
POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS REVIEW 2014

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Stephen Harker, Efficiency and Resources Portfolio**

Responsible Director - Ada Burns, Chief Executive

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

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

Summary

2. The Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006, as amended by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, placed a duty on all local authorities in England and Wales to undertake and complete a review of all of the Polling Districts and Polling Places in its area within a 16 month period, commencing from 1 October 2013 to 31 January 2015.
3. As the warding arrangements for Darlington were subject to a Further Electoral Review (FER), conducted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), it was appropriate to wait until the conclusion of this review before commencing a review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations. This would allow such a review to consider both the existing warding arrangements, and the new warding arrangements, scheduled to come into effect at the Local Elections in May 2015.
4. In anticipation of the final recommendations of the LGBCE being published in August 2014, the Council endorsed the structure and timetable of a Polling District, Polling Place and Polling Station Review, and the suggested programme of consultation, at its meeting on 17 July 2014, and approved a commencement date of 1 September 2014
5. This report outlines the outcome of the subsequent review.

Recommendation

6. Council are requested to:-

- (a) Note that no changes are proposed to the existing Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations ahead of the Local Elections in May 2015 (**Appendix C**);
- (b) Endorse the recommendations of the Acting Returning Officers for the Darlington and Sedgefield Parliamentary in relation to Polling Districts and Polling Places for the new warding arrangements, scheduled to come into effect at the Local Elections in May 2015, and request that officers implement the recommendations accordingly (**Appendix D**);
- (c) Authorise the publication of the proposals for Polling Places.

Reason

- 7. To comply with the requirements of the Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006, as amended by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.

Ada Burns
Chief Executive

Background Papers

- (i) Report to Council on 17 July 2014, entitled 'Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations Review';
- (ii) 'Reviews of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations': The Electoral Commission.

Linda Todd: Extension 2354

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder.
Health and Well Being	This report has no implications to address Health and Well Being for the residents of Darlington.
Carbon Impact	There are no direct implications to Carbon Emissions which this report needs to address.
Diversity	There are no direct implications to Diversity which this report needs to address.
Wards Affected	All Wards are equally affected.
Groups Affected	All Groups are equally affected.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	There are no links.
Efficiency	There are no efficiency proposals identified as part of this review.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

8. The Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006, as amended by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, placed a duty on all local authorities in England and Wales to undertake and complete a review of all of the Polling Districts and Polling Places in its area within a 16 month period, commencing from 1 October 2013 to 31 January 2015.
9. As the warding arrangements for Darlington were subject to a Further Electoral Review (FER), conducted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), it was appropriate to wait until the conclusion of this review before commencing a review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations. This would allow the Polling District, Polling Places and Polling Stations Review to consider both the existing warding arrangements, and the new warding arrangements, scheduled to come into effect at the Local Elections in May 2015.
10. 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.
11. The scope of this review only allows for Polling District boundaries and Polling Places to be changed, and does not permit changes to Ward, County, Parish and Parliamentary Electoral boundaries.

12. The Council endorsed the structure and timetable of a Polling District, Polling Place and Polling Station Review, and the suggested programme of consultation, at its meeting on 17 July 2014, and also approved a commencement date of 1 September 2014.

Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

13. A Notice advising of the review was placed on display at the Town Hall, and on the Council's website (see **Appendix A**) on 1 September 2014. All Members of the Council, local political groups, the Members of Parliament (MPs) for the constituencies of Darlington and Sedgefield, the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) for the North East Region, Parish Councils, 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.
14. 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 and via e-mail, with information also placed on the Council's social networking profiles. A Press Release was issued, and appeared on The Northern Echo's website on 2 September 2014. Those submitting representations which objected to the current Polling Place were encouraged to suggest alternative venues within the Polling District.
15. The initial consultation period ran from 1 to 19 September 2014, and encouraged respondents to comment on the existing Polling Districts and Polling Places, or make suggestions as to alternative provision. During this initial stage representations were received from one Member of Parliament, two Head Teachers, three Parish Councils, six Electors and two Ward Councillors. In addition, a petition, organised by a School Parent Governor, containing 191 signatures was also received (**Appendix B**).
16. Following this initial period of consultation, Officers gave consideration to the representations received, conducted any further premise inspections required, and prepared draft recommendations for the existing boundaries, and also prepared draft recommendations based on the new warding arrangements scheduled to come into effect at the Local Elections in May 2015.
17. The draft recommendations were then published on the Council's website on 29 September 2014 for further consultation (**Appendix C and D**), and a link to the relevant webpages was once again circulated to all interested parties, and those who had previously made representations.
18. One further representation, from Neasham Parish Council, was received by the closing date of the second period of consultation of 10 October 2014 (**Appendix B**).

19. Maps of the new wards and proposed Polling Districts can be found at <http://www.darlington.gov.uk/your-council/democracy/elections-and-electoral-registration/polling-review-2014/>

Representations Received

20. The representations received made no comments in terms of the proposed Polling District boundaries, however Officers were made aware of an obstruction on Harris Street in the Bank Top and Lascelles Ward, which could hinder residents access to the proposed Polling Place.
21. This necessitated a small amendment to the boundary between the proposed Polling Districts of BLA, BLB and BLD, designed to make access easier for residents.

