



Legal Counsel
The Electoral Commission
3 Bunhill Row
London
EC1Y 8YZ

22nd January 2020

Dear Sirs

Appeal Against Closure of Curbar Parish Polling Station.

Curbar Parish Council wishes to lodge a formal appeal against the proposed closure of Curbar Polling Station which is currently held in the Methodist Church Vestry in the centre of the village.

The council understands that the grounds for appeal are limited but believes that the 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 a polling station/ polling stations within a designated polling place. “

The current polling station meets very well the requirements of the electors being in the centre of the village, the majority of people can easily walk to the polling station and if not, there is ample on-street parking and a small car park behind the vestry is also available.

The current polling station is particularly convenient for the cluster of pensioner bungalows, owned by Dales Housing, which are immediately adjacent to the Methodist Church Vestry. Turning to the vestry itself, whilst small it is very functional; the door opens directly to the outside onto a short path leading directly to the highway.

DDDC document of current polling arrangements titled “Sensitive” states “poor disabled access - requires temporary ramp - very tight space” and “poor corridor access” and “kitchen in same room”. These are very much subjective judgements and some are not supported by the facts.

The access from the road into the vestry is smooth tarmac, there are no curbs or steps to negotiate. The reference to requiring a ramp is incorrect because there are no steps and the doorway has a rolling threshold specifically designed for wheelchairs and walkers. The reference to corridor must be an error because there is no corridor. The kitchen facilities are a very convenient amenity for polling staff, being in the same room, they are tucked away on one side and have no impact on the running of the polling station.

We should like to now compare the convenience of having a polling station in the village centre with the consequences of it moving to Calver Village Hall (CVH). Curbar village nestles on the hillside underneath Curbar Edge. The route to CVH is down a very steep hill known as Curbar Lane. If you go on Google Street view you will see how steep it is. It is completely unrealistic to expect elderly residents to walk up and down this hill to vote and many will simply not do both. This would be very disappointing as Curbar had an excellent turnout in the European Elections, with 111 electors casting their vote at the polling station along with 69 postal votes giving a total turnout of 69.5%. Unless they have access to a car there is no way an elderly or

disabled person can get to Calver Village Hall as there are no bus services to Curbar at any time.

However, the cost of running polling stations appears to have been the driving issue used by Derbyshire Dales District Council (DDDC) in carrying out this review. It would be grossly unfair if cost was not taken into account as part of the appeal even though it is not included in the grounds for appeal.

Curbar Polling Station costs are mid-range out of 89 parish councils.

DDDC received a report to the Council on 26 September 2019. Under item 13. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, PLACES AND STATIONS 2019, Appendix 3 listed a complete schedule of all the polling stations costs. Also, in the body of this report in paragraph 4 is a separate schedule listing the proposed changes and closures of polling stations which gives one of the reasons for closure being cost.

DDDC website page for REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, PLACES AND STATIONS 2019 includes a link to a table of the summary of cost per voter.

In the final report at the Council meeting on 21 November 2019 - item 12 REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, PLACES AND STATIONS 2019 – FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS - the recommendation to close Curbar Polling Station remained and the justification was cost.

DDDC finally published its decision on 16 January 2020 and the reasons for closure of Curbar Polling Station were stated as “Due to the Polling Place at Curbar being not fully accessible and the high elector cost, the polling station at Curbar has been deleted and electors have been re-directed to Calver”.

Whilst accepting the faculties in Curbar Polling Station are not completely compliant with the Equalities Act 2010, a balance needs to be struck between a building in Calver which is compliant and inaccessible to many, and the vestry in Curbar which is accessible to all. The law only requires reasonable adjustments to be made, but moving the polling station to CVH is unreasonable as potentially it will discriminate against many people.

We would ask that the Electoral Commission upholds our appeal and overturns the decision of DDDC to close Curbar Polling Station.

Yours sincerely

A rectangular area that has been redacted with a solid black fill, obscuring the signature of Sarah Nicholas.

Sarah Nicholas
Clerk to Curbar Parish Council