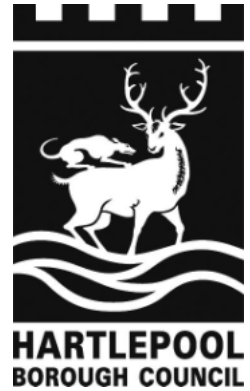


GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE AGENDA



Monday 18 April 2011

at 4.00 pm

in Committee Room C, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

MEMBERS: GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE:

Councillors Aiken, C Akers-Belcher, S Akers-Belcher, Fleet, Gibbon, James, Simmons and Wells

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

3. MINUTES

3.1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2011.

4. ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

- 4.1 Appointment of Local Authority Representatives to Serve On School Governing Bodies – *Director of Child and Adult Services*
- 4.2 Further Electoral Review – Hartlepool Borough Council – *Legal Services Manager*
- 4.3 Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations – *Legal Services Manager*

5. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

1 February 2011

The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Martyn Aiken (In the Chair)

Councillors: Christopher Akers-Belcher, Stephen Akers-Belcher, Mary Fleet, Steve Gibbon, Marjorie James, Chris Simmons and Ray Wells.

Officers: Lorraine Bennison, Principal Registration and Members' Services Officer
Ann Turner, Governor Support Officer
Angela Hunter, Principal Democratic Services Officer

27. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bob Flintoff.

28. Declarations of interest by Members

Councillor Ray Wells declared a prejudicial interest in part of minute 30 and indicated he would leave the meeting during the discussion on that item.

29. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2010

Confirmed.

30. Appointment of Local Authority Representatives to Service on School Governing Bodies *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

The Governor Support Officer updated members in respect of vacancies that currently existed for Local Authority (LA) representative governors, and to request members to make recommendations to the Children's Services Portfolio Holder in respect of the appointment of Local Authority representative governors to serve on school governing bodies. A schedule set out at as appendix to the report gave details of vacancies which currently existed for LA representative governors, together with applications received in respect of the vacancies. The applications

included at appendix B to the report, together with one additional application tabled at the meeting, contained exempt information under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006) namely, information relating to any individual (para 1).

Councillor Ray Wells left the meeting at the point of discussion on his application to be a Local Authority Governor at West Park Primary School and returned immediately upon that discussion being concluded.

Members considered the applications submitted. The Governor Support Officer informed Members that a late application had been submitted for the vacancy at Throston Primary School from a parent of a child attending the school. Members agreed to consider this late application. The Governor Support Officer confirmed that the school were currently seeking nominations for a parent governor. Members suggested that in the first instance, it would be more appropriate for the applicant to submit an application to be a parent governor.

There were more nominations than places at Rossmere Primary School and Seaton Carew Nursery School. Members agreed to the appointment of Councillor Patrica Lawton to Rossmere Primary School and Councillor Paul Thompson to Seaton Carew Nursery.

The remaining applications were considered suitable and were supported for submission to the Children's Services Portfolio Holder.

Decision

That the Children's Services Portfolio Holder be advised that this Committee's recommendations on the applications received is as follows:-

1. Rossmere Primary School – Councillor Patricia Lawton's application was supported.
2. Seaton Carew Nursery School – Councillor Paul Thompson's application was supported.
3. Throston Primary School – That the applicant be encouraged to apply for a parent governor position at the school.
4. That all the remaining applications for vacancies received should be supported.

31. Review of Polling Places (*Chief Solicitor*)

In presenting the report on behalf of the Chief Solicitor, the Principal Registration & Members' Services Officer advised that under Section 18 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 local authorities were required to

review their polling districts and polling places on a 4 yearly cycle. The last review was agreed by Council in December 2007 meaning the next scheduled review must be completed by December 2011. In addition, each Council was required to keep their polling districts and places under review during the intervening period. An interim review was undertaken in February 2009 with a number of changes to Polling Places being approved in March 2009.

Details of the existing polling districts and places were appended to the report. Currently, there were 59 polling districts and as there were no plans to review polling districts, it would not be necessary to revise and republish the Electoral Register. However, a number of potential new locations for polling places had been identified offering improved access and car parking facilities. Details of the polling districts affected together with existing and proposed polling places were outlined in Appendix B to the report.

The report proposed alternative venues for polling stations in the Brus and Owton Wards. Details were included within the report. As part of the Council's strategy for bridging the budget deficit for 2011/12, a number of buildings used as polling places had been earmarked for closure and in view of this the Principal Registration and Members' Services Officer provided an update on the contingency arrangements currently being examined.

Members were concerned at the distance between the current polling place at Foggy Furze Library and the proposed contingency arrangement of Oxford Road Baptist Church. It was suggested that the Bowling Club located to the rear of Foggy Furze Library and Greensides Public House be approached as an alternative to the Library should this be required.

As Members were aware, there would need to be a full review of all polling places in view of the new wards to be created following the Local Government Boundary Commission review. It was suggested that a Working Group of this Committee be arranged to commence looking at this issue as soon as practical after the local elections to be held in May.

A Member questioned why the new Housing Hartlepool development at Laurel Gardens was not being used as a polling place as the building that was previously on the site, Orwell Walk Flats had been used. The Principal Registration and Members' Services Officer confirmed that discussions had been held with the Manager of the development who had indicated that the Laurel Gardens development would not be made available for a polling place. Members were very disappointed with this outcome and suggested that the Chair of the Committee write to the Chief Executive of Housing Hartlepool with a reminder of the conditional planning approval which included the encouragement of community use of the development. Members considered that this would be an ideal opportunity for the development to be more integrated with the local community and suggested that the request to utilise the building as a

polling place commence with the local elections to be held in May 2011.

Decision

- (i) The alternative venues identified as possible polling places as detailed in Appendix B were approved.
- (ii) The contingency arrangements for polling places were approved with the exception of the alternative to the Foggy Furze Library.
- (iii) That the Bowling Club and Greensides Public House be approached to ascertain if either venue would be available to use as a polling place, should the Foggy Furze Library not be available.
- (iv) That if arrangements could be agreed with Housing Hartlepool with regard to Laurel Gardens, that this facility be used as polling place with effect from May 2011 elections.

32. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

None.

The meeting concluded at 17.01

CHAIR

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

18 April 2011



Report of: Director of Child & Adult Services

Subject: APPOINTMENT OF LOCAL AUTHORITY
REPRESENTATIVES TO SERVE ON SCHOOL
GOVERNING BODIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update members of the General Purposes Committee in respect of vacancies that currently exist for Local Authority representative governors, and to request members to make recommendations to the Children's Services Portfolio Holder in respect of the appointment of Local Authority representative governors to serve on school governing bodies.

2. BACKGROUND

Applications are invited from members of the general public, elected members and those governors whose term of office is about to expire or has expired and who are, interested in serving or wish to continue to serve as a LA representative governor on school governing bodies.

The following criteria were agreed by the Borough Council for the recruitment of LA representative governors in 2000. LA governors should be able to show:

- demonstrable interest in and commitment to education;
- a desire to support the school concerned;
- a commitment to attend regular meetings of the governing body (and committees as appropriate) and school functions generally;
- good communication/interpersonal skills;
- ability to work as part of a team;
- a clearly expressed willingness to participate in the governor training programme.

A schedule (**Appendix 1**) is attached setting out details of vacancies which currently exist for LA representative governors, together with applications received in respect of the vacancies (**Appendix 2**). **This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006) namely, information relating to any individual (para 1)**

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the recommendations for the appointments set out in the confidential section of the minutes, of LA representative governors be referred to the Children's Services Portfolio Holder for approval.

Contact Officer:

**Ann Turner, Governor Support Officer, telephone 523766
e.mail ann.turner@hartlepool.gov.uk**

Child and Adult Services



VACANCIES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY REPRESENTATIVES ON GOVERNING BODIES

April 2011

**Contact Officer: Ann Turner
Telephone: 01429 523766**

VACANCIES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY REPRESENTATIVES ON GOVERNING BODIES

SCHOOL INCLUDING LA GOVERNORS	VACANCIES	INTEREST EXPRESSED	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPOINTMENTS
Barnard Grove Primary School	One Vacancy	No interest expressed	
Mr M Kay			
Councillor R. W. Cook			
Brougham Primary School	One Vacancy	Miss A. J. Swann	
Mrs. S. Marshall			
Councillor R. Atkinson			
Catcote School	Two Vacancies	Mr S Wallace	
Mr. J. Bryant			
Eldon Grove Primary School	One Vacancy	No interest expressed	
Mrs. J. Butterworth			
Mrs. P. Vaughan			
Grange Primary School	Two Vacancies	No interest expressed	
Rift House Primary School	Two Vacancies	No interest expressed	
Mrs. S. Tempest			
Rossmere Primary School	One vacancy	No interest expressed	
Mrs. M. Smith			
St Helen's Primary School	One Vacancy	No interest expressed	
Mr J. Ibbotson			
Councillor R. Atkinson			
Miss C. Lamb			

SCHOOL INCLUDING LA GOVERNORS	VACANCIES	INTEREST EXPRESSED	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPOINTMENTS
St. Joseph's R. C. Primary School	One Vacancy	No interest expressed	
Throston Primary School	One Vacancy	Councillor A. Barclay	
Mrs. S. Allison			
Mr K. Shears			
English Martyrs School and Sixth Form College	One Vacancy	Councillor R. W. Cook	

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

18th April 2011



Report of: Legal Services Manager

Subject: FURTHER ELECTORAL REVIEW – HARTLEPOOL
BOROUGH COUNCIL

1. BACKGROUND

On 29 March 2011, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England published its draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Hartlepool. A copy of their report is attached at **Appendix 1**.

2. STAGE THREE CONSULTATION

A twelve week stage three consultation period commenced on 29 March, concluding on 19 June 2011. The LGBCE, through the stage three consultation are seeking the views of all interest parties and local people on the draft recommendations. Any representations must be submitted to the Commission by 20 June 2011. The Commission have stressed that it has not finalised its conclusions, and, should further evidence be put forward, final recommendations may differ from those set out in the draft recommendations. Any opposition to the draft recommendations should suggest alternatives which are supported by evidence.

3. RECOMMENDATION

To note and comment upon the LGBCEs draft recommendations on warding arrangements, and to identify the next steps for preparation of a response to the draft recommendations.

4. CONTACT OFFICER

Alyson Caman, Legal Services Manager

Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Hartlepool Borough Council

Electoral review

March 2011

Translations and other formats

For information on obtaining this publication in another language or in a large-print or Braille version please contact the Local Government Boundary Commission for England:

Tel: 0207 664 8534

Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

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Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. The broad purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements – the number of councillors, the names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions – for a specific local authority. We are conducting an electoral review of Hartlepool Borough Council to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the authority.

The review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same. The Commission commenced the review in 2010.

This review is being conducted as follows:

Stage	Stage starts	Description
Council Size	20 July 2010	Submission of proposals for council size to the LGBCE
One	28 September 2010	Submission of proposals of warding arrangements to the LGBCE
Two	21 December 2010	LGBCE's analysis and deliberation
Three	29 March 2011	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	20 June 2011	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Submissions received

The Commission received 80 representations during the council size consultation and Stage One, including district-wide schemes from Hartlepool Borough Council ('the Council'), Mayor Drummond, the Hartlepool Labour Party, the Independent Group and a local resident. The Commission also received localised evidence of community identity from parish councils and local residents in the borough. All submissions can be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Analysis and draft recommendations

Electorate figures

Hartlepool Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for December 2016, a date five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2011. These forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 2.8% over this period. The Council provided a robust methodology to support this increase and we are content to accept the Council's electorate forecasts as the basis of our draft recommendations.