Closure of Schools

22. The representation received from the MP for the Darlington Parliamentary Constituency initially expressed concern about the closure of Whinfield Primary School on Polling Day, however went on to make a wider point regarding the use of schools as Polling Places, requesting that the Council should do everything it could to ensure that schools do not close for polling in the future. It should be noted that the decision to close any school used as a Polling Place is made solely by the Head Teacher of that school, and not the Returning Officer, Electoral Registration Officer, or the Council.
23. The Council does, however, appreciate that the closure of any school causes huge disruption to staff, parents and children alike, and therefore only seeks to use a school where it is the most appropriate, or only, solution within a Polling District.
24. The Representation of the People Act 1983 allows the Returning Officer to use schools and public rooms, free of charge, for the purposes of taking the poll. This does not necessarily mean that a school must close, and the Elections Team have worked closely with schools across the Borough in an attempt to keep many schools fully, or partially, open, where suitable safeguarding arrangements can be implemented.
25. The legislation and guidance (below) notes that there are a number of ways in which a school could make up any 'lost day', and the Elections Team endeavour to provide as much notification of forthcoming elections as possible to enable this to happen. All Head Teachers were informed of the May 2015 Elections as part of the European Parliamentary Election write-out in November 2013, so that a training day, etc. could be scheduled in, or alternative provision made.

Use of schools and public rooms

22 (1) The Returning Officer may use, free of charge, for the purpose of taking the poll –

(a) a room in a school to which this rule applies;

(b) a room the expense of maintaining which is payable out of any rate. This rule applies –

(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.

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 term, or a training day could be arranged on the day of the poll if the head teacher or governors so wish."

Whinfield Primary School

26. As previously mentioned, the representation received from the MP for Darlington expressed concern at the closure of Whinfield Primary School. One further representation regarding Whinfield Primary School was received from the Head Teacher, who also expressed concern at the use of the school as a Polling Place, however did not offer an alternative suggestion.
27. Despite visits to the ward, and discussions with the current Haughton North Ward Councillors, it has not been possible to identify an alternative, suitable premise within the ward, and Whinfield Primary School therefore remains the only appropriate option.
28. Having visited the school prior to the European Parliamentary Election, the Election Officers are of the opinion that, with some minor disruption to Year 6, the school could remain open. The Head Teacher maintained a different view, and took the decision to close the school.

Hurworth Primary School

29. A large number of representations were received in terms of the use of Hurworth Primary School, including representations from parents, the Parish Council, and a Ward Councillor. A Parent Governor at the school had also organised a petition entitled 'Petition To Stop Hurworth Primary School Being Used As A Polling Station', which attracted 191 signatories. Following discussions with representatives of the Parish Council, it was apparent the issue was not with the use of the school as a Polling Place, but it was the closure of the school by the Head Teacher on Polling Day that had instigated the volume of representations.

30. Election Staff visited Hurworth Primary School and met with the Assistant Head Teacher, and the Business Manager, on 5th September 2014, and 22nd September 2014, with a view to working together to keep the school open on Polling Day.
31. The Elections Team are of the opinion that, by locking the security door between the Reception area and the rest of the school, a Polling Station could be safely sited in the Meeting Room immediately to the right of the Reception area. This would place a restriction on pupil access to the Reception area and the First Aid Room during the course of the day, however, if alternative provision could be made, it would enable the school to remain open.
32. Despite the offer to provide an additional Poll Clerk to assist with any safeguarding concerns, the Assistant Head Teacher maintains a different view, and has stated following advice from Health and Safety that she will continue to take the decision to close the school.
33. Election Officers have explored the alternative options suggested in the representations received, and visited the Hurworth Grange Community Centre, with the Chair of the Darlington Association on Disability, on 17 September 2014. Whilst the rooms viewed would be considered suitable for use as Polling Stations, the Chair of Darlington Association on Disability expressed a number of concerns in terms of the access arrangements (**Appendix E**), and therefore it would not be possible to consider using Hurworth Grange Community Centre without the necessary adaptations being made to the entrance.
34. Election staff also visited the Hurworth Methodist Church on 5 September 2014, and whilst the building provided adequate facilities for use as a Polling Place, the business housed within the church would need to be closed on Polling Day, with adaptations made to the layout of the premises in order to proceed with its use as a Polling Place.
35. Discussions have also taken place regarding the possibility of using a Private Nursery adjoining Hurworth Primary School, with the school housing the children from the nursery on Polling Day, however as a private enterprise it was felt that the nursery could not provide the security of tenure required.

St. Augustine's R.C. Aided Primary School

36. One representation was received in relation to the use of St. Augustine's R. C. Aided Primary School. In the case of this school, the Elections Team concede that it would not be possible to keep the school open whilst it was being used as a Polling Place, due to the open nature of the area at the front of the school.
37. Officers gave consideration to alternative venues within the area, and an approach was made to The Grange Centre, Grange Road Baptist Church, however Officers were advised that there would be no availability within the Centre. Officers also gave consideration to Harewood House, however the nature of the service

delivered from the premises, and the present access arrangements, would make siting a Polling Station at this venue problematic.

38. Despite being slightly over the ward boundary, St. Augustine's Parish Centre on Larchfield Street, Darlington would provide a suitable Polling Place, as it is already used to serve the current Central Ward. Under the new electoral arrangements these premises will be situated in the Park East Ward. In order to ensure that St. Augustine's R. C. Aided Primary School can remain open, it is proposed that the Polling Place for the new Canvass District PWC be situated at St. Augustine's Parish Centre.

Corporation Road Community Primary School

39. One representation was received in relation to the use of Corporation Road Community Primary School, from the Head Teacher, who was generally supportive of the use of the school as a venue, as long as sufficient notice of any election was provided. As previously mentioned, the Elections Team do endeavour to inform venues as soon as possible, with Head Teachers being informed of the anticipated May 2015 Elections as part of the European Parliamentary Election write-out in November 2013.

