

21ST OCTOBER, 2025

REPORT NO. DEM2508

POLLING PLACE REVIEW – POLLING DISTRICT FB

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Following an electoral event, an evaluation of the accessibility of venues used as polling places is required to inform future planning and to ensure any barriers to voting are identified. After the Parliamentary election in July 2024, feedback showed that the polling place at [The Fox Inn, Chapel Lane in Fernhill](#) was not a suitable venue for use as a polling place for parliamentary elections as the premises did not have sufficient space for two polling stations, and there were some accessibility issues. For one of the polling stations inside The Fox Inn, there was very limited space for electors to manoeuvre. The Electoral Commission guidance states that it is essential that polling stations provide sufficient space for voting to take place.
- 1.2 The Elections Group recommended a review of the polling place for Fernhill FB polling district at its meeting on 29th April 2025 and agreed to consult on changing the polling station to the Ferns Primary Academy. Formally, Fernhill Primary School.
- 1.3 The Elections Group considered the findings of the public consultation at its meeting on 23rd September 2025 and recommended that the polling place for Fernhill FB be moved to The Ferns Primary School Academy, Field Road in Fernhill Ward, Farnborough.

2 REVIEW OF POLLING PLACE CONSULTATION

- 2.1 A survey was posted on the Rushmoor website on 2nd June 2025 inviting residents to provide feedback on the continued use of The Fox Inn as a polling place or moving the polling place to The Ferns Academy. The consultation remained open until 13th July 2025.
- 2.2 An email was sent to those electors in Fernhill FB polling district that we hold an email address for, inviting them to respond to the survey. Targeted social media posts were put out for the Fernhill FB area. Emails were sent to the Rushmoor Councillors in the Fernhill ward, the County Councillor for Farnborough North and the link to the website page was included in the councillor's weekly email newsletter.
- 2.3 An email was also sent to the Rushmoor Accessibility Action Group (RAAG) Chair inviting members of RAAG to contribute to the consultation.

3 SURVEY REPONSES

- 3.1 There were 72 responses received to the online consultation and of those 70 indicated that they lived in the Fernhill FB polling district.
- 3.2 Of those responses, 76.4% were supportive of continued use of The Fox Inn and 44.4% for moving the polling station to The Ferns Academy.
- 3.3 Comments on why The Fox Inn should not continue to be used included that it was not a suitable venue for a polling place due to parking issues, a busy road and lack of wheelchair accessibility. There was a specific comment that the use of a pub was discriminatory to certain groups in the community. Points made which supported the continued use of The Fox Inn were that it was easier to get to and more central than The Ferns Academy.
- 3.4 Comments on why The Ferns Academy should not be used as a polling station included schools should not be closed for the day, it was tucked away on a housing estate, was further away than The Fox Inn and poor signage. Other comments supporting the change to The Ferns Academy included the school is a better/safer venue and it has better access and parking.
- 3.5 Other alternative venues proposed in the consultation responses were All Saints Church Hall, Chapel Lane, Hamberley Neurocare, Fernhill Road and Railway Enthusiast Club, Hawley Lane.
- 3.6 The Chair of RAAG provided a comprehensive response to the consultation, which took account of feedback sought from individuals who lived in Fernhill Ward.
- 3.7 The RAAG response gave no positive feedback about the continued use of the The Fox Inn. The issues highlighted were that travelling to The Fox Inn was difficult due to the busy road and parking on the road was impossible. The car park at The Fox Inn was gravel making it difficult for people on crutches and people in wheelchairs and parking spaces were limited as used by customers. People feel intimidated by the customers outside of the pub and they were aware of one person who felt unable to go into the pub to vote. The narrow doorways at The Fox Inn made it difficult for wheelchair users and the space was tight to manoeuvre. The lighting in The Fox Inn was poor which does not support visually impaired and elderly voters.
- 3.8 The feedback in support of The Ferns Academy was positive from RAAG. Points were made that traffic was less busy on the roads approaching The Ferns Academy and there were better parking options. It was indicated that The Ferns Academy had a much safer feel which would be more welcoming for disabled voters. The room would be larger and lighter providing better accessibility for physically and visually impaired, neuro divergent and elderly voters.
- 3.9 The full reports on the online survey responses and from RAAG is available on request from the Elections Team.

4 MAIN ISSUES RAISED AND MITIGATION

- 4.1 The overall number of survey responses which were supportive of the continued use of The Fox Inn were greater than those received supporting a change to The Ferns Academy. The support was mainly due to the location of The Fox Inn and that it was easier to find and closer for those that responded.
- 4.2 There were a number of comments expressing concern that the school would have to close if the polling place changed to The Ferns Academy. However, this would not be an issue as the school would be able to remain open on polling day. The new Headteacher is supportive of the school being used as a polling place, and the room identified for the location of the polling station has access from the main front entrance and would segregate electors from the main school area which would enable the school to remain open.
- 4.3 Some of the respondents felt that The Ferns Academy was difficult to find as it is tucked away on a housing estate. However, a map showing the location of the polling place can be provided with poll cards and additional signage from the main road can be provided on polling day. Also to note is that that Ferns Academy has been used in past as a polling place before Covid, when it was changed to reduce impact on schools.
- 4.4 The use of All Saints Church has been considered in the previous years but is used as a nursery so is unavailable. Hamberley Neurocare is a private care home for people with complex neurological disorders so unlikely to be available for use as a polling place. The Railway Enthusiast Club is outside of the polling district so would not be used as an alternative to a venue within the polling district.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The Elections Act 2022 makes clear the duty to ensure accessibility for disabled voters and this should be given weight in considering the decision on polling places. Subject to Committee approval, the new polling station will be used for the forthcoming elections in May 2026.
- 5.2 **The Committee is recommended to agree that:**
 - 1) the polling place for Fernhill FB be moved to The Ferns Primary Academy;
 - 2) a map showing the location of The Ferns Academy be included with the poll card for the next election; and
 - 3) additional signage from the main road to The Ferns Academy be provided on polling day.

JILL SHUTTLEWORTH
CORPORATE MANAGER – DEMOCRACY

Contact: jill.shuttleworth@rushmoor.gov.uk