Council size

Hartlepool currently has a council size of 47 councillors. During the council size consultation the Commission received proposals from Hartlepool Borough Council to retain the current council size. Mayor Drummond proposed a council size of 32

members. Both the Mayor and the Council took an evidence-based approach in their considerations and detailed their governance structure in addition to providing information on the roles, responsibilities and workload of its members. Having considered the evidence provided by the Mayor, and in line with current legislation that in an authority that elects by thirds there should be a presumption in favour of three-member wards, we have decided to adopt a council size of 33 members as part of our draft recommendations. We consider that a council size of 33 members will ensure the council can discharge its roles and responsibilities effectively and will provide for a ward pattern that best reflects community identities in Hartlepool.

General analysis

Having considered the submissions received during Stage One, we have developed proposals which are based broadly on those of the Council. The Council's proposals would provide good electoral equality and a clear warding pattern using man-made and natural boundaries. The Council's proposals were also supported by evidence of community identity. Where we have moved away from the Council's proposals, we have sought to use clearer ward boundaries that will result in good communication links across each ward.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which we encourage comments on the draft recommendations on the proposed electoral arrangements for Hartlepool Borough Council contained in the report. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.** We will take into account all submissions received by **20 June 2011**. Any received **after** this date may not be taken into account.

We would particularly welcome local views backed up by demonstrable evidence. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Express your views by writing directly to us:

Review Officer
Hartlepool Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76–86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG
reviews@lgbce.org.uk

The full report is available to download at www.lgbce.org.uk.

1 Introduction

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. This electoral review is being conducted following our decision to review Hartlepool Borough Council's electoral arrangements to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the authority.

2 We wrote to Hartlepool Borough Council as well as other interested parties, inviting the submission of proposals first on the council size and then on warding arrangements for the Council. The submissions received during these stages of the review have informed our draft recommendations.

3 We are now conducting a full public consultation on the draft recommendations. Following this period of consultation, we will consider the evidence received and will publish our final recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for Hartlepool Borough Council in autumn 2011.

What is an electoral review?

4 The main aim of an electoral review is to try to ensure 'electoral equality', which means that all councillors in a single authority represent approximately the same number of electors. Our objective is to make recommendations that will improve electoral equality, while also trying to reflect communities in the area and provide for effective and convenient local government.

5 Our three main considerations – equalising the number of electors each councillor represents; reflecting community identity; and providing for effective and convenient local government – are set out in legislation¹ and our task is to strike the best balance between them when making our recommendations. Our powers, as well as the guidance we have provided for electoral reviews and further information on the review process, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk.

Why are we conducting a review in Hartlepool?

6 We have decided to conduct this review because, based on the December 2009 electorate figures, 35% of wards in the borough have electoral variances greater than 10% from the average. Most notably, Dyke House ward has 22% fewer electors than the average. This situation is forecast to worsen following significant development planned over the next five years.

How will the recommendations affect you?

7 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the Council. They will also decide which ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward and, in some instances, which parish or town council wards you vote in. Your ward name may change, as may the names of parish or town council wards in the area. If you live in a parish, the name or boundaries of that parish will not change.

¹ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

8 It is therefore important that you let us have your comments and views on the draft recommendations. We encourage comments from everyone in the community, regardless of whether you agree with the draft recommendations or not. The draft recommendations are evidence based and we would therefore stress the importance of providing evidence in any comments on our recommendations, rather than relying on assertion. We will be accepting comments and views until 20 June 2011. After this point, we will be formulating our final recommendations which we are due to publish in autumn 2011. Details on how to submit proposals can be found on page 19 and more information can be found on our website, www.lgbce.org.uk.

What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

9 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Members of the Commission are:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Professor Colin Mellors (Deputy Chair)
Jane Earl
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE
Professor Paul Wiles CB

Chief Executive: Alan Cogbill
Director of Reviews: Archie Gall

2. Analysis and draft recommendations

10 Before finalising our recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Hartlepool Borough Council, we invite views on these draft recommendations. We welcome comments relating to the proposed ward boundaries, ward names, and parish or town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

11 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Hartlepool is to achieve a level of electoral fairness – that is, each elector's vote being worth the same as another's. In doing so we must have regard to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009,² with the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- provide for equality of representation
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities, in particular
 - the desirability of arriving at boundaries that are easily identifiable
 - the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties

12 Legislation also states that our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on the existing number of electors in an area, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over a five-year period. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for the wards we put forward at the end of the review.

13 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral fairness is unlikely to be attainable and there must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach is to keep variances in the number of electors each councillor represents to a minimum. We therefore recommend strongly that in formulating proposals for us to consider, local authorities and other interested parties should also try to keep variances to a minimum, making adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. We aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral fairness over a five-year period.

14 These recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Hartlepool Borough Council or the external boundaries or names of parish or town councils, or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that the recommendations will have an adverse effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. The proposals do not take account of parliamentary constituency boundaries, and we are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

15 Under the 2009 Act, where a council elects by thirds or halves (as opposed to the whole council being elected every four years), there is a presumption that the authority should have a uniform pattern of three-member and two-member wards respectively. We will only move away from this presumption where we receive compelling evidence to do so and where it can be demonstrated that an alternative

² Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

warding pattern will better reflect our statutory criteria. Our starting point for this review was that Hartlepool should have a uniform pattern of three-member wards given its current electoral cycle.

Submissions received

16 Prior to and during the initial stage of the review, we visited Hartlepool Borough Council and met with the Mayor, members, officers and parish and town councils. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 68 submissions during Stage One, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the Council. All representations received can also be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk.

Electorate figures

17 As part of this review, Hartlepool Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2016, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 2.8% over the period from 2010 to 2016.

18 The increase in electorate will be concentrated mainly around the harbour (the existing Stranton ward) and in the north-west (the existing Hart ward). Work on both of these developments has already commenced, with a large number of houses on the harbour already built. There are also core strategy sites in Claxton parish (the current Elwick ward). The Council provided a comprehensive spreadsheet displaying the number, type and precise location of developments with planning permission. The core strategy sites do not have planning permission but, after discussions with the Council and following a visit to Hartlepool, we are satisfied that these developments are likely to proceed.

19 It should be noted that during Stage One the Council did not use the polling district break-down of forecast electoral figures they had submitted at the start of the electoral review. Instead, they created a new forecast from the new warding pattern they submitted during this stage. This resulted in the Council's forecast electorates differing slightly from that previously agreed, with the largest difference being in the rural area. The Mayor, Hartlepool Constituency Labour Party ("the Labour Party") and Independent Group also each used slightly different electoral figures. Having discussed this issue with the Council, we are satisfied that the electoral figures originally provided are accurate and consistent. The original electoral figures are used for our draft recommendations.

20 Noting the Council's supporting methodology, and the lack of evidence to contradict the electorate forecasts, we are content to accept the Council's forecasts as the basis of our draft recommendations.

Council size

21 Hartlepool Borough Council currently has 47 councillors elected from 17 wards. During our initial consultation, the Commission received 12 comments in relation to council size. The Council proposed the current size of 47 members be retained, while the Mayor submitted a proposal for a reduction to 32 councillors.

22 We took an evidence-based approach in our consideration of council size and proposed a council size of 33, a reduction of 14 from the current number.

23 During the council size consultation the Council and the Mayor both provided details of the proposed political management structure, and outlined the responsibilities of the current executive and non-executive councillors. We considered that the recent and future reorganisations of Hartlepool Borough Council, as proposed by the Mayor, supported a reduction in council size.

24 We considered the Mayor's proposals provided good evidence for a reduction in council size. However, as stated above, as the 2009 Act provides that for authorities that elect by thirds there should be a presumption in favour of three-member wards, we increased the Mayor's proposed council size from 32 to 33.

25 Based on the evidence received, we have decided to adopt the proposed council size of 33 members as the basis of our draft recommendations.

Electoral fairness

26 As discussed in the introduction to this report, the prime aim of an electoral review is to achieve electoral fairness within a local authority.

27 Electoral fairness, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. It is expected that our recommendations should provide for electoral fairness whilst ensuring that we reflect communities in the area, and provide for effective and convenient local government.

28 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we work out the average number of electors per councillor. The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district (69,416 in 2010 and 71,371 by 2016) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 33 under our draft recommendations. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our draft recommendations is 2,104 in 2010 and 2,163 by 2016.

29 Under the draft recommendations, all of our proposed 11 wards will have electoral variances of less than 10% from the average for the authority by 2016. We are therefore satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral fairness under our draft recommendations for Hartlepool.

General analysis

30 During Stage One, five full district-wide schemes were received. These were from the Council, Mayor Drummond, the Hartlepool Labour Party, the Independent Group and a local resident. A total of 68 individual submissions were received, as well as groups of identical letters. All the submissions received can be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk.

31 The Council proposed a pattern of 11 three-member wards. Five of these wards would have variances of more than 10% from the borough average in 2010,

improving to three wards by 2016. These three wards would be East, (14% more electors than the average), Victoria (13% fewer) and De Bruce (14% fewer). The Council's submission used strong and easily identifiable boundaries. The Conservative Group supported the Council's proposal with a suggested amendment that the Council's West ward be renamed Park & Villages ward.

32 The Labour Party submitted a very similar scheme, which differed from the Council's proposals, predominantly in the Foggy Furze, Middleton and Jesmond areas. The Labour Party also proposed different ward names.

33 The Mayor submitted a pattern of ten three-member wards and one two-member ward, which was to the west of the main urban area. He argued that his two-member ward allowed the rural parishes to form a ward separate from the urban Hartlepool area, so providing for better community identity. However, this ward gave poor electoral equality, with a variance of 39% fewer electors than the average in 2010 and 18% fewer by 2016.

34 The Independent Group submitted a scheme with ten three-member wards and a rural ward with either one or two councillors. The submission suggested a preference for a council size of 31 and a single-member rural ward containing 45% more electors than the average in 2016, but also proposed that this rural ward could be represented by two councillors, resulting in a council size of 32 and a two-member rural ward containing 25% fewer electors than the average in 2016. The Independent Group scheme differed significantly from the Mayor and the Council's scheme in the urban area and provided for poor electoral equality.

35 A local resident suggested a single-member ward scheme, but provided no specific argument for single-member wards in any of the particular locations, beyond the assertion that single-member wards were better in principle.

36 The remainder of the submissions received focused on key areas. In the Stranton and Dyke House area, three submissions were received, as well as 12 identical letters from residents in the Dent and Derwent area and 50 identical letters from residents in the Furness, Cameron and Belk Street area. In the Greatham and the Fens area six submissions were received, while in the Elwick and Hart area 45 submissions were received, of which 24 were variants on a standard letter.

37 Greatham Parish Council submitted a request for the parish not to be warded on account of the difficulty in finding parish councillors to represent the northern section, Greatham Fens. The parish of Greatham contains 1,700 electors, with approximately half in the village of Greatham and the other half in an area of urban overspill. This overspill is in the north of the parish and is known as the Fens area. The two sections are clearly distinct, having no direct road links and being separated by a busy main road. All authority-wide schemes divided Greatham parish, placing Greatham Fens in South ward.