Skerne Park Youth and Community Centre

40. Further to comments received in relation to using the Skerne Park Youth and Community Centre as a Polling Place, instead of the Coleridge Centre, the Elections Officer visited the Skerne Park Youth and Community Centre on 8 September 2014, to assess the building's suitability as a Polling Place. An initial assessment revealed that the premises provided appropriate access and facilities, and a follow up visit on 25th September 2014, with the Chair of the Darlington Association on Disability, confirmed the premises' suitability as a Polling Place.
41. It was felt, however, that a move away from the Coleridge Centre, which is situated centrally within the Polling District, would be detrimental to voters in the northernmost aspect of the Polling District, who would be required to travel to the southernmost end of the Polling District in order to cast their vote.
42. The premises would, though, provide a more realistic alternative to the Elm Ridge Methodist Church Hall for the residents of 'The Lanes', which will become a Parish Ward and Polling District in its own right following the implementation of the new electoral arrangements.
43. Consideration was given to combining two Polling Stations in the Coleridge Centre, however the Meeting Room currently used at the Coleridge Centre would not be large enough to accommodate a second Polling Station.
44. It is therefore appropriate that residents of the existing Polling District SA (which becomes the proposed Polling District of PED), continue to vote at the Coleridge Centre, and that the residents of 'The Lanes' (who will form the proposed Polling District PEE) move from Elm Ridge Methodist Church Hall to the Skerne Park

Youth and Community Centre. This solution will also ensure that there is no cross-pollination of ballot papers at future Parliamentary (General) Elections.

45. This is the only change proposed in the review that has any impact on the Sedgefield Parliamentary Constituency, and the only aspect of the review which the Acting Returning Officer for the Sedgefield Parliamentary Constituency has commented on, stating that:

“Your reasoning for the change you’re proposing, to re-locate the polling place back within the polling district, seems soundly thought through. Am entirely trusting in your good judgement for selection of polling stations.”

Bondgate Methodist Church Hall

46. Whilst the Bondgate Methodist Church would serve as a useful alternative to St. Augustine’s Parish Centre, as both are sited in close proximity to the larger residential area of the Polling District, it is perceived that there would be no additional benefit moving from an already long-established Polling Place.

Bishopton Village Hall

47. Bishopton Village Hall would seem to be the most appropriate venue for a Polling Place, and the supportive stance of Bishopton Parish Council should be noted.

Holy Trinity Youth and Community Centre

48. Unfortunately, at the time of the last review, there were no accessible community venues in Polling District CC itself, and therefore the Polling Station was sited in Holy Trinity Youth and Community Centre, which is actually based in Polling District DB. As noted in the representation, there are some alternatives available in the locality.
49. Unfortunately, Walkington House has a pre-existing booking which has previously proved difficult to re-arrange, meaning that the Council has been unable to access the premise.
50. Vane House has been the Polling Station for Polling District CB, in which it is based, however the room used is not large enough to accommodate a second Polling Station, and the uncertain future of the building means that the Council will also need to seek an alternative venue for this Polling Station.
51. Officers from the Election Team contacted the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College with a view to using the premises as a Polling Place, and visited the college on 2 October 2014. A number of suitable rooms were identified including the Dance Studio and the Sports Hall, which, with only slight disruption to students, would allow the college to remain open.
52. It is therefore proposed that all three Polling Stations in the College Ward be combined into one central Polling Place at the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form

College. This would resolve the issue of having a Polling Place sited so far out of the Polling District at Holy Trinity Youth and Community Centre, and address the uncertainty surrounding the future of Vane House, currently used in Polling District CB. In addition, together with moving the Polling Place in the proposed Polling District PWB from Abbey Infant School to All Saints Millennium Centre, it would enable both schools within the Federation of Abbey Schools to remain open on Polling Day.

Heighington Village Hall

53. It was reassuring to receive feedback from Heighington Parish Council, who felt that the provision at Heighington was adequate.

The Reading Room, Neasham

54. Likewise, it was reassuring to receive feedback from the Chair of Neasham Parish Council, who confirmed that the Reading Rooms at Neasham provided the perfect location for a Polling Place within the village, and had appropriate facilities.

55. In relation to any recommended changes to Polling Places, it would be the Council's intention to issue additional guidance alongside the Poll Card, to highlight the change in Polling Place.



NOTICE OF REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

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, 1st September 2014** and has to be completed by **Friday, 10th October 2014**.

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, 19th September 2014**. The Council will then prepare draft recommendations, which the Returning Officer will then comment upon, and interested parties can then make further representations between **Monday, 29th September 2014** and **Friday, 10th October 2014**, before final recommendations are considered by Council on **Thursday, 4th December 2014**.

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 <http://www.darlington.gov.uk/your-council/democracy/elections-and-electoral-registration/polling-station-review-2014.aspx>. 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: Monday, 1st September 2014.

Polling District, Polling Place and Polling Station Review 2014 - Representations Received

