

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Constitutional and Nomination Committee – 18 November 2015

Subject: Polling Districts and Polling Places: proposed changes to the current scheme

Report of: Chief Executive

Summary

To propose changes to the current scheme of polling places for three polling districts in Hulme, Gorton North and Moston wards.

Recommendations

1. To approve the changes to the current scheme set out in Appendix 1.
 2. To adopt the changes to the scheme for both parliamentary and local elections.
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Wards Affected: Hulme, Gorton North and Moston wards.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

It is anticipated that the costs of the proposed changes to polling place arrangements will be neutral, because the costs of the new polling place designations will not be greater than the costs of existing arrangements.

Financial Consequences – Capital

None

Equal Opportunities

Yes

Risk Management

No

Legal Considerations

Yes – see report

Equal Opportunities Implications

The City Council has a statutory responsibility to seek to ensure that all electors in the local authority area have reasonable facilities for voting which are practicable in the circumstances and to ensure that in so far as is reasonable and practicable that the polling places are accessible to electors who are disabled. The accessibility of buildings and location of polling places has been a key factor in developing the proposals. The City Council will ensure reasonable adjustments are made to polling places where required and that polling station staff are provided with the appropriate training.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Final Proposals for changes to polling places.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 As part of preparations for the local elections taking place on 5 May 2016, work has been undertaken by officers to ensure that polling places have the suitable access, space and facilities for electors. This work has been based on feedback and approaches from local councillors and comments received from candidates and agents, polling station inspectors and other senior officers who worked on 7 May 2015 local and parliamentary general elections. Some premises themselves have also been in contact regarding the future use of their buildings. This preparatory work has also taken into consideration that a referendum on EU membership will be taking place in the United Kingdom before the end of 2017 and therefore could take place during 2016.

2.0 The designation of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

- 2.1 The designation of the city's polling districts and places is the responsibility of the Council and the relevant functions are delegated to the Constitutional and Nomination Committee in the Scheme of Delegation. This includes the Council's duties under the Representation of the People Act 1983 to divide constituencies into polling districts and also the power to divide wards into polling districts at local government elections.
- 2.2 On occasion, it may be necessary to change the designation of a polling place outside the statutory review process or meeting of the Constitutional and Nomination Committee. This usually occurs as a result of premises being closed or unexpectedly becoming unavailable, often at short notice. Authority is delegated to the Chief Executive to make, where necessary alterations to the designation of any polling place in such circumstances, in consultation with the group leader, ward Councillors and the Chair of Constitutional and Nomination Committee, as agreed by Council at its January 2014 meeting.
- 2.3 The allocation of polling stations within polling places is not a Council function and is the responsibility of the Returning Officer.
- 2.4 The Electoral Commission advises that the polling districts for UK parliamentary and local government elections should always be the same, and it therefore follows that any changes to parliamentary polling arrangements should be conducted simultaneously with one of local government arrangements. Consequently, it is recommended that polling districts and polling places adopted by the Council for parliamentary elections should also be effective for local government elections.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 A statutory review of polling districts and polling places was undertaken at the end of 2013 concluding at the 2014. As a result, Full Council approved a new scheme on 29 January 2014, which came into effect when the 17 February 2014 electoral register was published. It is a legal requirement that these reviews take place on a five yearly cycle. A small number of changes to the scheme were made as part of preparations for the parliamentary and general

elections held on 7 May 2015, which came into effect when the Electoral Register was published on 1 December 2014.

- 3.2 The Parliamentary Boundary Review is using the Electoral Register published on 1 December 2015 as the basis of the Review. In advance of this, the Boundary Commission for England has recommended that because preparatory work is already underway on the Review, no changes should be made to the current polling district boundaries when the Register is published on 1 December 2015. This recommendation has therefore been taken into consideration when undertaking this work.

4.0 Polling Place/Station Visits

- 4.1 Officers have undertaken visits to the relevant polling places to assess their suitability and to evaluate any alternatives which may exist.

