

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Constitutional and Nomination Committee – 2 February 2022

Subject: Proposed Redesignation of Polling Places for 5 May 2022
Elections

Report of: The Chief Executive

Summary

To propose changes to the Council's current scheme of polling places for the following wards:

Blackley and Broughton Constituency

Crumpsall (polling district 1CRG),
Cheetham (polling district 1CTD),
Harpurhey (polling districts 1HAA,1HAG),
Higher Blackley (polling district 1HBC),

Manchester Central Constituency

Piccadilly (polling districts 2PYC/2PYE),

Manchester Gorton Constituency

Fallowfield (polling district 3FAD, 3FAE),
Rusholme (polling district 3RUG),

Wythenshawe and Sale East Constituency

Sharston (5SHB) and
Woodhouse Park (polling district 5WPA).

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the proposed changes to the current polling place scheme, as set out in Sections 4 to 8 of the report.
2. Consider the update on the current position regarding outstanding re-designations for polling places referred to in this report, but not resolved at the time of publication, that will be brought to the meeting and approve any further proposed changes to the polling place scheme set out in that update.
3. Agree that any remaining or subsequent polling place re-designations required ahead of 5 May 2022 elections, which cannot be reported to the Committee on 2 February 2022, shall be made by the Chief Executive under the delegated authority that allows her to make, where necessary, alterations to the designation of any polling place prior to the next full review in

consultation with ward councillors, group leaders and the Chair of Constitutional and Nomination Committee.

Wards Affected:

Crumpsall, Cheetham, Harpurhey, Higher Blackley, Piccadilly, Fallowfield, Rusholme, Sharston and Woodhouse Park.

Alignment to the Our Manchester Strategy Outcomes (if applicable)

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The Our Manchester Strategy sets out the vision for the city to 2025. Local elections provide the opportunity for eligible Manchester residents to elect Councillors to represent them and therefore to influence how the strategy is delivered. The Council's scheme of polling districts and polling places is a key part of the city's governance arrangements. Changes of the scheme are required ahead of 5 May 2022 Local Elections.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

It is anticipated that the costs of the proposed changes to polling place arrangements will increase by approximately £1000 due to new designations of polling places and higher rental charges for premises largely related to Covid.

Financial Consequences – Capital None

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Background documents (available for public inspection): None

Appendices: None

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Coronavirus pandemic impacted on a number of designated polling places last year making them unavailable for use at the 2021 Local and Greater Manchester Combined Authority Mayoral Elections
- 1.2 As part of the preparations for the local government elections taking place on the 5 May 2022, work has been undertaken by officers to ensure that polling places are available for use and 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 and feedback from stakeholders.
- 1.3 It is apparent that the Coronavirus pandemic continues to have an impact on the availability and suitability of polling places, as arrangements are put in place to deliver the May 2022 Local Elections. Last year the Council needed to re-designate a total of 12 polling places. This year the number of polling places which require re-designation including those where there continues to be Covid related complexities stands at 10. Of these, 4 are returning to their pre-Coronavirus polling places given that they are now available. Further details are outlined in the report.
- 1.4 Building on the successful work undertaken last year the Elections Team continues to work closely with the Education Directorate, schools and the Council's health and safety team to undertake risk assessments and put in place arrangements to enable designated schools to be used as Polling Places wherever possible.

2. The designation of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

- 2.1 The designation of the city's polling districts and polling places within them 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 the power to divide wards into polling districts at local elections. The Electoral Commission advises that polling districts for UK parliamentary and local government elections should always be the same. It therefore follows that any review of parliamentary polling arrangements should be conducted simultaneously with one of local government arrangements.
- 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 an unscheduled poll takes 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 group leaders, ward Councillors and the Chair of Constitutional and Nomination Committee, as agreed by Council at its 27 November 2019 meeting

2.3 The allocation of polling stations within polling places is not a Council function and is the responsibility of the Returning Officer.

3. Context and Polling Place visits

3.1 Officers have undertaken work to establish which polling places are now available for use again, where they were not unavailable at the 2021 Elections. Also, to identify alternatives for those polling places which still remain unavailable permanently either as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic or other issues, including identifying and assessing alternatives which may exist.

3.2 When assessing the suitability of polling places an assessment of the following issues has been taken into account:

- the proximity of the polling place to populated areas and relevant electors
- accessibility
- signage
- the management and configuration of the polling station, still taking into account Covid safety requirements
- the capacity of polling places to accommodate more than one polling station if necessary, taking into account Covid safety requirements
- the number of electors within the district

3.3 The Committee is asked to consider the following proposals for the polling place re-designations as set out in sections 4 to 8 below.

4. Blackley and Broughton Constituency

4.1 Changes are required for five polling places (in 1CRF and 1CRG, 1CTD, 1HAA, 1HAG and 1HBC polling districts) in the Crumpsall and Harpurhey wards, within the Blackley and Broughton Constituency.

4.1.1 Crumpsall Ward – 1CRF and 1CRG

The designated polling place for 1CRG is currently Cravenwood Academy which is an existing polling place for neighbouring 1CRF. It had been hoped this year to identify a permanent replacement for the previous polling place (the now demolished GMT Whitehouse Club) for 1CRG within the relevant polling district.

At the elections last year, the polling place was located on the grounds of the school due to building work taking place on site. The school have confirmed that the building work is still ongoing and is unlikely to be completed in time for the May Elections.

To avoid having to use a temporary structure again at the school, alternatives within 1CRF and 1CRG polling districts are being investigated and an update will be brought to the Committee meeting.