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments
Member of Parliament – Darlington Constituency	9th May 2014 – (1)	<p>CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS</p> <p>As you know, I have been contacted recently about the closure of Whinfield School on polling day this year. I am aware that many parents in Darlington are opposed to the closure of schools for polling, and I agree with them.</p> <p>Although at this stage the closure of Whinfield School on 22 May seems to be unavoidable, I would be grateful for anything you may be able to do to ensure that schools do not close for polling in the future. I would also like my views to be taken into account in the review of Polling Stations later this year.</p>
Parent Governor / Electors – (Parent Governor)	23rd July 2014 - (2)	<p>HURWORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL</p> <p><i>A Parent Governor at Hurworth Primary School, circulated a covering letter (text below), which obtained 191 signatories to a petition entitled 'Petition To Stop Hurworth Primary School Being Used As A Polling Station':</i></p> <p>For the next few weeks I would appreciate as much support as possible in my joint attempt with the school to stop the council using Hurworth Primary School as a polling station.</p> <p>The staff are just as frustrated and inconvenienced as the families of the children who attend the school. However, unfortunately at the moment they have no choice as the school is funded by central Government.</p> <p>We do however have a small window of opportunity to dispute the current situation. Every three years the council hold a consultation to review where their current polling stations are. The next consultation is in September and if we work together we will hopefully be able to persuade the council to use an alternative location.</p> <p>After looking into the criteria required there appears to be two alternative locations in the village which I am proposing the council consider. One being Hurworth Grange Community Centre and the other being Hurworth Methodist Church, which has recently been partly converted into a Café and now along with the Grange has full disabled access.</p> <p>I will be at the school most days asking for signatures on petitions. As we need the village to support this, I would be grateful to anyone who could take a copy away with them in a view that they could ask their neighbours to sign it.</p> <p>I also need as many parents as possible to write a letter, explaining how the school closing for this purpose affects your family. It may be worth pointing out that the council currently fine families £60 per child when they are taken out of school during term time... if only we could fine them when the role is reversed!!</p>

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments
Electors	23rd July 2014 - (3)	<p>HURWORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL</p> <p>We are writing to express our support for a review of the use of our son's Primary School as a polling station. We understand that such a review is due to take place in September and would strongly like Hurworth Primary's case to be considered as part of this.</p> <p>The closure of the school during the most recent elections caused considerable disruption, meaning lost time at work, which is difficult when we save all of our holiday to cover normal school holidays for our two children. It is somewhat hard to accept that, as a parent, we would be fined £60 a day if we were to take our children out of school and yet, elections mean that our children lose a day of valuable teaching time.</p> <p>Moreover, there are two very suitable alternative locations in the village, which have full disabled access and we believe that these should be considered as credible options for future elections.</p> <p>Thank you in advance for your time and we look forward to hearing the outcome of the pending review.</p>
Electors	23rd July 2014 - (4)	<p>HURWORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL</p> <p>We are writing to request that during the council's tri-annual review of polling stations, the council reviews the use of Hurworth Primary School as a polling station and ceases to use Hurworth Primary School as a polling station with immediate effect.</p> <p>As working parents, it is already challenging to balance work and school holidays/teacher training days. We believe that the council should be supporting people in employment and are of the opinion that using schools as polling stations has a detrimental effect on working parents.</p> <p>Furthermore, it seems inappropriate to use Hurworth Primary School as a polling station, when Hurworth contains at least two other buildings that are suitable for use as polling stations. These buildings are Hurworth Grange Community Centre and the Hurworth Methodist Church. Both of these venues are fully accessible for people who possess physical disabilities.</p> <p>It is also seems both unjust and contrary to central government policy for the council to fine parents who take their children out of school, yet to close the school when it suits the council.</p> <p>In light of the above, we therefore respectfully ask you to cease using Hurworth Primary School as a polling station and to use an alternative venue as a polling station.</p> <p>If you wish to discuss any aspect of our views in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact either of us.</p>
Elector	23rd July 2014 - (5)	<p>HURWORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL</p> <p>I understand that Darlington Borough Council will shortly be reviewing the location of Polling Stations within Hurworth and I would be grateful if this process changed the location from Hurworth Primary School to another community facility within the village.</p> <p>My reason for making this request and my objection to the current use of Hurworth Primary School as a Polling Station is because of the closure</p>

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments
		<p>the school when it is used as a Polling Station. This closure causes disruption to a great number of families which are faced with finding some form of suitable child care or taking annual leave. Surely in the design and operation of a modern school it would be possible to secure areas of the school whilst Polling is in operation and if this is not possible then an alternative location for Polling should be used.</p> <p>The closure of schools for the purpose of Polling would seem to contradict the current political environment where legislation has recently been brought into effect preventing children being taken out of school during term time. The whole argument for this legislation would seem to discourage the closure of schools for Polling Stations and as Hurworth Village has a number of alternative community facilities surely the government directive would be that they should be used if the school cannot operate whilst it is being used as a Polling Station.</p> <p>I understand a central location and disabled facilities are a consideration in deciding the correct location for a Polling Station but surely in addition to these factors the amount of disruption and inconvenience to the community should also be considered. If other community facilities are used such as the Grange Community Centre or Hurworth Methodist Church far fewer people would be inconvenienced.</p> <p>I hope that Darlington Borough Council gives serious thought in its review of Polling Stations locations within Hurworth as the current situation is untenable.</p>
Electors	23rd July 2014 - (6)	<p>HURWORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL</p> <p>We are writing to you in regard to the closure of Hurworth Primary School during term time for the purpose of using the school as a polling station.</p> <p>This causes so much disruption to the children, the staff and of course to the families of the children. We both work full time in our family and do not have any additional family members in the area to help us with the children, so when the school is closed for this purpose it means that one of us has to take holidays from work. We are not allowed to take our children out of school during term time, so don't feel the Council should allow this to happen either.</p> <p>We do not understand why the school has to be used for this purpose. In Hurworth there are church halls and the community centre, the Grange, and any of those places could easily be used instead and it would save causing this disruption to school and family life.</p> <p>We sincerely hope that you can reconsider using Hurworth Primary for a Polling station in the future.</p>
Elector	15/08/2014 - (7)	<p>ST. AUGUSTINE'S R.C. (AIDED) PRIMARY SCHOOL</p> <p>I understand that you are respectively the responsible Director and Cabinet member for the forthcoming review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations.</p> <p>Whilst I appreciate that this is a legal requirement under an Act of Parliament to be completed every 4 years, I applaud the professional manner in which the Council has recognised this as an issue and is instigating the timely review.</p> <p>I would ask that the Council formally considers moving away from using Saint Augustines' RC Primary School, Beechwood Avenue, Darlington</p>