- 4.2 When assessing the suitability of polling places an assessment of the following issues were taken into account:

- the proximity of the polling place to populated areas
- accessibility
- signage
- management and configuration of the polling station
- capacity of polling places to accommodate more than one polling station if necessary
- the number of electors within the district
- recent development and population changes

- 4.3 The Committee is asked to consider the following proposals for the three new polling place designations as set out in sections 5 to 7 below.

5. Manchester Central Constituency

- 5.1 Changes are proposed for two polling places within the Manchester Central Constituency, one in Hulme ward and one in Moston ward.

5.1.1 Hulme ward

It is proposed that St. Wilfrid's Enterprise Centre on Royce Road is designated as the polling place for HUB polling district, in place of Church of the Ascension on Stretford Road. The Enterprise Centre has a suitable room for use as a polling station and offers off road parking for electors. It also has the advantage of being more centrally located within the polling district, than the current polling place and so will be more convenient for the majority of electors.

5.1.2 Moston ward

It is proposed that the Moston Leisure Centre on Broadway, also known as Broadway Baths, is designated as the polling place for MOD polling district

replacing New Moston Primary School. The proposed polling place is located on the west side of Broadway, is more centrally located within the polling district and is easier to access for the majority of electors. The Leisure Centre is well known to the local community and is located close to other amenities.

6. Manchester Gorton Constituency

6.1 Changes are proposed for one polling place within the Manchester Gorton Constituency in Gorton North ward.

6.1.1 Gorton North

St. Paul's with St. John's Church Hall on Abbey Hey Lane, the current polling place in GNE polling district is no longer available as a result of a recent change in circumstances at the church. Given the lack of suitable alternative premises within the polling district, it is proposed that Abbey Hey Primary School, the polling place for the adjoining polling district GND, is also designated as the polling place for GNE. The School is accessible to electors in both polling districts given it is located on the Abbey Hey Lane, which runs from GNE through GND towards the district centre. This arrangement will be revisited next year, so that consideration can be given to re-designating the church in GNE if it becomes available again for use as polling place.

7. Blackley and Broughton, Manchester Withington and Wythenshawe and Sale East Constituencies

7.1 No changes are proposed for any wards within the Blackley and Broughton, Manchester Withington or Wythenshawe and Sale East Constituencies.

8. Improvements to existing polling places and polling district boundary changes

8.1 Officers have also made a wider number of improvements to current arrangements at polling places, which has included moving to bigger or more accessible rooms. These changes have been agreed with local Councillors where relevant and do not require a change in existing polling place designations.

8.2 As a result of the proposals in this report and the wider work undertaken, it has not been necessary to propose any changes to polling district boundaries.

9. Financial implications

9.1 It is anticipated that the costs of the proposed changes to polling place arrangements will be neutral, because the costs of the new polling place designations will not be greater than the costs of existing arrangements.

10. Recommendations

10.1 Recommendations to the Committee appear at the front of the report.

APPENDIX 1 - FINAL PROPOSALS FOR CHANGES TO POLLING PLACES						
CURRENT POLLING DISTRICT	NEW POLLING DISTRICT	ELECTORATE AT NOVEMBER 2015 (Voters in Person)	NEW ELECTORATE (Voters in Person)	EFFECT OF CHANGE TO POLLING DISTRICT	CURRENT POLLING PLACE	PROPOSED POLLING PLACE
Manchester Central Constituency						
Hulme						
HUB	No change	1,867	No change	Not relevant	Church of the Ascension, Stretford Road	St. Wildrid's Enterprise Centre, Royce Road
Moston						
MOD	No change	1,408	No change	Not relevant	New Moston Primary School, Moston Lane East	Broadway Leisure Centre, Broadway
Manchester Gorton Constituency						
Gorton North						
GNE	No change	1,535	No change	Not relevant	St Paul's and St John's Church Hall, Abbey Hey Lane	Abbey Hey Primary School, Abbey Hey Lane