38 Having considered the authority-wide schemes received during Stage One, we consider that overall, the proposals submitted by the Council and the Labour Party provide for strong, easily identifiable boundaries. Where we have moved away from either of these schemes, the change has been based on evidence of community links and identity, the consideration of direct road links, or in order to improve electoral

equality. Where residents have provided evidence of community identity, we have sought to reflect this wherever possible.

39 Our proposals are for a pattern of 11 three-member wards. We consider our proposals ensure good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests.

40 During Stage Three we welcome comments on these draft recommendations, particularly in relation to those areas where we did not receive representations other than the authority-wide schemes received during Stage One.

Electoral arrangements

41 This section of the report details the warding recommendations for each area of Hartlepool in context of the submissions received. The following areas are considered in turn:

- The villages and Seaton Carew (pages 9–11)
- The northern urban area and the harbour (pages 11–13)
- The southern and central urban area (pages 13–15)

42 Details of the draft recommendations are set out in Table C1 on page 29, and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

The villages and Seaton Carew

43 The western part of Hartlepool consists of rural parished villages, connected by small roads. The parish of Hart is the most northerly, while the parish of Greatham is the most southerly. Seaton Carew is to the south-east of Hartlepool. Under the current arrangements, the area broadly comprises Elwick, Greatham and Seaton wards, with parts of Rossmere and Park wards.

44 During Stage One, we received submissions from Elwick Parish Council, Hart Parish Council, Greatham Parish Council, Councillor Barker (Hart Ward), Councillor Lilley (Greatham Ward), Councillor Preece (Fens Ward), Councillor Wright (Hart Ward) and 45 local residents. We also received a joint submission from the Parish Councils of Dalton Piercy, Elwick, Greatham and Hart and the Parish Meeting of Newton Bewley. We received detailed borough-wide suggestions from the Council, the Mayor, the Labour Party, the Independent Group and a local resident.

45 Our draft recommendations in this area are for an East ward containing 2% more electors than the borough average and a West ward containing 7% more electors than the average by 2016. Both wards return three members. Our East ward includes Seaton Carew and part of Hartlepool to the south-east of the A689. West ward includes the villages of Elwick, Claxton, Newton Bewley, Dalton Piercy and Greatham, as well as part of the Park area of Hartlepool.

46 Our draft recommendations are based on the Council's proposals, with the exception of Greatham, which we recommend is placed in West ward instead of East ward, due to lack of access into East ward. The Council's proposed West ward

contained 6% fewer electors and their East ward contained 14% more electors than the average by 2016.

47 The Conservative Group supported the Council's warding pattern. The Mayor suggested a two-member ward containing only the rural villages, which would result in very poor electoral equality, with 39% fewer electors in 2010 and 18% fewer electors in 2016. The Independent Group supported a rural ward similar to the Mayor's proposal and represented by either one or two councillors.

The villages

48 The existing wards in this area are the single-member Elwick and Greatham wards, which are projected to have variances of 75% more and 10% more electors than the average respectively by 2016. The neighbouring Park ward is part of the urban area, and is a three-member ward predicted to have a variance of 3% in 2016.

49 Our draft recommendation is for a three-member West ward based on the Council's proposal, with the additional inclusion of Greatham village. As mentioned earlier, we consider that Greatham village should be included in West Ward due to the lack of direct access between Greatham and Seaton Carew and the community evidence provided by Greatham Parish Council. This would provide for good electoral equality in West ward, with 6% fewer electors in 2010 and 7% more electors than the average in 2016.

50 Submissions were received from the rural parishes (Elwick, Hart, Greatham, Newton Bewley and Dalton Piercy) requesting that they be in a rural ward on the grounds of community identity. A total of 43 submissions were received regarding this area, of which 24 were standard letters supporting a separate rural ward. In general, the letters argued that the rural areas had little in common with the urban town. Although many submissions mentioned that Hart Primary School and Elwick Primary School shared a headteacher, they tended to emphasise the differences rather than the connections between the villages. If Hart village were to be included in West ward in addition to the inclusion of Greatham village, the electoral variance would increase to 2% more electors in 2010 and 15% more electors than the average in 2016. We do not consider that the evidence provided by Hart Parish Council, the rural parish councils and local residents is sufficiently strong to allow an electoral variance of 15%.

51 Alternative names suggested for West ward were Park & Villages (the Conservative Group), Tunstall (Labour Party) and Hartlepool Villages (the Mayor). We welcome further comments on the most appropriate name.

Seaton Carew

52 The existing wards in this area are the three-member Seaton ward, which is projected to have a variance of 12% more electors than the average by 2016, and the three-member St Hilda and Stranton wards, which are projected to have variances of 7% fewer and 11% more electors than the average respectively by 2016.

53 Our draft recommendation is for a three-member East ward containing Seaton Carew and part of the urban area of Hartlepool bordered by Seaton Lane and the A689. This ward would contain 2% more electors than the average in 2016. Having toured the area, we consider there is a good road connection between the Seaton Lane area and Seaton Carew. The A689 provides a strong boundary separating the Seaton Lane area from the neighbouring Foggy Furze and Rossmere areas to the north. As mentioned in the paragraphs above, we do not include Greatham village in this ward as we noted that there were no road connections between Greatham village and Seaton Carew. Furthermore, Greatham Parish Council has stated that they would prefer to be included with the other villages in West ward, with which they have direct road links.

54 There was a lack of consensus among the submissions received. The Labour Party agreed with the Council's proposal to include Greatham within the area of Seaton Carew, while the Independent Group and the Mayor placed Greatham in the rural West ward. The Independent Group also included the Seaton Lane area with Seaton Carew, while the Mayor and the Labour Party suggested that the area should be included in Foggy Furze ward to the north. The Mayor also suggested that the new harbour-side developments should be joined with Seaton Carew.

55 Alternative names suggested for East ward were Seaton Carew (a local resident), South (the Labour Party) and Seaton Coastal (the Mayor). We welcome further comments on the most appropriate name.

56 Table C1 (on page 29) provides details of the electoral variances of the draft recommendations for wards in this area of the borough. The draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 3 accompanying this report.

The northern urban area and the harbour

57 The northern urban area broadly comprises the current wards of Brus, Dyke House, Hart and Throston, as well as the parish of Hart. The harbour-side area is the former ward of St Hilda's and part of the Stranton area. Extensive development has occurred in the harbour-side area during the last few years, with more development still taking place. Development is also occurring in the former ward of Hart, to the south of the A179.

58 During Stage One we received submissions from Clavering & Hart Station Residents' Association, Dent and Derwent Residents' Association (enclosing 12 identical letters from local residents), Furness, Cameron & Belk Street Residents' Association (enclosing 50 identical letters from local residents), and a local resident. We also received borough-wide suggestions from the Council, the Mayor, the Labour Party, the Independent Group and a local resident.

59 We have developed proposals for this area which are based on the submissions from the Council and from the Labour Party; they submitted almost identical schemes, with the Labour Party's proposals providing for slightly better electoral equality. The Independent Group's submission did not provide for good electoral equality, and we considered that the Mayor's submission did not use strong boundaries.

The harbour-side

60 The existing wards in this area are the three-member St Hilda's and Stranton wards, which are projected to have variances of 7% fewer and 11% more electors than the average respectively by 2016.

61 Our draft recommendation is for a three-member Heritage ward combining the new harbour-side developments with Headland parish. This ward has strong boundaries and would have a variance of 2% more electors than the average by 2016. This ward is adopted from the Council's proposals.

62 The Mayor suggested putting the harbour-side developments in East ward with Seaton Carew. We considered that the Mayor's scheme had adverse knock-on effects in the area to the north and that the harbour-side developments (which are ongoing) have little in common with Seaton Carew. The Furness, Cameron & Belk Street Residents Association and the Dent and Derwent Residents' Association suggested that the southern part of the Council's proposed Heritage ward be placed in Victoria, citing the locations of existing services and community relations, despite the area being divided by a dual carriageway. However, having toured this area, we consider the Council's proposal to be the most appropriate pattern for this area.

63 Alternative names suggested for Heritage ward were Headland (the Labour Party) and St Hilda's (the Mayor).

Northern urban area

64 The existing wards in this area are the three-member Brus, Dyke House, Hart and Throston wards, which are projected to have variances of 8% more, 29% fewer, 20% more and 3% fewer electors than the average respectively by 2016.

65 Our draft recommendation in this area is for three three-member wards called De Bruce, Jesmond and Warren Grange, which would contain 9% fewer, 4% fewer and 4% fewer electors respectively by 2016. These wards are adopted from the Labour Party's proposals.

66 The proposed De Bruce ward, in the north of the authority, uses a main road as a strong external boundary, and provides clear boundaries and acceptable electoral equality by 2016. This ward was proposed by the Labour Party. Almost identical proposals were submitted by the Council, with a minor boundary change to the south of this ward. The Mayor suggested dividing the ward in two with the main road bridged. The Independent Group's proposal was similar to the Council's scheme, but used a different southern boundary, providing very poor electoral equality.

67 Our proposed Jesmond ward unites two areas around Jesmond Park. It uses strong, identifiable boundaries and provides for good electoral equality. This ward was suggested by the Labour Party. The Council's submission was similar, with minor changes on the northern boundaries, but provided for slightly worse electoral equality. The Mayor and Independent Group suggested warding patterns with considerably weaker boundaries and worse electoral equality.

68 The proposed Warren Grange ward contains the parish of Hart and part of urban Hartlepool to the east of Hart village. It also includes a large new development to the south of the A179, which joins the areas of Hart Station and Throston. The Council's scheme was similar, with the only difference being a slightly different boundary with their proposed Jesmond ward. The Mayor and Independent Group proposed that the urban area to the east of Hart village be combined with part of De Bruce ward, while Hart parish would be in a rural ward.

69 Hart Parish Council, local residents of Hart and the neighbouring parish councils have expressed their wish that Hart be in a rural ward. Hart is linked to Elwick by a single-track direct road or by a main road which briefly exits the borough. The same main road leads from Hart into the urban area. If Hart village was transferred from our proposed Warren Grange ward into the proposed West ward, it would result in an electoral variance of 15% more electors in West ward and 11% fewer electors in Warren Grange ward by 2016. We do not consider that we have received sufficient community evidence to justify these electoral variances.

70 Furthermore, if Hart village were to be placed in West ward, Hart parish would have to become warded, as there is an area of urban overspill (the Kingfisher estate) which has no direct road access to the village of Hart and so would remain in Warren Grange ward.

71 An alternative name suggested for De Bruce ward was King Oswy (the Labour Party). Alternative names suggested for Jesmond ward were Throston (the Labour Party) and St Oswald's (the Mayor). Alternative names suggested for Warren Grange ward were Hart (the Labour Party) and Saxon (the Mayor). We welcome further comments on the most appropriate names for these wards.

72 Table C1 (on page 29) provides details of the electoral variances of the draft recommendations for wards in this area of the borough. The draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2 accompanying this report.

The southern and central urban area

73 The southern and central areas of Hartlepool include the main town centre. They broadly comprise the current wards of Grange, Burn Valley, Foggy Furze, Rift House, Rossmere, Owton and Fens, as well as part of Park and part of Stranton.

74 During Stage One we received submissions from Dent and Derwent Residents' Association (enclosing 12 identical letters from local residents), Furness, Cameron & Belk Street Residents' Association (enclosing 50 identical letters from local residents), Greatham Parish Council, Councillor Lilley and five local residents.