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments
		<p>as a Polling Station.</p> <p>This is a small school in terms of the physical site and when the school is used as a Polling Station the school itself is forced to close that day in respect of pupils attending for lessons, This is because the area used a Polling Station cannot be adequately physically isolated from the rest of the school site and therefore pupil safety could not be guaranteed.</p> <p>For this reason I fully understand why the school closes when used for this purpose, with the consequent increase in members of the public attending during Polling times. Clearly this may not be an issue in schools with the facility to define and isolate areas for use during the voting process.</p> <p>In my view closing the school has an unfair and disproportionate impact on working families during a time of hardship and austerity. Clearly it is an additional and often unplanned requirement for many in securing often expensive childcare; either through an external provider or through friends/family if available.</p> <p>In addition to this and of no less importance is the fact that circa 210 pupils are left without education that day. This seems hypocritical in that it is forced upon families, when conversely they are unable to remove children during term time without financial penalty or worse. My view is that neither closing the school to enable voting, or the removal of pupils during term time is to be supported.</p> <p>I would urge the Council to fully consider the options open to them in respect of finding alternative and less impactive venues that are still accessible to all those wishing to exercise their right to vote, especially with less people using this traditional voting method.</p> <p>My suggestion would be that the Council looks at amalgamating current venues, so as to reduce overall costs and the staff required manage voting. A saving could be achieved by reducing the overall Polling venues and specifically with Saint Augustine's RC Primary School by using the nearby Saint Augustine's Parish Centre on Larchfield Street, Darlington.</p> <p>The Saint Augustine's Parish Centre is already used successfully as a Polling Station and is a matter of minutes from the school site; it is additionally able to provide adequate off-street parking for those voting. In my view simply amalgamating these Polling Station venues would have no adverse impact on the electorate and would actually be an improvement on the current practice.</p> <p>In summary, I would ask that the Council moves away from the currently used venue of Saint Augustine's RC Primary School and seeks a more imaginative and better solution to this issue.</p> <p>I would request that this letter and my views are considered within the aforementioned review and added to the wider debate.</p> <p>I have previously explored this issue via email with Councillor Ian Galletley MBE and was informed by him that he had forwarded my emails to MP for Darlington Jenny Chapman. I will therefore as matter of courtesy provide them with a copy of this letter.</p>

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments
Parish Clerk – Hurworth Parish Council	28/08/2014 - (8)	<p>HURWORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL</p> <p>We write to thank you and your colleagues for meeting our Parish Chair and Vice Chair recently to discuss the forthcoming Polling Station Review as far as it affects Hurworth Parish.</p> <p>At the meeting we left with you a copy of a Petition signed by approx. 187 concerned parents of Hurworth Primary School pupils, plus four separate letters. These submissions reflected the objections of parents to Hurworth Primary School (HPS) being used as a Polling Station, necessitating the closure of the school, thus denying the pupils days of tuition. Suggestions were put forward for alternative locations for future elections.</p> <p>We have been in contact with Mr N Blackburn, Executive Head of Hurworth Primary to solicit his views on the best suitable location for Hurworth's pollsters and the need to satisfy the vehement wishes of parents.</p> <p>His opinion is that HPS could continue to be used as a Polling Station without any need to close the School on polling days. This would satisfy the wishes of the parents of the pupils. However, he has reservations about:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The limited parking area at the school and the effect of increased car traffic on an election day. 2. The overall wishes of the Hurworth parishioners as to where the Polling Station should be located following the review. <p>The view of the Parish Council is that The Grange Community Centre offers a preferable location due to its location, adequate parking facilities and suitable accommodation for Polling Staff, plus facilities for any disabled pollster.</p> <p>We therefore strongly endorse our request that the review gives full consideration to using The Grange Community Centre. It is a more popular location for villagers than HPS.</p>
Head Teacher – Corporation Road Community Primary School	1st September 2014 - (9)	<p>CORPORATION ROAD COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL</p> <p>If local people prefer to use our school as a venue then I'm quite happy to continue to offer it, as long as we get plenty of notice.</p> <p>More than one closure/election per year would be problematic however.</p>
Elected Representative – Ward Councillor	1st September 2014 – (10)	<p>SKERNE PARK YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE / PARK PLACE / BONDGATE METHODIST CHURCH</p> <p>I would like to propose that Skerne Park Youth and Community Centre be one of the polling stations for Park East Ward to replace the Coleridge Centre.</p> <p>The Centre has recently been refurbished and is fully accessible.</p>

