

APPENDIX 6

Manchester Disabled People's Access Group

Access Audits

Venue	Access	Notes
Ancoats & Clayton - Manchester Central Fire Station, Thompson Street, M4 5FP	Approach to the polling station	<p>The pedestrian entrance is approx 50 metres away from the fire station garage, down Thompson Street. I would be concerned for pedestrians who may walk into the path of emergency vehicles as they search for the main entrance. This entrance has a small gradient then 2 sets of double doors to go through. The doors pull towards you which is also likely to be difficult.</p> <p>The car park for voters, which has 1 accessible parking bay, can be found on Cassidy Close but this isn't obvious from the front of the fire station. It has an intercom controlled barrier which was raised at the time of visit. Next to the accessible parking bay is a two tier ramp which has a wall on one side and a handrail on the other. The rail ends before the top of the ramp and opens out on to a small step at the side. This could be hazardous as it is not marked well. The ramp leads to a narrow door which goes directly into the polling room, bypassing the need to use the reception area. This door is extremely narrow so I would be concerned about some wheelchair users being able to get through it however I was unable to test this as the window shutters were locked and we were unable to find a key.</p>
	Internal route to the area to be used as the polling station	If entering the building from the pedestrian entrance on Thompson Street, once through the 2 sets of double doors, there is a narrow door leading to the polling room down a short corridor. The width of this door and the corridor leaves insufficient turning space particularly for power chair users. As a manual wheelchair user, I also found it difficult to enter the room, catching my knuckles on the door frame.
	Room to be used as the polling station	Once inside, the room to be used for polling is a reasonable size with a small kitchen and an accessible toilet. Acoustics are acceptable and lighting in the room was good.
	Recommendations /comments	I would recommend that the fire station is not used as a polling station. This is primarily because of the narrow doors but also due to the way the handrail finishes before the end of the ramp, as described above.

Venue	Access	Notes
Ardwick - Victoria Baths Hathersage Road M13 0FE	Approach to the polling station	There is parking to the side and rear of the building. The entrance is up a long ramp that some may find steep.
	Internal route to the area to be used as the polling station	<p>The internal route to the polling room is down a wide corridor but dark corridor. The intention is that voters should enter the polling room by one route and leave by another but the route to leave has no ramp so would not be accessible to wheelchair users.</p> <p>At present the designated corridors and possible polling rooms could not accommodate any surge in voting numbers that there might be.</p>
	Room to be used as the polling station	At present, MCC is considering two rooms for polling. The nearer room is thought to be too small to accommodate voters and electoral officials. The second room is larger, although it would involve a longer internal walk.
	Recommendations /comments	<p>1: The corridors and both possible voting spaces will require extra lighting for people to see clearly where they are going and also lighting above the actual polling booths and ballot boxes.</p> <p>2: The Victoria Baths building is not heated within the areas proposed to be used as a polling station. Consequently if there is ever an election in the winter months, MCC should provide safe temporary heating in the polling room.</p>

Venue	Access	Notes
Burnage - Westcroft Community Centre , 24-26 Westcroft Road, M20 6EF.	Approach to the polling station	There is parking on the road and a small number of parking places in the grounds of the building. One space has a wheelchair symbol on the ground but the space is too small. Planters are also placed next to that space, making it impossible to open the car doors wide enough. There is a dropped kerb to a narrow pavement/route to the entrance but this is blocked by a locked gate which is not visible from the car park. Consequently, wheelchair users who have parked in the car park would have to wheel along the road to get into the centre. There is a ramp to the entrance door but the surface is uneven and in need of repair. A handrail is only available on one side of the ramp and is not highlighted. There is a step to the entrance door which is not highlighted and could be a hazard for visually impaired people. The entrance door has a clear colour contrasted handle but is heavy to open from the inside.
	Internal route to the area to be used as the polling station	There is a small lobby on entering the building and two doors to enter the reception area. This is bright and spacious with a small number of seats and access to the kitchen and an accessible toilet. Other toilets are upstairs. There is one large open plan room visible from the reception area which would be used for the polling station.
	Room to be used as the polling station	The room is large and airy with plenty of light. There is an accessible fire exit but this opens on to the small pavement from the car park which is currently locked - see section 1 above for more detail.
	Recommendations /comments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There needs to be a larger accessible parking space marked out to Design for Access 2 standards in the car park area and policed to ensure that it is only available to people with a disabled parking badge. 2. The planters currently place next to the parking space should be moved. 3. Maintenance and improvements to the road surface need to be carried out at the start of the ramp. 4. Highlighting is required on the nosing of the step to the entrance using colour contrast. 5. It would also be safer to highlight the handrail on the ramp. 6. The front door was heavy so it would help if the door springs were altered to make it easier for people to use. 7. A larger sign to the accessible toilet would be helpful. 8. So the car park can be used safely It is important to unlock the gate which currently blocks the pedestrian route from the car park.

Venue	Access	Notes
Cheetham - The Cheetwood Centre, 41 Allesley Drive, M7 4YE	Approach to the polling station	<p>Large car park on two sides of building, level tarmac, well lit throughout by floodlights. One officially designated and marked disabled parking space close to entrance, but lots of space in general. Step-free wide gentle slope to front entrance from car park.</p> <p>Another step-free flagged slope from side car park to level path around building with good lighting. Specific door to right of main entrance will be designated for polling use and will be held open on the day. There is a 2 cm lip over the threshold of this door.</p>
	Internal route to the area to be used as the polling station	From the designated entrance door, access to the polling area is via a wide, short corridor to double doors into a sports hall where polling will take place. The Corridor has a hard smooth floor, is very well-lit, warm with good colour contrasts wall/floor and walls/doors. The double doors will be held open on the day. Along the corridor there is a full set of toilets including an accessible toilet which is clean, warm and well-lit.
	Room to be used as the polling station	Half of a big sports hall will be used. The only drawback is the strong echo. Because of the nature of the room, with hard floor and walls and a high ceiling this inevitable. However I don't see this as a major issue as you are not going for a lecture, talking, lecturing and so on.
	Recommendations /comments	None, other than this venue would make a good polling station.