75 We have developed proposals for this area which are broadly based on the Council's proposals. In the southern urban area there was a broad consensus on the warding arrangements, although a variety of different ward names were suggested.

76 In the central urban area the various schemes suggested differed significantly. While part of the Council's warding pattern is similar to the proposal from the Labour Party, both differ significantly from the schemes proposed by the Mayor and the

Independent Group. The Mayor's submission emphasised community identity, while the Council argued that its proposal provided for clear boundaries. We have based our draft recommendations on the Council's scheme, with modifications made for community identity and electoral equality.

Southern urban area

77 The existing wards in this area are the three-member Fens, Owton, Rift House and Rossmere wards, which are projected to have variances of 12% fewer, 12% fewer, 3% more and 4% more electors than the average respectively by 2016.

78 Our draft recommendation is for two three-member wards, called Manor House and South, which would contain 8% more and 9% more electors respectively by 2016. These wards are adopted from the Council's proposals.

79 The proposed South ward has particularly strong boundaries. Similar wards were proposed by the Council, by the Mayor, the Independent Group and the Labour Party. There was opposition to the Council's scheme from Greatham Parish Council, as South ward would include the 'Greatham Fens' area, resulting in parish warding. However, the two parts of the parish are divided by a dual carriageway, across which there is no footpath or direct road. Two local residents argued that Greatham village and Greatham Fens are separate communities, while one local resident asserted that the parish should not be divided. We toured this area and consider that there is little to unite the separate parts of Greatham parish.

80 Our proposed Manor House ward was suggested by the Council, the Mayor, the Conservative Group and the Labour Party. The Council argued that this ward rests on strong boundaries, while the Mayor reasoned that the area contains strong community and voluntary groups. The Independent Group's proposal divided this area and neighbouring Foggy Furze into northern and southern sections, resulting in poor electoral equality.

81 An alternative name suggested for Manor House ward was Brierton (the Labour Party and the Mayor). Alternative names suggested for South ward were Catcote (Labour Party) and St Teresa's (the Mayor). We welcome further comments on the most appropriate names for these wards.

Central urban area

82 The existing wards in this area are the three three-member Burn Valley, Foggy Furze and Grange wards, which are projected to have variances of 10% fewer, 14% fewer and 11% fewer electors than the average respectively by 2016.

83 Our draft recommendation is for three three-member wards called Foggy Furze, Middleton and Victoria, which would contain 1% more, 4% fewer and 8% fewer electors respectively by 2016. These wards are based a number of different proposals for this area.

84 The draft recommendation for Victoria ward is based on the Council's proposal and provides for strong, clear boundaries and good electoral equality. We consider that the western boundary of the proposed Victoria ward, which meets West ward, is

particularly strong. Our draft recommendation differs from the Council's submission along the southern boundary, where we were persuaded by community evidence provided by the Dent and Derwent Residents' Association.

85 Submissions were received from the, Furness, Cameron & Belk Street Residents' Association and the Dent and Derwent Residents' Association. Both groups expressed their wish to remain in their current ward due to the relationships already created between neighbourhoods and the facilities available in the area. The Dent and Derwent Residents' Association argued that they had a shared community identity with the neighbouring streets, in particular with five separate groups including one in an area in the historic town (placed by the Council in Heritage ward) and another in an area to the immediate west of the shopping centre (placed by the Council in Middleton ward). We do not consider that sufficient evidence of community links with the historic town has been provided, particular given that a busy main road divides the historic town from the other areas mentioned by Dent and Derwent Residents' Association. Having toured the area, we consider that our modification to the Council's proposal is in the interests of local communities.

86 Our proposed Foggy Furze ward is based on the proposals of the Council, and is similar to the suggestions of the Mayor and the Labour Party. Our proposed boundary differs from the Council's recommendation in the north-east corner of this ward, where we continue the boundary along Oxford Street, as proposed by the Labour Party and the Mayor, rather than using Stockton Road, as proposed by the Council. This provides for better electoral equality in both Middleton and Foggy Furze wards.

87 Our proposed Middleton ward lies to the south of the proposed Victoria ward and to the north of the proposed Foggy Furze ward. It is broadly based on the Council's submission, with modifications to the boundary with Victoria and Foggy Furze as described in the paragraphs above. We consider that this provides for good electoral equality and facilitates a good pattern of wards in the central urban area of Hartlepool.

88 An alternative name suggested for Foggy Furze ward was St Aidan's (the Mayor). Alternative names suggested for Middleton ward were Burn (the Labour Party) and Burn Valley (the Mayor). An alternative name suggested for Victoria ward was Jackson (the Labour Party). We welcome further comments on the most appropriate names for these wards.

89 Table C1 (on page 29) provides details of the electoral variances of the draft recommendations for wards in this area of the borough. The draft recommendations are shown on Map 1, Map 2 and Map 3 accompanying this report.

Conclusions

90 Table 1 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2008 and 2013 electorate figures.

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2010	2016
Number of councillors	33	33
Number of electoral wards	11	11
Average number of electors per councillor	2,104	2,163
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	2	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Draft recommendation

Hartlepool Borough Council should comprise 33 councillors serving 11 wards, as detailed and named in Table C1 and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

91 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single district ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

92 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Hartlepool Borough Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

93 To meet our obligations under the 2009 Act, we propose consequential parish warding arrangements for the parish of Greatham.

94 We would particularly welcome comments on these proposals from the parish council concerned and local residents during this consultation stage.

95 The parish of Greatham should be divided into two parish wards: Greatham Fens (returning four members) and Greatham Village (returning three members). We welcome comments on these arrangements during this consultation period.

Draft recommendation

Greatham Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Greatham Fens (returning four members), and Greatham Village (returning three members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 3.

3 What happens next

Draft recommendations

96 There will now be a consultation period of 12 weeks, during which time everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Hartlepool Borough Council contained in this report. We will take into account fully all submissions received by 20 June 2011. Any received after this date may not be taken into account.

97 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Hartlepool and welcome comments from interested parties relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. We would welcome alternative proposals backed up by demonstrable evidence during Stage Three. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

98 Express your views by writing directly to:

Review Officer
Hartlepool Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76–86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG

reviews@lgbce.org.uk

Submissions can also be made by using the consultation section of our website, www.lgbce.org.uk or by emailing reviews@lgbce.org.uk.

99 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, we make available for public inspection full copies of all representations the Commission takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all Stage Three representations will be placed on deposit locally at the offices of Hartlepool Borough Council and at our offices in Layden House (London) and on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

100 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers, such as postal or email addresses, signatures or phone numbers from your submission before it is made public. We will remove signatures from all letters, no matter who they are from.

101 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations and consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and

evidence, **whether or not** they agree with the draft recommendations. We will then publish our final recommendations.

102 After the publication of our final recommendations, the changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in draft in Parliament. Parliament can either accept or reject our recommendations. If accepted, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the next elections for Hartlepool Borough Council in 2012.

4. Mapping

Draft recommendations for Hartlepool

103 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Hartlepool Borough Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Hartlepool Borough Council.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2** illustrates the proposed wards in the north of Hartlepool.
- **Sheet 3, Map 3** illustrates the proposed wards in the south of Hartlepool and the proposed warding arrangements for Greatham parish.

Appendix A

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty is so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
Boundary Committee for England	The Boundary Committee for England was a committee of the Electoral Commission, responsible for undertaking electoral reviews. The Boundary Committee's functions were assumed by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in April 2010
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral Commission	An independent body that was set up by the UK Parliament. Its aim is integrity and public confidence in the democratic process. It regulates party and election finance and sets standards for well-run elections

Electoral fairness	When one elector's vote is worth the same as another's
Electoral imbalance	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. For the purposes of this report, we refer specifically to the electorate for local government elections
Local Government Boundary Commission for England or LGBCE	The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is responsible for undertaking electoral reviews. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England assumed the functions of the Boundary Committee for England in April 2010
Multi-member ward or division	A ward or division represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	The 12 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and can be found at www.nationalparks.gov.uk
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of

	representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town Council'
Parish (or Town) Council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Committee for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England
Political management arrangements	The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enabled local authorities in England to modernise their decision making process. Councils could choose from two broad categories; a directly elected mayor and cabinet or a cabinet with a leader
Town Council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average

Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's *Code of Practice on Written Consultation* (November 2000) (http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/servicefirst/2000/consult/code/_consultation.pdf) requires all government departments and agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 November 2008, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

Table B1: The Local Government Boundary Commission for England's compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	We consult at the start of the review and on our draft recommendations. Our consultation stages are a minimum total of 16 weeks.

Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.	We comply with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	We comply with this requirement.

Appendix C

Table C1: Draft recommendations for Hartlepool Borough Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2010)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2016)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	De Bruce	3	5,786	1,929	-8%	5,880	1,960	-9%
2	East	3	6,661	2,220	6%	6,607	2,202	2%
3	Foggy Furze	3	6,479	2,160	3%	6,549	2,183	1%
4	Heritage	3	5,595	1,865	-11%	6,650	2,217	2%
5	Jesmond	3	6,285	2,095	0%	6,242	2,081	-4%
6	Manor House	3	6,962	2,321	10%	6,993	2,331	8%
7	Middleton	3	6,322	2,107	0%	6,217	2,072	-4%
8	South	3	7,225	2,408	14%	7,084	2,361	9%
9	Victoria	3	6,188	2,063	-2%	5,938	1,979	-8%
10	Warren Grange	3	5,980	1,993	-5%	6,241	2,080	-4%
11	West	3	5,933	1,978	-6%	6,970	2,323	7%
Totals		33	69,416	–	–	71,371	–	–
Averages		–	–	2,104	–	–	2,163	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Hartlepool Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each ward varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

18TH APRIL 2011



Report of: Legal Services Manager

Subject: REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To invite the Committee to embark upon a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations and to determine a strategy and timetable for the review.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 (EAA 2006) introduced a duty for all polling districts, polling places and polling stations to be reviewed by the end of 2007 and at least every four years after that.
- 2.2 The Electoral Commission have produced a document EC Circular 19/2010 (attached at **Appendix 1**) which explains the processes and basis for such reviews. Members will note that a heavy emphasis is placed on public consultation. To meet the requirements of the guidance a timetable which will enable the Council to conclude the review by the end of 2011 will be necessary.
- 2.3 In aiming to reduce the requirement of a full review, the Council has, following each year's elections, conducted a mini review of polling places, resulting in a number of changes to polling places.
- 2.4 As members are aware, the Council is currently undertaking a further electoral review which, if approved by Parliament, will be effective from elections in 2012.
- 2.5 Accordingly, at the time of writing this report, guidance is being sought from the Electoral Commission regarding the timing of the review of polling districts, places and polling stations. This is due to the likelihood of changes to warding arrangements from 2012, which may well impact on such a

review. The following paragraphs set out for the Committee's information the aims and process of the review..

3. AIMS OF THE REVIEW

- 3.1 Local authorities are required to divide their area into polling districts for the purposes of parliamentary elections and to designate polling places for these polling districts and polling stations, and to keep these under review.
- 3.2 By conducting this statutory review of polling places, local authorities must demonstrate that they have, as far as is practicable, met the criteria set out in legislation.
- 3.3 The authority must:
- (a) seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
 - (b) seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons
- 3.4 The key points to bear in mind when conducting the review is that all decisions made must be consulted upon, measured, and practical. The whole process should be as transparent and open as possible to avoid possible conflict.