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments
		<p>This would reduce disruption to the school and benefit voters in the Pastures which will move from Hurworth to join Park East.</p> <p>For those parts of Central Ward to be moved into Park East I would suggest Park Place and / or Bondgate Methodists Church.</p>
Head Teacher – Whinfield Primary School	9th September 2014 – (11)	<p>WHINFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL</p> <p>I am writing to ask that Whinfield Primary School be taken off the list of Polling Stations and an alternative venue be found for future elections.</p> <p>As you are aware from both my previous e-mails and your visit to school we have real difficulty in the school operating as a Polling Station and continuing with our core purpose of education. On the occasions when the school has been required for use as a Polling Station we have had to close due to safeguarding concerns. I have discussed this matter with Governors as you are aware and we would like this school not to be used in the future due to the detrimental impact it has on our school community.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration in this matter.</p>
Parish Clerk - Bishopton	10th September 2014 – (12)	<p>BISHOPTON VILLAGE HALL</p> <p>I have been asked by Bishopton Parish Council to urge the continued use of our Village Hall as a Polling Station on the basis that any other location would involve excessive travel and, with only a very minimal 3 day per week bus service, access for some residents would be extremely difficult if not impossible.</p>
Elector	15th September 2014 – (13)	<p>HOLY TRINITY YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE</p> <p>I live in Woodlands Court, in the Woodlands estate off Milbank Road and so have been voting in the Holy Trinity Youth Centre. This of course entails crossing the very busy Woodlands Road.</p> <p>Not surprisingly then I propose the Polling Station for the CC sub district of College Ward be Walkington House, Vane House or the Sixth Form College; or indeed any location between Abbey Road and Woodlands Road.</p> <p>Elector's comments were subsequently supported by Councillors Ian Galletley and Tony Richmond, Ward Councillors for the College Ward.</p> <p>Councillor Galletley responded to Elector: 'Indeed I do, Ian, and have done for years. Two polling stations is sufficient for the ward and would save money, too!'</p> <p>Councillor Tony Richmond responded to Elector: 'I will support you.'</p>
Parish Clerk - Heighington	19th September 2014 – (14)	<p>HEIGHINGTON VILLAGE HALL</p> <p>This matter was discussed at the Parish Council meeting last night and the Councillors felt that the provision for Heighington was adequate.</p>

Name / Organisation	Date Received and Number	Comments
Elected Representative – Ward Councillor	19th September 2014 – (15)	HURWORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL As you know there is a large voice of opinion in Hurworth that believes the Grange would make a far more suitable Polling Station than the Primary School. I would ask that this proposal be fully explored.
Chair – Neasham Parish Council	29th September 2014 - (16)	NEASHAM READING ROOMS Neasham Reading Rooms are a perfect location for Polling station having ramped easy access, kitchen, disabled toilet facilities, etc. for voters and staff.

APPENDIX C

Proposals for Existing Wards (up until 6th May 2015)

Ward	Polling District	Electorate (2013/14)	Polling Place
Hummersknott [pdf document]	AA	1100	Carmel R.C. College (John Caden Hall), The Headlands, Darlington
	AB	1826	Carmel R. C. College (John Caden Hall), The Headlands, Darlington
Mowden [pdf document]	BA	1241	Mowden Infant School, Bushel Hill Drive, Darlington
	BB	1819	Mowden Infant School, Bushel Hill Drive, Darlington
College [pdf document]	CA	1391	Abbey Junior School, Abbey Road, Darlington
	CB	1095	Vane House (front of the Arts Centre), Vane Terrace, Darlington
	CC	889	Holy Trinity Youth and Community Centre, Pierremont Road, Darlington
Pierremont [pdf document]	DA	1370	Willow Road Community Centre, Willow Road, Darlington

Ward	Polling District	Electorate (2013/14)	Polling Place
	DB	1375	Reid Street Primary School, Reid Street, Darlington
	DC	1264	Willow Road Community Centre, Willow Road, Darlington
Cockerton West [pdf document]	EA	724	Mount Pleasant Sure Start Children's Centre, Newton Lane, Darlington
	EB	1204	Branksome Community Centre, Eggleston View, Darlington
	EC	278	Cockerton Library, Woodland Road, Darlington
	ED	644	Mount Pleasant Sure Start Children's Centre, Newton Lane, Darlington
Cockerton East [pdf document]	FA	968	Mobile Polling Station, The Brinkburn Public House Car Park, Lady Kathryn Grove, Darlington
	FB	1400	R. A. Social Club (Snooker Room), 168 Brinkburn Road,

Ward	Polling District	Electorate (2013/14)	Polling Place
			Darlington
	FC	1794	Holy Family R.C. (Aided) Primary School, Prior Street, Darlington
Faverdale [pdf document]	GA	852	West Park Academy, Alderman Leach Drive, Darlington
	GB	1352	West Park Academy, Alderman Leach Drive, Darlington
Harrowgate Hill [pdf document]	HA	948	Harrowgate CIU Ltd., Salters Lane North, Darlington
	HB	1637	Harrowgate Hill Methodist Church Hall, Lawson Street, Darlington
	HC	1253	D.S.R.M. Social Club, Longfield Road, Darlington
	HD	941	Whessoe Village Hall, Harrowgate Village, Darlington
North Road [pdf document]	JA	874	St. Thomas Aquinas Church Hall, North Road, Darlington

Ward	Polling District	Electorate (2013/14)	Polling Place
	JB	1311	Northwood Primary School, Pendleton Road South, Darlington
	JC	837	Northwood Primary School, Pendleton Road South, Darlington
	JD	1352	Rise Carr Academy, Eldon Street, Darlington
Haughton West [pdf document]	KA	2157	St. Bede's R.C. (Aided) Primary School, Kingsway, Darlington
	KB	2013	Haughton Children's Centre, 92 Salters Lane South, Darlington
Haughton North [pdf document]	LA	1746	Whinfield Primary School, Augusta Close, Darlington
	LB	971	Whinfield Primary School, Augusta Close, Darlington
Haughton East [pdf document]	MA	2057	St. Anne's Church Hall, Welbeck Avenue, Darlington
	MB	1005	Red Hall Community Association, Headingley Crescent, Darlington
Lingfield [pdf document]	NA	1151	Eastbourne Sports Complex, Bourne Avenue (off Hundens

