge, for the purpose of taking the poll -</i></p> <p><i>(a) a room in a school to which this rule applies ;</i></p> <p><i>(b) a room the expense of maintaining which is payable out of any rate. This rule applies -</i></p> <p><i>(i) in England and Wales, to a school maintained or assisted by a local education authority or a school in respect of which grants are made out of moneys provided by Parliament to the person or body of persons responsible for the management of the school.</i></p> <p>Guidance received from the Department for Education stated: "Under current legislation, Returning Officers (ROs) have the right to select schools as venues for Polling Stations. If there is an area which can be used with a separate entrance and isolated from the rest of the school, the school can continue to operate. If not, the school must close on the day of the poll. Schools which need to close as a result of being used as Polling Stations can move to alternative accommodation or make up the lost day by other means. The lost day could be made up at the beginning or end of a</p>

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments	Acting Returning Officers Comments
			<p>term, or a training day could be arranged on the day of the poll if the head teacher or governors so wish.</p> <p>There are currently no plans to change or amend this legislation which is found in the Representation of the People Act 1983, Chapter 2, Schedule 1, Part III, paragraph 22. This paragraph effectively renders all mainstream schools liable for use by the RO of the local authority irrespective of how they were procured.”</p> <p>As previously stated, it is not necessary for a school to close in every case, and the Elections Team work closely with all schools in an attempt to keep the school fully or partially open, where suitable safeguarding arrangements can be implemented. Ahead of the Local Elections in May 2011, the Head of Democratic and Customer Services, and the Elections Officer, visited the Federation of Abbey Schools to ascertain the viability of using the Sports Hall as an alternative to both schools. Whilst acknowledging that the Sports Hall may have been suitable as an alternative to the Main Hall at Abbey Junior School, unfortunately the lack of access to the Sports</p>

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments	Acting Returning Officers Comments
			Hall from Cleveland Terrace would mean that it did not provide a suitable alternative to the use of Abbey Infant School.
Councillors – Learning Resource Centre, Education Village	26th September 2011 (12)	Not sure whether it has been communicated but we now have the new children’s centre on Salters Lane South and this we think would be a more suitable venue than the EV (Education Village)	The comments in relation to this point are the same as in (9) above.
Member of the European Parliament	26 th September 2011 (13)	I have no comments to make in relation to this review.	Comments are noted.