4. PRELIMINARY STAGE

- 4.1 The first stage of the review process involves giving notice of the review. It is recommended that notice be given at least at the Council office and on the Council website. The contents of the notice should state:
- That the authority is conducting a review of polling districts and polling places;
 - That the Returning Officer will make a comment on proposed polling Stations;
 - That electors within the authority or within a parliamentary constituency which has any part in the authority may make a representation;
 - That the authority would welcome any person or body with expertise in access for persons with any type of disability to make a representation or to comment on the authorities proposals, the Returning Officer's representation or any other matter;
 - That persons or bodies making representations should, if possible, give alternative places that may be used as polling places;
 - The postal address, email address and website address at which documents can be inspected and representations made;
 - An indication of the timetable of the review and a deadline for representations.

Notable is reference to the ability of electors to make representations, the importance of comments on access issues, where relevant documentation can be inspected and the anticipated timetable.

- 4.2 The authority should consider sending a copy of the notice to potentially interested parties such as councillors, disability groups and other stakeholders. It may be useful to include details of the review in any council newsletter and possibly a note in a local newspaper.
- 4.3 A set of reference documents should be gained from the various parts of the council to assist with the review. Naturally, maps of the proposed wards based on the LGBCE warding arrangements showing residential areas will be necessary. Material commenting on the merits of existing polling stations and as to the availability of those and other buildings should also be available

5. PROPOSAL STAGE

- 5.1 The authority must devise a proposal for the new polling district and polling place arrangements.
- 5.2 The Returning Officer for each parliamentary constituency either wholly or partly within the local authority area must be consulted. The Returning Officer must comment on all existing polling stations used at elections and any new polling stations which would probably be chosen if the new proposals were accepted by the authority and should focus on the access and staff accommodation features of locations.
- 5.3 The location of the proposed polling districts and places are the responsibility of the local authority and the locations of the polling stations are the responsibility of the Returning Officer.
- 5.4 It may be practicable to again set up a sub-committee (as in 2007) involving members of the council to work with the proposals before they reach full council. Alternatively the proposals could be sent to the leadership of the different groups on the council and meetings arranged to discuss any issues. This should ensure the proper scrutiny of and confidence in the proposals in an efficient manner. Authorities may find it useful to have such a group involved throughout the review so that any possibly contentious decisions are managed throughout the process with no stakeholder believing there has been insufficient consultation or due process given to a decision.

6. CONSULTATION STAGE

- 6.1 The consultation stage is for representations and comments on the local authority proposals for polling districts and places. There are two parts to this:
 - A compulsory submission from the Returning Officer of the parliamentary constituency

- Submissions from other persons and bodies. These can be referenced to the Returning Officer's proposed polling stations as well as the authority proposals
- 6.2 The Returning Officer's report is based on deciding on the probable polling places due to the new proposals and analysing those polling places. Once the RO has made his comments, they must be published in accordance with the guidance.
- 6.3 The authority must consult widely on the review and seek out the views of interested groups or bodies including electors, candidates and agents, political parties and members of the council. Consultees should be asked for comment both in general and if appropriate about the particular buildings within the authority.

7. CONCLUSION OF REVIEW

- 7.1 The council must produce final proposals for the new polling districts and places. The final proposals must be made after taking into consideration all of the representations made. The proposals then need to be approved by the Council.

8. PUBLISHING STAGE

- 8.1 Once the Council has agreed on the proposals, the new polling districts and polling places must be made available to the public. The reasons for the choice of every polling district and polling place must be given; these do not have to be too detailed but should show how accessibility issues were considered. Along with the reasons for the final decision of the review, a suite of further information must be published.

9. ISSUES

- 9.1 There are two principal issues for the committee at this stage. The first is timetabling the conduct of the review in order to achieve the required deadline, whilst respecting also a variety of critical dates in the process leading to conclusion of the review. The second issue is in relation to which warding arrangements the review should be based, respecting that any recommendations of the LGBCE are subject to approval by Parliament and any statistics used will be provisional. However, if the current warding arrangements are used, there will be a requirement for a full further review prior to the elections in 2012.
- 9.2 The timetable will be influenced by the following features of the process -
- Preparation of documentation
- The documentation referred above will need to be prepared and collated. Some is readily available, some does not exist and some will need to be

prepared for the purpose of the review. The documentation will need to be available to inform the preparation of proposals.

Preparation of proposals

When the documentation referred to above is available, a meeting of the committee (or a sub-committee if the suggestion made in para 5.4 is taken up) will be necessary to consider and draw up preliminary proposals. It is likely that subsequent meetings will be required if the pattern of 2007 is repeated.

Returning Officer's report

The Returning Officer's report would be available within 1 week of the conclusion of preliminary proposals.

Public Consultation

Production of the Returning Officer's report would enable public consultation to commence.

Final proposals

Final proposals will need to be made by the committee (sub-committee) following the public consultation exercise and scrutiny. A period of, say 2 weeks would be a minimum for preparation of a report and convening of the meeting.

Council resolution

Consideration and approval of final proposals.

Members are asked to bear in mind that the process cannot commence until after the elections on 5 May 2011 and it is proposed that the review commence in June 2011.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee note and discuss.

Priority	Medium
Event specific	No
Action required	Yes
Area	Great Britain
Retain	Until replaced
Circular reference	EC19(2010)

Review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

30 July 2010

Purpose

1. The purpose of this circular is to provide local authorities and (Acting) Returning Officers in England, Scotland and Wales with guidance in relation to carrying out a review of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places.
2. Reviews of parliamentary polling districts must be undertaken at least once every four years. However, in the Commission's interim report on the problems experienced at some polling stations at the close of poll at the 6 May 2010 elections, we recommended that all local authorities take steps immediately to begin the process of conducting reviews of polling districts and polling places, reflecting on the problems identified in some areas at the May 2010 elections.
3. This guidance builds upon that issued in 2007 on the commencement of the relevant provisions introduced by the Electoral Administration Act 2006.
4. This circular replaces circular EC28/2007.

Background

5. Section 18C(1) of the Representation of the People Act 1983¹ places a duty on all local authorities to review their UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places every four years.
6. As part of this review process, (Acting) Returning Officers are required to make representations to the local authority on the existing polling stations and

¹ As inserted by Section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

the polling stations that would likely be used based on the proposed arrangements for polling places.

7. Other persons, including electors, community groups and other bodies with particular expertise in access to premises for disabled people, may submit proposals to the local authority during the review process.
8. Polling districts and polling places for local government elections are not automatically part of the review². However, given that in practice polling districts and polling places for local government elections are based on UK Parliamentary polling arrangements, it is recommended that the local government Returning Officer become involved in the UK Parliamentary review, and that a review of local government polling arrangements is conducted simultaneously.

The review process

9. The main guidance document in Appendix A sets out a staged approach for conducting the review in line with the relevant legislation.
10. Appendix B includes templates that can be used to assess the suitability of polling places and polling stations.
11. Appendix C covers the step-by-step process for changing the name of an electoral area in England and Wales.

Contact

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² Local government polling districts and polling places are covered separately in Section 31, Representation of the People Act 1983.

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This circular is for the attention of:

The Acting Returning Officer

Parliamentary constituencies in England and Wales

The Returning Officer

Parliamentary constituencies in Scotland

District, metropolitan borough and London borough authorities in England

Unitary authorities in England and Wales

This circular is for the information of:

The Electoral Registration Officer

District, metropolitan borough and London borough authorities in England

Unitary authorities in England and Wales

Unitary authorities and joint boards in Scotland

The Chief Electoral Officer

Northern Ireland

This circular was approved by Andrew Scallan, Director of Electoral Administration.

Circular EC19/2010 – Appendix A

Review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

1 Introduction

Legislation

1.1 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 (EAA 2006) introduced a duty on all local authorities in Great Britain to review their UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places at least once every four years.¹ The first such review had to be completed by the end of 2007.²

1.2 Polling districts and places for local government elections, including mayoral elections and elections to the Greater London Authority, are not automatically part of this review as they are provided for separately in Section 31 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983). However, reviews of local government polling arrangements should nevertheless be conducted simultaneously with a review of UK Parliamentary arrangements. Local authorities, the (Acting) Returning Officer and the local government Returning Officer should, therefore, liaise closely with each other throughout the review process.

1.3 However, it is the (Acting) Returning Officer who will retain the responsibility for any actions arising from the UK Parliamentary review.

1.4 The polling districts and places for European Parliamentary and Welsh Assembly elections are to be the same as those used for UK Parliamentary elections.³ However, different arrangements may be used at these elections if there are special circumstances.

1.5 The polling districts and places for Scottish Parliamentary elections are those used at the previous Scottish Parliamentary election.⁴

1.6 This guidance provides a staged approach to conducting the review according to the relevant legislative requirements. It expands on guidance issued by the Commission in 2007, and has benefited from the experiences of people carrying out their initial reviews following the commencement of the relevant provisions of the EAA 2006.

¹ Section 18C(4), RPA 1983.

² Section 18C(1), RPA 1983, as inserted by Section 16, EAA 2006.

³ Regulation 8, European Parliamentary Elections Regulations 2004; Article 6, National Assembly for Wales (Representation of the People) Order 2007.

⁴ Article 6, Scottish Parliament (Elections etc.) Order 2007.

Definition of terms

UK Parliamentary constituencies

1.7 The Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 states:⁵

‘There shall for the purpose of parliamentary elections be the county and borough constituencies (or in Scotland the county and burgh constituencies), each returning a single member, which are described in Orders in Council made under this Act’

‘In this Act and, except where the context otherwise requires, in any Act passed after the Representation of the People Act 1948, “constituency” means an area having separate representation in the House of Commons.’

1.8 UK Parliamentary constituency boundaries cannot be changed by the review.

Polling district

1.9 A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a constituency, ward or division into smaller parts.

1.10 In England, each parish is to be a separate polling district and, in Wales, each community should be a separate polling district unless there are special circumstances.⁶ This means that a parish or community must not be in a polling district which has a part of either a different parish or community within it, or any unparished part of the local authority area within it.

1.11 In Scotland, each electoral ward⁷ must be divided into two or more polling districts unless there are special circumstances.⁸ However, given the size of wards in Scotland, it is difficult to envisage what those specific circumstances might be.

1.12 When a parish or community is not a separate polling district or a Scottish electoral ward is not split into two or more polling districts, the special circumstances and the recommendation resulting from these should be clearly set in the review document for the council to consider.

1.13 The Commission is aware that some authorities designate the entire polling district as the polling place. However, Section 18B(4)(e) of the RPA 1983 states that ‘the polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station’.⁹ The Commission therefore recommends that polling places always be defined.

⁵ Section 1, Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986.

⁶ Section 18A(3), RPA 1983.

⁷ Within the meaning of Section 1, Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004.

⁸ Section 18A, RPA 1983.

⁹ Note, however, that Section 18B(5) states that if the polling place is not designated, it will by default be taken to be the polling district.

Polling place

1.14 A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer.

Polling stations

1.15 A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the local authority, polling stations are chosen by the (Acting) Returning Officer for the election.