Ward	Polling District	Electorate (2013/14)	Polling Place
			Lane), Darlington
	NB	721	Heathfield Primary School, The Broadway, Darlington
	NC	1017	St. Herbert's Church Hall, Yarm Road, Darlington
Central [pdf document]	OA	1091	Gurney Pease Academy (Community Room), Dodsworth Street, Darlington
	OB	850	Borough Road Nursery School, Borough Road, Darlington
	OC	776	St. Augustine's Parish Centre, Larchfield Street, Darlington
Eastbourne [pdf document]	PA	922	St. Teresa's R.C. (Aided) Primary School, Harris Street, Darlington
	PB	2100	Firthmoor and District Community Association, Burnside Road, Darlington
	PC	1642	Pilmoor Green Community Centre, Pilmoor Green, Darlington

Ward	Polling District	Electorate (2013/14)	Polling Place
Lascelles [pdf document]	QA	980	St. John's Church of England Academy, Fenby Avenue, Darlington
	QB	1981	Dodmire Children's Centre, Rydal Road, Darlington
Bank Top [pdf document]	RA	796	Dodmire Children's Centre, Rydal Road, Darlington
	RB	1136	King William Street Community Centre, King William Street, Darlington
	RC	600	St. Teresa's R.C. (Aided) Primary School, Harris Street, Darlington
	RD	296	Wesley Street Community Centre, Yarm Road, Darlington
Park East [pdf document]	SA	1660	Skerne Park Children's Centre, Coleridge Gardens, Darlington
	SB	722	St. Columba's Church and the Clifton Centre, Clifton Avenue, Darlington

Ward	Polling District	Electorate (2013/14)	Polling Place
	SC	1248	St. Columba's Church and the Clifton Centre, Clifton Avenue, Darlington
	SD	643	St. Augustine's R.C. (Aided) Primary School, Beechwood Avenue, Darlington
Park West [pdf document]	TA	811	Abbey Infant School, Cleveland Terrace, Darlington
	TB	1463	All Saint's Millennium Centre, Ravensdale Road, Darlington
	TC	678	Elm Ridge Methodist Church Hall, Carmel Road South, Darlington
Northgate [pdf document]	UA	1216	Corporation Road Community Primary School, Corporation Road, Darlington
	UB	1221	Corporation Road Community Primary School, Corporation Road, Darlington
	UC	496	Reid Street Primary School, Reid Street, Darlington

Ward	Polling District	Electorate (2013/14)	Polling Place
Hurworth [pdf document]	VA	1641	Hurworth Primary School, Westfield Drive, Hurworth, Darlington
	VB	830	Linden Court, Linden Drive, Hurworth Place
	VC	273	Elm Ridge Methodist Church Hall, Carmel Road South, Darlington
	VD/VE	286 / 10	The Reading Room, Neasham, Darlington
Middleton St. George [pdf document]	WA	629	Middleton St, George Community Centre, Middleton St. George
	WB	2923	Middleton St, George Community Centre, Middleton St. George
	WB		Middleton St. George Community Centre, Middleton St. George
Sadberge and Whesoe [pdf]	XA	72	St. Anne's Church Hall, Welbeck Avenue, Darlington

Ward	Polling District	Electorate (2013/14)	Polling Place
document]	XB	82	St. Anne's Church Hall, Welbeck Avenue, Darlington
	XC	22	St. Anne's Church Hall, Welbeck Avenue, Darlington
	XD	126	Brafferton Village Hall, Brafferton
	XE	584	Sadberge Village Hall, Sadberge
	XF	30	Sadberge Village Hall, Sadberge
	XG	55	Great Stainton Church Hall, Great Stainton
	XH	80	Great Stainton Church Hall, Great Stainton
	XJ	310	Bishopton Village Hall, Bishopton
	XK	97	Whessoe Village Hall, Harrowgate Village, Darlington
	XL	200	Whessoe Village Hall, Harrowgate Village, Darlington

Ward	Polling District	Electorate (2013/14)	Polling Place
Heighington and Coniscliffe [pdf document]	YA	1846	Heighington Village Hall, Heighington
	YB	95	Walworth Castle Hotel, Walworth
	YC	19	Walworth Castle Hotel, Walworth
	YD	500	High Coniscliffe Church Hall, The Green, High Coniscliffe
	YE	225	High Coniscliffe Church Hall, The Green, High Coniscliffe
	YF	89	St. Mary's Church, Piercebridge
	YG	29	Walworth Castle Hotel, Walworth
	YH	62	Summerhouse Village Hall, Summerhouse
	YJ	45	Summerhouse Village Hall, Summerhouse
	YK	60	Walworth Castle Hotel, Walworth

APPENDIX D

Proposals for the new warding arrangements scheduled to come into effect from 7th May 2015 are:

Ward	Polling District	Projected Electorate 2015	Polling Place
Bank Top and Lascelles	BLA	1252	King William Street Community Centre, King William Street, Darlington
	BLB	1454	Dodmire Children's Centre, Rydal Road, Darlington
	BLC	1527	Dodmire Children's Centre, Rydal Road, Darlington
	BLD	1032	St. John's Church of England Academy, Fenby Avenue, Darlington
Brinkburn and Faverdale	BFA	933	West Park Academy, Alderman Leach Drive, Darlington
	BFB	1300	West Park Academy, Alderman Leach Drive, Darlington
	BFC	2402	R. A. Social Club (Snooker Room), 168 Brinkburn Road, Darlington
Cockerton	CKA	2026	Holy Family R.C. (Aided) Primary School, Prior Street, Darlington
	CKB	1451	Mount Pleasant SureStart Children's Centre, Newton Lane, Darlington
	CKC	1213	Branksome Community Centre, Eggleston View, Darlington
College	COA	1374	Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, Vane Terrace, Darlington
	COB	1165	Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, Vane Terrace, Darlington
	COC	884	Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, Vane Terrace, Darlington
Eastbourne	EAA	1081	St. Teresa's R.C. (Aided) Primary School, Harris Street, Darlington
	EAB	2277	Firth Moor and District Community Association, Burnside Road, Darlington
	EAC	1744	Pilmoor Green Community Centre, Pilmoor Green, Darlington
Harrowgate Hill	HHA	942	Whesoe Village Hall, Harrowgate Village, Darlington
	HHB	2599	Harrowgate C.I.U. Ltd., Salters Lane North, Darlington
	HHC	1502	D.S.R.M. Social Club, Longfield Road, Darlington
Haughton and Springfield	HSA	1905	Haughton Children's Centre, 92 Salters Lane South, Darlington

