
**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Constitutional and Nomination Committee – 25 January 2017

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 four polling districts in Cheetham, City Centre, and Gorton South wards.

Recommendations

1. To approve the changes to the current scheme as set out in paragraphs 4.1.1, 5.1.1 and 6.1.1 below.
 2. To adopt the changes to the scheme for both parliamentary and local elections.
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Wards Affected: Cheetham, City Centre, and Gorton South.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

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

Financial Consequences – Capital

None

Equal Opportunities	Risk Management	Legal Considerations
Yes	No	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:

None

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 As part of preparations for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Mayoral Election taking place on 4 May 2017, 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 practical considerations relating to the availability of polling places in the current scheme, feedback from local councillors and comments received polling station inspectors and other senior officers who worked on both the 5 May 2016 local elections and the 23 June 2016 Referendum on the United Kingdom's Membership of the European Union.

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, or if additional unscheduled polls take place. 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 Context and Polling Place/Station Visits

- 3.1 A small number of changes to the scheme are required as part of the preparations for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Mayoral Election which is due to be held on the 4 May 2017. It should be noted that a Statutory Review of polling districts and polling places will take place in advance of local elections for all councillors (all out elections) taking place in May 2018. This Review will take account of the Local Government Boundary Commission

for England's (LGBCE) final recommendations on new electoral arrangements for Manchester City Council, which are expected to become law in July 2017.

3.2 Officers have undertaken visits to the possible polling places in the polling districts where changes to the current scheme are required, to assess their suitability and to evaluate any alternatives which may exist.

3.3 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

3.4 The Committee is asked to consider the following proposals for the four new polling place designations as set out in sections 4 to 6 below.

4. BLACKLEY AND BROUGHTON CONSTITUENCY

4.1 Changes are proposed for one polling place within the Blackley and Broughton Constituency, in the Cheetham Ward.

4.1.1 Cheetham ward – polling district CTH

For the referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union, St Chad's RC Church on Cheetham Hill Road was designated as the polling place for polling district CTH. This change was undertaken as The Park Inn Hotel on Cheetham Hill Road, which was previously the designated polling place for this polling district, did not have any rooms available on the day of poll given its short notice.

For the GM Mayoral election and future polls, it is proposed that The Park Inn Hotel, Cheetham Hill Road, is re-designated as the polling place for CTH. The Park Inn Hotel is a fully accessible building and has a number of different rooms which can be used for a polling station. This includes a large conference room which was successfully used to host a double polling station at the local elections in May 2016. Park Inn therefore provides more accessible, larger and better quality accommodation compared to St Chad's RC Church. In addition, Park Inn is located closer to the majority of the electors in the polling district.

This change of polling station will be communicated to electors through their poll card and additional signage in the vicinity, including directions on St Chad's RC Church, as the previously used building.

5. MANCHESTER CENTRAL CONSTITUENCY

5.1 Changes are proposed for one polling place within the Manchester Central Constituency in the City Centre ward.

5.1.1 City Centre ward – polling district CCC

At the Referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union, the Media Hub, which is located on the ground floor of the Town Hall Extension was designated as the polling place for the CCC polling district.

In preparation for the GM Mayoral election and future polls, it is proposed that the entirety of the Central Reference Library/Town Hall Extension complex is designated as the polling place. This will provide the flexibility for the Returning Officer to identify the most appropriate and suitable space within the complex for the polling station for each poll, based on its particular requirements. This will also provide a level of continuity for electors who will be able to enter the polling place primarily using entrances on the St. Peter's Square side of the complex, as they did for the Referendum.

For the GM Mayoral election, the Returning Officers staff have currently identified the Performance Space in Central Library, which is located near the cafe on the ground floor as the most suitable location available. This provides a suitable space accessible space on the ground floor of the building.

There will be extensive signage around the whole of the complex to signpost electors to the exact location of the polling station, the details of which will also be on their poll cards.

6. MANCHESTER GORTON CONSTITUENCY

6.1 Changes are proposed for two polling places within the Manchester Gorton Constituency in the Gorton South Ward

6.1.1 Gorton South ward – polling districts GSD and GSG

The former Levenshulme Library on Cromwell Grove is currently the designated polling place for the GSD polling district. This building is currently not in use and an alternative polling place therefore needs to be designated for this polling district for the forthcoming GM Mayoral election and other polls.

St Peter's Church on the corner of Stockport Road and Barlow Road is located within polling district GSD. This building is currently designated as the polling place for the adjacent GSG polling district and only has sufficient suitable space to accommodate a single polling station.

Officers have identified that Levenshulme Inspire Community Centre, 747 Stockport Road, which is within the border of the GSG polling district, as a possible polling place. This is a fully accessible building which has appropriate

rooms and facilities to accommodate a polling station. It is therefore proposed that:

- The polling place for GSD is designated as St Peter's Church, Stockport Road/Barlow Road
- The polling place for GSG is designated as Levenshulme Inspire Community Centre, 747 Stockport Road

In practice, this means that the electors in GSD who have previously used Levenshulme Library will now use St Peter's Church. The electors from GSG who have previously used St Peter's Church will be moved to use a new polling place Levenshulme Inspire Community Centre which is located approximately 150 meters down Stockport Road, and is well known to the local community.

Electors in both polling districts will be contacted to advise them of the new arrangements in advance of polling day. Polling station information will also be included on their poll cards. On polling day itself, additional signage will be displayed at the polling stations including signage on the former Levenshulme Library building directing electors to vote at St Peter's Church. Where necessary, staff will direct any voters from GSG polling district who come to vote at St Peter's to their new polling place at Levenshulme Inspire.

7. MANCHESTER WITHINGTON AND WYTHENSHAW AND SALE EAST CONSTITUENCIES

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

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 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.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 Recommendations to the Committee appear at the front of the report.