Roles and responsibilities

The local authority

1.16 Every relevant local authority in Great Britain is responsible for dividing its area into polling districts for UK Parliamentary elections for so much of any constituency as is situated in its area, and for reviewing the polling districts and polling places at least once every four years.¹⁰ A relevant local authority is, in England, the council of a district or London borough, in Scotland, a local authority, and, in Wales, the council of a county or county borough.¹¹

1.17 Depending on the structure of the council, it may be the full council or the executive who will make the decisions on any changes to polling districts or polling places. Some local authorities may have decided to delegate that function to a committee, in which case the decision on polling districts and polling places becomes the responsibility of that committee.

The Electoral Registration Officer

1.18 Where a local authority makes any alterations to the polling districts within its area, the Electoral Registration Officer must amend the register of electors accordingly. The changes to the register take effect on the date that the Electoral Registration Officer publishes a notice stating that the alterations have been made.¹²

The (Acting) Returning Officer

1.19 The (Acting) Returning Officer must comment during any review of polling districts and polling places on both existing polling stations and the polling stations that would probably be used if any new proposal for polling places were accepted.¹³ The election rules require the (Acting) Returning Officer to decide how many polling stations are required for each polling place and must allocate electors to the polling stations in such manner as he or she thinks most convenient.¹⁴ The location, size and layout of any polling place/polling station must be a key consideration when deciding on the number of electors to be allocated to a polling station.

¹⁰ Section 18A(2), RPA 1983.

¹¹ Section 18E(3), RPA 1983.

¹² Section 18A(5), RPA 1983.

¹³ Paragraph 3, Schedule A1, RPA 1983.

¹⁴ Rule 25, Schedule 1, RPA 1983.

The Electoral Commission

1.20 While legislation provides no role for the Commission in the review process, it does provide a role for the Commission after the conclusion of the review.

1.21 Once the local authority has published the results of its review, specified interested parties – including any group of 30 or more electors – may make representations to the Commission to reconsider any polling districts and polling places.

1.22 If, on receipt of such representations, the Commission finds that a local authority's review did not:

- meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency, or a body of them, or
- take sufficient account of the accessibility for disabled persons of polling stations within a designated polling place¹⁵

then it may direct the authority to make any alterations to the polling places that the Commission thinks necessary and, if the alterations are not made within two months, may make the alterations itself.¹⁶

2 The requirements of the review

2.1 Local authorities are required to divide every constituency into polling districts for the purposes of UK Parliamentary elections, to designate a polling place for each polling district, and to review these at least once every four years.¹⁷ Polling places should be within the polling district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area outside the district.

2.2 In conducting the statutory review, local authorities must follow the rules set out in legislation, which are:¹⁸

- The authority must publish notice of the holding of a review
- The authority must consult the (Acting) Returning Officer in a constituency which is wholly or partly in its area
- The (Acting) Returning Officer must make representations to the authority which must include information as to the location of polling stations (existing or proposed) within polling places (existing or proposed)
- The local authority must publish the (Acting) Returning Officer's representations within 30 calendar days of receipt, in such manner as is prescribed
- The authority must seek representations from such persons as it thinks have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons

¹⁵ Section 18D(2), RPA 1983.

¹⁶ Section 18D(4), RPA 1983 and Regulation 4, Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006.

¹⁷ Unless the size or other circumstances of a polling district are such that the situation of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of electors, in which case there is no requirement to designate a polling place (Section 18B(2), RPA 1983).

¹⁸ Section 18C and Schedule A1, RPA 1983 and Regulation 3, Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006.

who have different forms of disability. Such persons must have an opportunity to make representations and to comment on the returning officer's representations

- Any elector in a constituency situated in whole or in part in the authority's area may make representations
- Representations made by any person in connection with a review of polling places may include proposals for specified alternative polling places
- On completion of a review, the authority must give reasons for its decisions in the review and publish such other information as is prescribed

2.3 As part of the review process, local authorities must:¹⁹

- Seek to ensure that all electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
- Seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable the polling places are accessible to those who are disabled, and
- When considering or reviewing the designation of a polling place, have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.

3 Preparation and scoping for the review

3.1 The local authority will need to identify who will lead and support the review, drawing personnel not just from electoral services but also from other parts of the authority who may have expertise to assist.

3.2 Prior to commencing the review, the local authority will also need to set out the terms of reference and the criteria for assessing the suitability of the current/proposed arrangements. The following statistics and information will assist with this process:

- Electorate figures, broken down to street level within wards and existing polling districts.
- Any local authority or national statistics that estimate population change within the area.
- A report from the authority's planning section detailing any proposed areas of new development and the approximate number of dwellings and expected population numbers for the areas.
- Detailed up-to-date maps of a scale that will assist in the designation of polling district boundaries.
- Details of current polling places and an indication as to their overall suitability for purpose (including, for example, any surveys, diagrams or photographs completed with assistance of Presiding Officers or polling station inspectors or as part of a previous review).
- Any comments or complaints regarding the current arrangements from the public, elected members or other bodies.
- Up-to-date information gained from the existing and possible future polling station venue managers as to continued availability (highlighting, for example, planned renovation work or other future plans).

¹⁹ Section 18B, RPA 1983.

- Details of potential alternative buildings (public, private or temporary type constructions) that might appear suitable.
- Advice and guidance from local disability groups and disability organisations (such as, for example, Scope or Capability Scotland), and any expert help from officers within the council who are responsible for equality schemes.

3.3 The systems, data, maps and other support documentation should be identified as early as possible so that they can be made available to those carrying out the review.

Timing of the review

3.4 As part of the planning process, it is important to factor into the timetable the most likely scheduled date of the council/ executive/committee meeting where the detailed review proposals would be formally considered and approved. The review officers should work closely with the lead officer in charge of these meetings to ensure that the deadline is factored into the review timescale.

3.5 Sufficient time should be allowed to deal with all of the necessary site visits and completion of templates in Appendix B.

3.6 The time allowed for consultation should be sufficient to enable all stakeholders to absorb the proposals, gather comments from their own groups, and respond with any alternative arrangements that they may wish to submit.

4 The review process

Stage 1 – Notification of the review

4.1 The formal commencement of the review requires the local authority to give notice of the holding of a review.²⁰ The notice must be published using the following methods:

- notice to be displayed at the council's office and in at least one conspicuous place within the authority
- on the council website

4.2 Additionally, the authority could publish the notice in a council newsletter and display copies in other public buildings.

4.3 It is recommended that the notice should state:

- that the local authority is conducting a review of polling districts and polling places
- that the (Acting) Returning Officer will make a comment on proposed polling stations
- that electors within the authority or within a UK Parliamentary constituency which has any part in the authority may make a representation
- that the authority would welcome any person or body with expertise in access for persons with any type of disability to make a representation or to comment

²⁰ Schedule A1, RPA 1983.

on the authority's proposals, the (Acting) Returning Officer's representation or any other matter

- that persons or bodies making representations should, if possible, give alternative places that may be used as polling places
- the postal address, e-mail address and website address at which documents can be inspected and representations made
- an indication of the timetable of the review and a deadline for representations

4.4 The authority should also send a copy of the notice to interested parties such as councillors, disability groups and other stakeholders. Additionally, the authority could include details of the review in any council newsletter and issue a press release drawing attention to the review and the process. The council's website is also a useful source for disseminating information.

Stage 2 – Administering the review

4.5 Initially, the local authority should undertake a preliminary review of the current polling districts and polling places with a view to establishing their suitability. There is no requirement to change any of these districts and polling places but any 'no change' decision must be fully justified as part of the overall proposals.

4.6 The review process should be structured, and must be conducted formally with supporting documentation. This will ensure that there is a complete audit trail for all decisions taken and will contribute to the transparency of the process.

4.7 Close liaison with other departments of the council will help to increase the efficiency of the overall review process.

4.8 The local authority planning and property services departments, for example, will be able to provide guidance on the availability of locations and premises and details of any residential developments that might have an impact on future electorate figures.

4.9 Modelling possible options where changes are deemed necessary can be achieved by using mapping and planning tools available within the local authority, particularly as most authorities will now have access to GIS mapping services which can pull data from a variety of sources.

4.10 Local authorities should determine the most appropriate method of involving relevant council staff and other interested groups as appropriate. Regular meetings may be appropriate to enable consideration of all aspects of the review prior to the submission of the final recommendations. In adopting this approach, stakeholders can be involved in the process in a timely and efficient way which may help to deliver the proper scrutiny of and confidence in the proposals.

4.11 The legislation suggests an approach starting with polling districts, followed by choosing polling places and then considering polling stations. In practice, however, it is important that good quality polling places are identified first, which can then be used as part of the process of defining suitable polling district arrangements that comply with the requirements set out in the legislation. Appendix B provides template checklists to assist with the evaluation of current/proposed polling places and stations.

Assessing the current arrangements and proposals for change

4.12 The following should be considered as part of the assessment of the suitability of polling district boundaries:

- Boundaries: Are they well defined? For example, do they follow the natural boundaries of the area? If not, is it clear which properties belong in the polling district?
- Location: Are there suitable transport links within the polling district, and how do they relate to the areas of the district that are most highly populated? Are there any obstacles to voters crossing the current polling district and reaching the polling place e.g., steep hills, impassable major roads, railway lines, rivers?

4.13 There are a number of factors that must be considered when reviewing existing polling places or when assessing new polling places, including:

- The location: Is it reasonably accessible within the polling district? Does it avoid barriers for the voter such as steep hills, major roads, rivers, etc.? Are there any convenient transport links?
- Size: Can it accommodate more than one polling station if required? If multiple polling stations are required, is the polling place ample enough to accommodate all voters going into and out of the polling stations, even where there is a high turnout?
- Suitability: Is the building readily available in the event of any unscheduled elections? Is there any possibility that the building may be demolished as part of a new development? Is the building accessible to all those entitled to attend the polling place?

4.14 Appendix B contains templates to evaluate the suitability of buildings as polling places/polling stations based on these key factors, which can be completed as part of the review process.

4.15 Ideally, there would be the choice of a range of fully accessible buildings, conveniently located for electors in the area within which to establish polling stations. In practice, however, the choice of polling places will often be a balance between the quality of a building (access, facilities, etc.) and the proximity of the building to the electors. When making a decision, all factors will need to be considered and the authority will need to be able to demonstrate their reasoning behind the decision.

4.16 Where, because of local circumstances, a polling place has been selected that is not fully accessible, then reasonable adjustments must be undertaken to provide access for all electors. Alternatively, the local authority should consider whether it would be appropriate to designate a polling place that falls wholly or partly outside the polling district.

4.17 It should be noted that for the purpose of taking the poll in England and Wales, the (Acting) Returning Officer is entitled to use free of charge schools maintained or assisted by a local authority as well as those schools that receive grants made out of moneys provided by Parliament. In Scotland, the rooms in schools that can be used free of charge for the taking of the poll are those in schools that are not independent schools within the meaning of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

4.18 Part of the decision-making process involves assessing if the polling place is capable of accommodating more than one polling station together with the necessary staff and equipment, particularly in circumstances where the number of electors allocated to a polling place is high. For example, in instances where there may be a higher turnout, such as at a UK Parliamentary election, (Acting) Returning Officers may wish to set up multiple polling stations within the polling place. Consideration will need to be given to whether the area or building can accommodate such arrangements.