Ward	Polling District	Projected Electorate 2015	Polling Place
	HSB	1367	Haughton Children's Centre, 92 Salters Lane South, Darlington
	HSC	1807	St. Anne's Church Hall, Welbeck Avenue, Darlington
Heighington and Coniscliffe	HCA	1857	Heighington Village Hall, Heighington
	HCB	57	Walworth Castle Hotel, Walworth
	HCC	49	Walworth Castle Hotel, Walworth
	HCD	58	Summerhouse Village Hall, Summerhouse
	HCE	30	Walworth Castle Hotel, Walworth
	HCF	95	Walworth Castle Hotel, Walworth
	HCG	98	St. Mary's Church, The Green, Piercebridge
	HCH	225	High Coniscliffe Church Hall, The Green, High Coniscliffe
	HCI	510	High Coniscliffe Church Hall, The Green, High Coniscliffe
	HCJ	100	Whessoe Village Hall, Harrowgate Village, Darlington
	HCK	199	Whessoe Village Hall, Harrowgate Village, Darlington
	HCL	131	Brafferton Village Hall, Brafferton
	Hummersknott	HKA	1252
HKB		2010	Carmel R. C. College (John Caden Hall), The Headlands, Darlington
Hurworth	HUA	830	Linden Court, Linden Drive, Hurworth Place
	HUB	1641	Hurworth Primary School, Westfield Drive, Hurworth
	HUC	288	The Reading Room, Neasham, Darlington
	HUD	98	The Reading Room, Neasham, Darlington
	HUE	14	The Reading Room, Neasham, Darlington
Mowden	MOA	1235	Mowden Infant School, Bushel Hill Drive, Darlington
	MOB	1861	Mowden Infant School, Bushel Hill Drive, Darlington
Northgate	NGA	1245	Corporation Road Community Primary School, Corporation Road,

Ward	Polling District	Projected Electorate 2015	Polling Place
			Darlington
	NGB	1201	Corporation Road Community Primary School, Corporation Road, Darlington
	NGC	365	Borough Road Nursery School, Borough Road, Darlington
North Road	NRA	1259	St. Thomas Aquinas Church Hall, North Road, Darlington
	NRB	1419	Rise Carr Academy, Eldon Street, Darlington
	NRC	1331	Northwood Primary School, Pendleton Road South, Darlington
	NRD	862	Northwood Primary School, Pendleton Road South, Darlington
Park East	PEA	635	St. Augustine's Parish Centre, Larchfield Street, Darlington
	PEB	551	Borough Road Nursery School, Borough Road, Darlington
	PEC	2014	St. Columba's Church and The Clifton Centre, Clifton Avenue, Darlington
	PED	1672	Skerne Park Children's Centre, Coleridge Centre, Darlington
	PEE	177	Skerne Park Youth and Community Centre, Coleridge Gardens, Darlington
Park West	PWA	1423	All Saint's Millennium Centre, Ravensdale Road, Darlington
	PWB	721	All Saint's Millennium Centre, Ravensdale Road, Darlington
	PWC	1324	St. Augustine's Parish Centre, Larchfield Street, Darlington
Pierremont	PIA	1462	Willow Road Community Centre, Willow Road, Darlington
	PIB	1244	Willow Road Community Centre, Willow Road, Darlington
	PIC	1088	Reid Street Primary School, Reid Street, Darlington
	PID	830	Reid Street Primary School, Reid Street, Darlington
Red Hall and Lingfield	RLA	1014	Red Hall Community Association, Headingley Crescent, Darlington
	RLB	1747	St. Herbert's Church Hall, Yarm Road, Darlington

Ward	Polling District	Projected Electorate 2015	Polling Place
Sadberge and Middleton St. George	SMA	56	Great Stainton Church Hall, Great Stainton
	SMB	311	Bishopton Village Hall, Bishopton
	SMC	76	Great Stainton Church Hall, Great Stainton
	SMD	31	Sadberge Village Hall, Sadberge
	SME	71	St. Anne's Church Hall, Welbeck Avenue, Darlington
	SMF	591	Sadberge Village Hall, Sadberge
	SMG	84	St. Anne's Church Hall, Welbeck Avenue, Darlington
	SMH	23	St. Anne's Church Hall, Welbeck Avenue, Darlington
	SMI	530	Middleton St. George Community Centre, Middleton St. George
	SMJ	2944	Middleton St. George Community Centre, Middleton St. George
Stephenson	STA	1135	Gurney Pease Academy (Community Room), Dodsworth Street, Darlington
	STB	1497	Eastbourne Sports Complex, Bourne Avenue, Darlington
Whinfield	WHA	2246	Whinfield Primary School, Augusta Close, Darlington
	WHB	1157	Whinfield Primary School, Augusta Close, Darlington