Venue	Access	Notes
Didsbury East - Didsbury Baptist Church, School Lane & Beaver Road, M20 6SX	Approach to the polling station	There is not much on-street parking available near the polling station but the Metrolink is across the road. The church car park has a few spaces but none of these are marked properly. The pavement outside the church on Beaver Road is very uneven, poorly maintained and could be hazardous. There are dips in the pavement with difficult gradients on either side where a dropped kerb has been created at the stepped entrance to the church on Beaver Road. However the entrance on School Lane has level access. The main entrance has a small push button for the automatic doors, which might be difficult for some people to locate. When the door is open, there is sufficient space for wheelchair users to enter.
	Internal route to the area to be used as the polling station	The route to the polling room is easily navigated. It takes visitors passed the accessible toilet and other toilets and the kitchen into the area to be used by the polling station. All corridors and rooms are wide and clear with no obstructions, they are well lit and have plenty of natural light.
	Room to be used as the polling station	The room identified for the polling station is very light and airy with flexible seating and is accessed from all parts of the church building.
	Recommendations /comments	The pavement outside the church on Beaver Road requires improvement to create a level surface without potholes as it could be hazardous for pedestrians and wheelchair users.

Venue	Access	Notes
Longsight - The Methodist International House, 68 Daisy Bank Road, M14 5QP	Approach to the polling station	There is a small car park for the centre which has one accessible parking bay. The pavement leading up to the car park entrance is poorly maintained with uneven cracked surfaces. There is a dropped kerb immediately outside the car park entrance with a steep gradient which could present a challenge for some manual wheelchair users. To access the building entrance, you have to go across the car park, which does not have a pedestrian route so safety for visually impaired people could be a concern. There is a two tiered ramp which leads into the main entrance of the centre. The ramp is perfectly accessible. however once at the top there are several concrete steps immediately to the left, leading back onto the car park. There are no visible signs of the steps or texture changes so this could present a safety risk.
	Internal route to the area to be used as the polling station	The two proposed rooms are the first rooms on the main corridor. This end of the corridor is quite a small area with a number of chairs which appears to be used as a waiting area. The area is congested and care should be taken to ensure that there is a clear walkway leading to both rooms, which is not obstructed by chairs or tables. We were advised of an accessible toilet which is in the building on the main corridor down three steps. There is a lift down to this level, however at the time of our visit, the lift was out of order.
	Room to be used as the polling station	We were not able to assess the 2 proposed rooms as we were advised that the centre decided just before our visit that they do not want to host elections at this time.
	Recommendations /comments	Ideally a clear pedestrian route should be established. The steps to the side of the top of the ramp need to be highlighted to reduce the risk of falling down them. Reduce the furniture just outside the proposed rooms to reduce the hazard to visually impaired people. Ensure the lift is working so that disabled people can make use of the accessible toilet.

Venue	Access	Notes
Miles Platting & Newton Heath - Stirling Centre, Scotland Hall Road, M40 2RF	Approach to the polling station	<p>The centre is at the bottom of Scotland Hall Road which terminates at Scotland Hall Park. The street is quite narrow at this point so not many cars can park directly outside the centre. From this point voters would have to enter the building via a pavement which is very uneven and has a number of potholes. This would be difficult to manoeuvre in a wheelchair and could be a trip hazard for those with limited mobility or visual impairment.</p> <p>There is a car park at the side of the centre but this can only be accessed via a security gate controlled by keypad entry and it is a long route round to the front of the building where people would go into the centre to vote.</p>
	Internal route to the area to be used as the polling station	This is flat, wide and obstacle free. There is also a good accessible toilet.
	Room to be used as the polling station	Voting would be carried out in the main hall of the Stirling Centre. It is accessed through a door that is wide enough for a wheelchair to get through and is light enough to be opened easily. Once in the hall it is flat, on one level, well lit and very spacious. A fire exit is located at the back of the hall. The door has level access out onto a flat well maintained path round to the side of the building and on to the car park mentioned above.
	Recommendations /comments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I would say that the building itself is very suitable to be used as a polling station. However, my concerns are the access from outside and the parking provision. I would recommend that the pavement surface should be resurfaced and the kerb lowered to remove the trip hazard and allow better wheelchair access. 2. Despite the route and distance to the entrance of the centre to be used by voters, I hope people could be given the option of using the car park if they would like. To do that the gate to the car park would have to be left open during polling hours and places designated for visitors with impairments who need a wider space than standard.

Venue	Access	Notes
Miles Platting & Newton Heath - St Georges Community Centre, Livesey Street, M40 7NR	Approach to the polling station	Direct access to the community centre is hampered due to a lack of dropped curbs and rough ground between the curbs. The ground immediately outside the venue is also uneven. There could be an alternate route into the venue via the playground however the gate may not be wide enough for scooters or larger wheelchairs.
	Internal route to the area to be used as the polling station	The door into the building is quite heavy however there is smooth surfaces good natural lighting and the doorways are of ample width. There is quite short distance to travel as the building is compact.
	Room to be used as the polling station	It was unclear at the time of the visit which of 2 rooms would be used for polling so both were looked at. The decor had good contrast throughout. Only comment would be that the doors are a little heavy.
	Recommendations	The building is easy to manoeuvre throughout. The only real problem is with the lack of dropped kerbs outside the building. However, access into the Centre is available via more than one route, as described above.