4.19 When assessing the suitability of a room or area for use as a polling station, the (Acting) Returning Officer should consider how the size and layout would allow for the most effective throughput of voters, including in those instances where there is a high number of electors in the polling station at any one time on polling day. Each polling station should be designed to provide suitable conditions for the elector to vote in private, for staff to conduct elections in an efficient and effective manner and for those entitled to observe the voting process to do so without compromising the secrecy of the ballot.

Stage 3 – Consultation

4.20 The consultation stage is for representations and comments on the existing and proposed arrangements for polling districts and places. There are two parts to this stage:

- A compulsory submission from the (Acting) Returning Officer of the UK Parliamentary constituency, which must then be published by the local authority.
- Any submissions from electors and other persons and bodies, including those with expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for disabled people.

4.21 The (Acting) Returning Officer's submission must comment on both the existing polling stations and the polling stations that would likely be used based on any proposed polling places. The (Acting) Returning Officer's report must also contain information as to the location of polling stations within polling places. The completion of the templates at Appendix B may help to form a basis for this report.

4.22 The local authority must publish the (Acting) Returning Officer's comments within 30 calendar days of receipt.²¹ The comments should be published at the local authority offices and in at least one conspicuous place within each UK Parliamentary constituency. They should also be published on the council website. Additionally, the (Acting) Returning Officer's response could be copied and bound or joined into a booklet for ease of reading and made available in council offices, libraries, community centres or other places where residents may visit.

4.23 The authority should consult widely on the review and should seek out the views of interested groups or bodies including electors, candidates and agents, political parties and members of the council. Consultees should be asked for comment both in general and, if appropriate, about particular buildings or areas within the authority.

²¹ Regulation 3, Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006.

4.24 It will be particularly important to consult with those who have specific experience of assessing access for persons with different disabilities. These could include disability sections or occupational health departments within the council, as well as local and national disability groups. The authority should give consideration to the different types of disability which may make voting in person more difficult, and should also consider the council's own policy on disabled access.

4.25 Any persons involved in the consultation have the right to comment on the recommendations proposed by the (Acting) Returning Officer, and should be invited to consider the implications of these.

4.26 Any elector for a UK Parliamentary constituency either wholly within or partly within the local authority area may comment on any of the recommendations within the whole local authority area.

4.27 Any person or body that makes a comment should be invited to suggest alternative polling districts/polling places and should be encouraged to give a reason for the alternative proposal so that it may be given appropriate consideration. As mentioned above, the notice published by the local authority should provide a deadline for the submission of comments.

Stage 4 – Concluding the review

4.28 After considering all of the representations, the local authority must decide on the most appropriate polling districts and polling places. Depending on the council structure, this may be a matter for full council, the executive or a committee to which the review function has been delegated.

4.29 If the review results in the alteration of polling districts, the Electoral Registration Officer must make the necessary alterations to the electoral register. Any alteration is effective on the date on which the Electoral Registration Officer publishes a notice stating that the alterations have been made.²² If the review is concluded before publication of the annual revised register, the changes can be incorporated in the revised register to be published by 1 December. Otherwise, alterations can be made by the publication of another revised register or on a notice of alteration.

4.30 Where the Electoral Registration Officer has decided to republish to incorporate the changes, they will need to publish a notice fourteen calendar days before the publication of the revised version of the register in a local newspaper, at his or her office and at some other conspicuous place or places in the area.²³

5 Publishing the conclusions of the review

5.1 Once the local authority has agreed on the proposals, details of the new polling districts and polling places must be made available to the public. These should be made available at the local authority offices, in at least one conspicuous place in the constituency, and on the council's website. The reasons for choosing a particular polling district and polling place must be given.

²² Section 18A(5), RPA 1983.

²³ Section 13(3), RPA 1983 and Regulation 36(1), Representation of the People Regulations 2001.

5.2 Along with the reasons for the final decision of the review, the following must also be published:²⁴

- all correspondence sent to the (Acting) Returning Officer in connection with the review
- all correspondence sent to any person whom the authority contacted because they had particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for disabled people
- all representations made by any person in connection with the review
- the minutes of any meeting held by the authority to consider any revision to the designation of polling districts or polling places within its area as a result of the review
- details of the designation of polling districts or polling places within its area as a result of the review
- details of the places where the results of the review have been published

6 The appeals process

6.1 Following the conclusion of the local authority's review, certain persons have a right to make representations to the Commission.

Who is entitled to make representation to the Electoral Commission?

6.2 Section 18D(1) of the RPA 1983 sets out who may make representations to the Electoral Commission, namely:

- in England, any parish council which is wholly or partly situated within the constituency, or parish meeting where there is no such council
- in Wales, any community council which is wholly or partly situated within the constituency
- not less than thirty registered electors in the constituency (although electors registered anonymously cannot make a representation)²⁵
- a person (except the (Acting) Returning Officer) who made representations to the authority when the review was being undertaken
- any person who is not an elector in a constituency in the authority's area but who the Commission thinks has sufficient interest in the accessibility of disabled persons to polling places in the area or has particular expertise in relation to the access to premises or facilities of disabled persons

6.3 In addition, the (Acting) Returning Officer may make observations on any representations made to the Commission.²⁶

²⁴ Regulation 4, Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006.

²⁵ Section 18D(7), RPA 1983.

²⁶ Section 18D(3), RPA 1983.

Format for all representations

6.4 All representations made to the Commission must be in writing, either by post, e-mail or fax. The representation must be as specific as possible. The representation should clearly state the manner in which it is alleged that the local authority has failed to properly conduct the review. There are only two grounds on which a representation may state that a local authority has failed to conduct a proper review. These are:

- the local authority has failed to meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency
- the local authority has failed to take sufficient account of accessibility to disabled persons of the polling stations within a polling place.

6.5 Representations based on any other premise will not be considered.

6.6 The representation should include the location and any other relevant information regarding the polling place at issue, stating specifically why it is inaccessible or does not meet the reasonable requirements of the electors.

6.7 A representation may also include for consideration specific proposals for alterations to the polling place.

The decision-making process of the Commission

6.8 Upon receipt of a representation, the Commission will request all relevant documentation from the local authority and will show the authority the representation.

6.9 The (Acting) Returning Officer is entitled to make observations on the representation submitted to the Commission and should give a report on the probable polling stations which would be used should the representation be successful.

6.10 The documentation from the local authority, the observations of the (Acting) Returning Officer and any other relevant information will be taken into consideration, in conjunction with the representation.

6.11 The Commission may seek advice from persons with expertise on accessibility issues when making its decision.

6.12 The Commission will set out in writing its conclusions and the reasons for its decision. The Commission's decision will be issued to the person(s) who made the representation, the local authority and the (Acting) Returning Officer. The decision and related documents will also be published on the Commission's website. Local authorities are advised to publish the outcome of the appeal in the same way as the results of the review are published.

6.13 The Commission may direct the local authority to consider any alterations to the polling places that the Commission deems necessary under the review.²⁷ After two

²⁷ Part 1, Section 18D(4), RPA 1983.

months, if the local authority has failed to make the alterations, the Commission can itself make the alterations as if the local authority had implemented them.

6.14 Representations should be sent to:

Legal Counsel
The Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW

Tel: 020 7271 0500

Fax 020 7271 0505

Email: appeals@electoralcommission.org.uk

7 Making amendments to polling places outside of the formal review

7.1 If a polling station becomes unavailable, the (Acting) Returning Officer should consider whether another polling station could be designated within the polling place. Changing the polling station within the polling place would not require a review.

7.2 If a building becomes unavailable before an election, the polling place can be changed by the local authority and council agreement will be required. If delegation procedures are in place, these should be followed as set out in the council's constitution and the person or persons who are entitled to make changes to polling places should be contacted.

7.3 Between formal reviews, all polling places and stations used should be kept under consideration, and an evaluation of their suitability carried out after each election. If any changes are identified as being desirable, the same principles behind conducting the formal review should be applied. Should any changes to polling places be required, then they could be implemented as described above.

8 Making changes to the names of electoral areas in England and Wales

8.1 Local authorities in England and Wales can change the name of an electoral area e.g. a ward by resolution. The process involved is attached as Appendix C. Local authorities in Scotland would need to ask the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland to begin a review of a ward name.

Circular EC19/2010 – Appendix B

Review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

The following templates have been designed for use in evaluating the suitability of buildings as polling places/polling stations.

Part A – to be completed by the local authority with the details of the current polling places.

Part B – to be completed by the local authority to evaluate external access and facilities both outside the perimeter of the building and within the boundary of the building itself.

Part C – to be completed by the local authority to assess internal access to the polling station, but excluding the polling station itself (ie. covering the corridors leading to the polling station accommodation and facilities available, but not the area in which polling will be carried out). Should the proposed building, room or area to be used as the polling station have direct access to the road/pavement or external parts, Part C can be excluded from this assessment.

Part D – to be completed by the (Acting) Returning Officer with the details of the area that is, or is likely to be, used as the polling station(s).

(If local authorities already have up-to-date detailed information to assist with the completion of Parts B, C and D, this can be inserted into the individual templates together with any diagrams and/or photographs to enable the building to be re-assessed on a site visit. The information should be verified as part of the visit.)

Part E – to be completed by the local authority and should be used to add any comments or complaints received from stakeholders as part of the consultation exercise. Completion can provide evidence that the review considered the submissions as part of the formal evaluation process.

Any alternative proposals or suggestions put forward for new polling places/stations should be evaluated using the templates, and the results should be collated to provide appropriate feedback.

Date reviewed	Officer initials

Polling place – evaluation checklist

Part A – Current polling place details		
Polling place identifier		
Polling place name		
Polling place address		
Number of electors (If more than one polling station within the polling place, identify split of electors)		
Building availability for future elections/referendums		
Polling place review		
Check	✓	Comment
• Are there suitable transport links?		
• Are there any access issues regarding main/busy roads, railways, rivers, etc?		
• Is the polling place capable of accommodating more than one polling station together with the necessary staff and equipment? If so, could it accommodate all voters going in and out of the polling stations, even where there is a high turnout?		
• Is the building readily available in the event of any unscheduled elections? • Is there any possibility that the building may be demolished as part of a new development?		

Identify any complaints/comments received from stakeholders at previous electoral events

Date reviewed	Officer initials

Part B – External areas access and facilities		
Check	(√)	Comments
• Are there good public transport links to the polling place?		
• Is the approach to the building safe and free from obstructions and does it have a dropped kerb?		
• Is the building clearly identifiable?		
• Is additional signage required between street and entrance?		
• Is there the facility to put up the required signage for polling day?		
• Are there parking facilities for disabled people?		
• Are there parking facilities for polling staff?		
• Does the approach to the building have external lighting?		
• Does the building have level access? Yes/No. If no -		
• Has a purpose built ramp been installed?		
• If so, does it have a handrail?		
• Does the ramp have a gentle slope?		
• Does the building require a temporary ramp or is there an alternative disabled route?		
• Is the entrance door wide enough for a disabled person using a motorised wheelchair?		
• Are the doors light enough for frail/elderly voters to open?		
• Can the 'Guidance for voters' notice be clearly displayed outside the premises, as required by the election rules?		
• Are there any external security concerns?		
• Can tellers be accommodated outside the building?		

Please complete template B1 showing external layout, street names, car parking, ramps, steps, lighting and appropriate places for signage.

External plan – B1

Show external layout, street name(s), car parking (including disabled car parking), ramps, steps, lighting, appropriate places for signage, etc.

Sketch layout; provide photographs as appropriate.