4.1.2 Cheetham Ward – 1CTD

Electors in 1CTD currently vote at St Chad's RC Primary School.

Due to ongoing challenges regarding the use of St Chads a re-designation is required in this polling district

For future polls it is proposed that voters in 1CTD vote at the Welcome Centre on Brentfield Avenue. This building is centrally located within the polling district and is well known to the local community.

4.1.3 Harpurhey Ward – 1HAA

The designated polling place for 1HAA is currently North City Library.

This was a new polling place for the 2021 polls located in neighbouring polling district 1HAB, which was required because Mount Carmel RC Primary School could not be used due to Covid related complexities.

It is proposed that voters in 1HAA return to voting at Mount Carmel RC Primary School.

4.1.4 Harpurhey Ward – 1HAG

The designated polling place for 1HAG is also currently North City Library.

At the last election Factory Youth Zone was only open on a restricted basis and therefore could not be used as a polling station. However, these premises are now available again and so it can be re-designated for future use.

It is proposed that voters in 1HAG return to voting at Factory Youth Zone.

4.1.5 Higher Blackley Ward – 1HBC

The designated polling place for 1HBC is currently E-Act Blackley Academy.

Due to ongoing challenges regarding the use of E-Act Blackley Academy a re-designation is required in this polling district.

It is proposed that voters in 1HBC vote at The Scout Hut, located at the junction of Mirfield Road and Ashdown Avenue Road. The Scout Hut is accessible and centrally located within the polling district.

5. Manchester Central Constituency

5.1 Changes are required for one polling place (2PYC/2PYE polling districts) in and Piccadilly ward, within the Manchester Central Constituency.

5.1.1 Piccadilly – 2PYC/2PYE

The designated polling place for 2PYC/2PYE is Central Hall. This was anticipated to be a temporary measure given the designated polling place for these polling districts was AC Marriott Hotel.

This was designated following the review in 2019, but has never actually been used following postponement of the elections in 2020 and because the hotel remained closed due to Covid in 2021.

Since this time further development in the area has meant that other opportunities are now available, and it is therefore proposed that the designated polling place for 2PYC/2PYE, is Hampton by Hilton, Manchester Northern Quarter. Hampton by Hilton is located on the 2PYE side of Rochdale Road, this polling district has 1510 electors compared with 517 in 2PYC.

This is in the process of being arranged and an update will be brought to the Committee meeting

6. Manchester Gorton Constituency

6.1 Changes are proposed for two polling places (3FAD/3FAE, and 3RUG) in the Fallowfield and Rusholme wards, within the Manchester Gorton Constituency.

6.1.1 Fallowfield – 3FAD/3FAE

For future polls it is proposed that voters in 3FAD/3FAE vote at the Unsworth Park.

At the last Election, electors voted at Union Chapel in 3FAB, as Owens Park was not available as it was being used as a Testing and Vaccination centre.

Whilst contact has been made with Manchester University about returning to Owens Park, this building is now closed and due to be demolished as part of wider development of the site

Due to the nature of the Owens Park campus, extra care is needed in picking a suitable location as the new polling place needs to be easy to find for the non-student electors in this polling district. Of all the buildings visited, Unsworth Park on Chancellors Way is the easiest to find and is also fully accessible.

6.1.2 Rusholme – 3RUG

For future polls it is proposed that voters in 3RUG also vote at the Unsworth Park.

Similar to above (Fallowfield 3FAD/3FAE) at the last Election, electors in 3RUG also voted at Union Chapel as Owens Park was not available as it was being used as a Testing and Vaccination centre.

Whilst contact has been made with Manchester University about returning to Owens Park, this building is now closed and due to be demolished as part of wider development of the site.

This polling district only contains students from the Unsworth Park halls of residence.

7. Manchester Withington Constituency

- 7.1 No changes are currently proposed for any polling places in Manchester Withington Constituency.

8. Wythenshawe and Sale East Constituency

- 8.1 Changes are required for two polling places (5SHB and 5WPA) in the Sharston and Woodhouse Park wards, within the Wythenshawe and Sale East Constituency.

8.1.1 Sharston – 5SHB

The designated polling place for 5SHB is currently Brownley Green Baptist Church. It is proposed that voters in 5SHB return to voting at Wythenshawe Campus Manchester College.

At the last election Wythenshawe Campus Manchester College could not accommodate a polling place because it was a Covid Testing site for staff and students. Contact has since been made with Wythenshawe Campus Manchester College, and they have confirmed that they would be available for use on election day 2022.

8.1.2 Woodhouse Park – 5WPA

The designated polling place for 5WPA is currently St Mark URC.

It is proposed that voters in 5WPA return to voting at Woodhouse Park Lifestyle Centre.

At the last election Woodhouse Park Lifestyle Centre was not available for hire due to it being used as Covid-19 testing site. The Centre has now confirmed they are available for use as a polling place in the future.

9. Polling districts where polling places are still to be confirmed.

- 9.1 An update will be brought to the Committee meeting for those polling places included in the report, where alternatives are in the process of being identified and agreed.

10. Communication to electors

- 10.1 Changes to all polling places will be communicated to electors via their poll card. In addition, on polling day, signs directing electors to their new polling place will be attached to the polling places previously used where this is possible. This approach has been successfully used for a number of years. A polling place finder will be live on the Council's website for the election period. In addition, the wider elections comms campaign will also stress the importance of electors checking their poll card to confirm polling station details.

11. Recommendations

- 11.1 Recommendations to the Committee appear at the front of this report.