Date reviewed	Officer initials

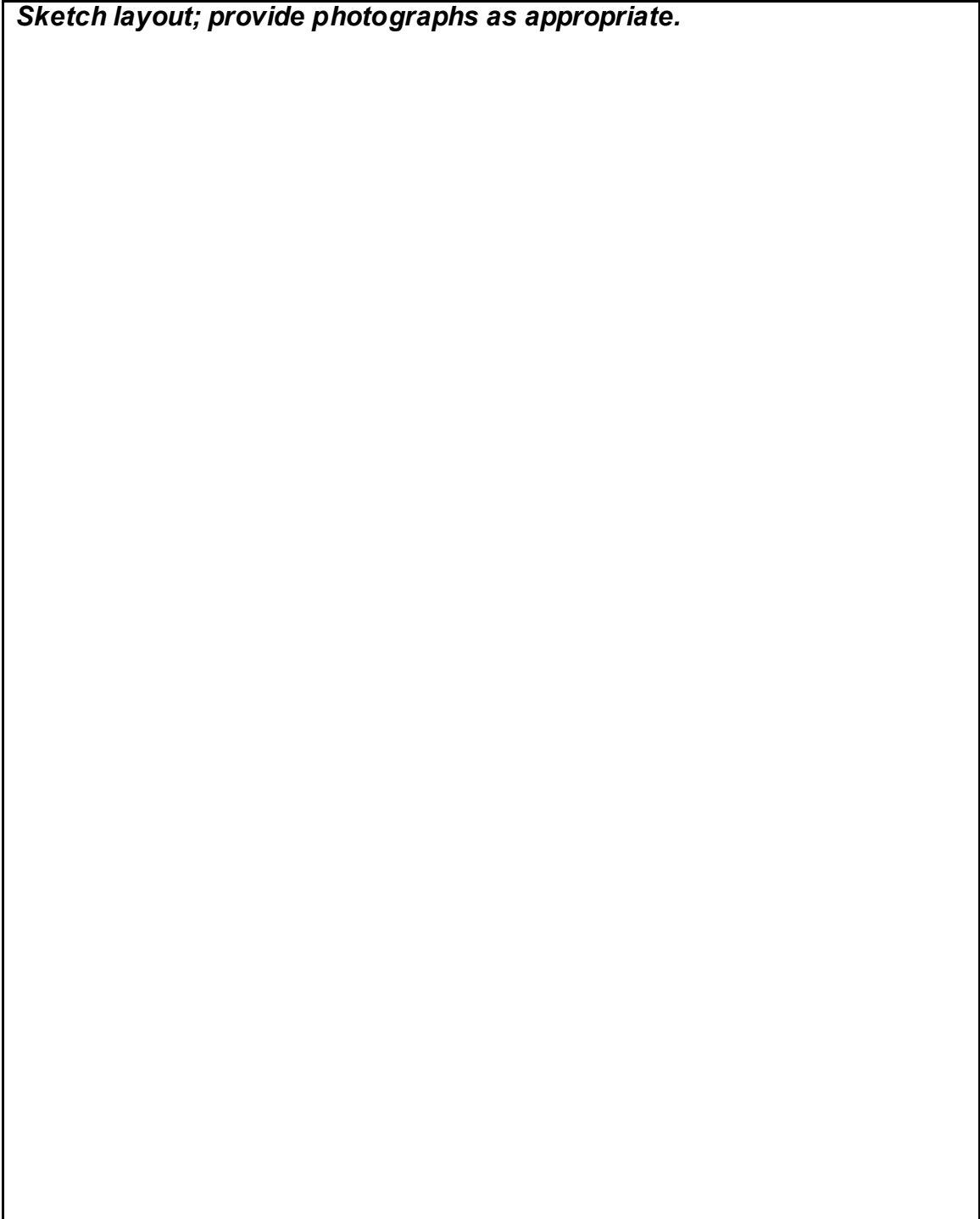
Part C – Internal areas access and facilities		
Check	(√)	Comments
• Are all doors easy to open (including by wheelchair users) or do they need to be permanently locked back?		
• Are there any internal steps or obstructions/hazards?		
• Are any doormats level with the floor?		
• Is the floor covering non-slip (especially in wet weather)?		
• Are there any corridors that may cause access problems?		
• Is there adequate lighting in the corridors?		
• Are there toilet facilities?		
• Is there a kitchen that staff can use?		
• Is the area adequately lit for day and night time?		
• Is there adequate space for signage?		
• How many polling stations can the building accommodate?		
• Does the building have a telephone available (land line) in the event of mobile network problems?		

Please complete template C1 below showing internal areas including corridors, internal doors, kitchen, toilets and highlighting any possible signage requirements and potential hazards in relation to access to the polling station itself.

Internal access leading to polling station(s) – C1

Show internal areas of the building, excluding the actual polling station where voting will take place, including corridors that link to the polling station, kitchen, toilets and highlighting any possible signage requirements and potential hazards. Also indicate any areas of poor lighting, door swing direction and ease of opening, and areas of uneven floor, etc.

Sketch layout; provide photographs as appropriate.



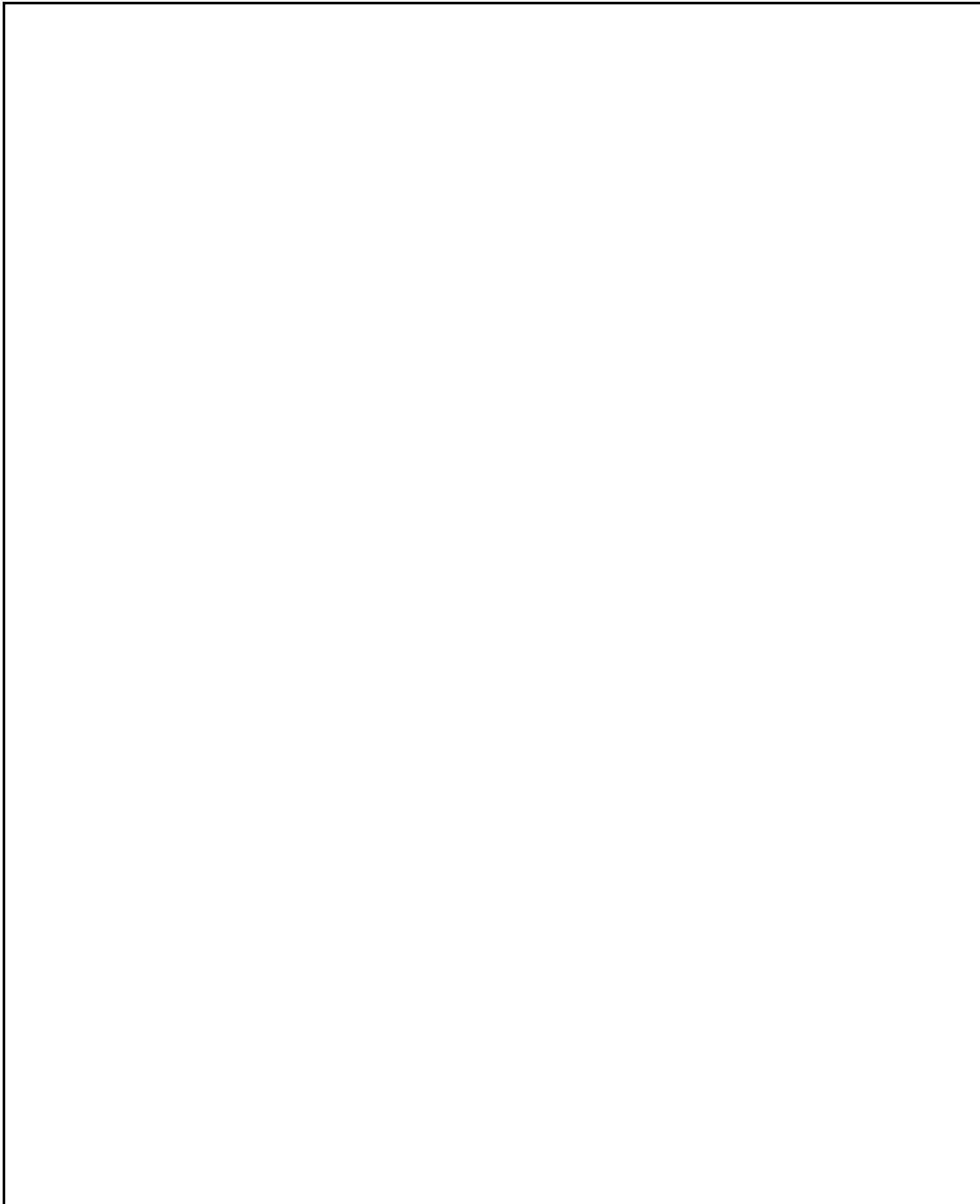
Date reviewed	Officer initials

Part D – The polling station(s)		
Check	(√)	Comments
• Is there sufficient space inside the polling station to comfortably accommodate staff, voters, polling agents and observers?		
• Is there sufficient space for administering all types of elections, including combined elections?		
• If multiple polling stations need to be provided, are there other rooms available, or can the space be divided to provide adequate room for more than one polling station?		
• In case of high turnout, is there sufficient space for managing the flow and accommodating a high volume of electors? If yes, could ballot booths be positioned in a way that would preserve the secrecy of the ballot?		
• Is there adequate lighting for day and night time?		
• Is there suitable furniture (tables and chairs) available for all types of election for polling staff and those voters who may need to rest?		
• Can the official notices be clearly displayed, including the large-print version of the ballot paper(s)?		

Please complete template D1 indicating how the polling station should be laid out to accommodate all those entitled to be inside the polling station, taking into account access requirements for all voters, including those in wheelchairs, and demonstrating how the space should be used to ensure the most efficient flow of voters and the effective administration of the voting process.

Internal – The polling station(s) – D1

Identify the space and shape of the area available for polling.
Include the position of the door(s), any windows and how the
furniture and equipment should be laid out to ensure the effective
administration of and best possible access to the voting process.



Date reviewed	Officer initials

Part E – Comments from stakeholders during consultation

Comment	Name/organisation

Comment from (A)RO

Circular EC19/2010 – Appendix C

Changing the name of an electoral area in England and Wales

A local authority in England and Wales may change the name of any of its electoral area¹ by resolution. In order to do this, the local authority must take all reasonable steps to consult such persons as it considers appropriate on the proposed name or names. The resolution must be passed.²

- at a specially convened meeting with notice of its purpose, and
- by a majority of at least two thirds of the members voting on it.

If, however, the name of the electoral area is protected, the resolution may not be passed unless the Electoral Commission has first agreed to the proposed change.³

A local authority can change the name of a parish or community situated within the authority at the request of the parish/community council (or, where there is no parish/community council, at the request of a parish/community meeting).⁴ The local authority should consider such a request and make a resolution as to whether the name should be changed. If it is agreed to change the name of a parish/community, the law states that notice of the name change must be sent to the Secretary of State, the Director of Ordnance Survey and the Registrar General.⁵ The notice must also be published in the parish/community and elsewhere as the authority considers appropriate.

¹ “electoral area” means any area for which councillors are elected to the authority.

² Section 59, Local Government and Public in Health Act 2007.

³ Section 59(5), Local Government and Public in Health Act 2007.

⁴ Sections 75 and 76, Local Government Act 1972.

⁵ Section 75(2)(a) and 76(2)(a), Local Government Act 1972.