

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Constitutional and Nomination Committee – 1 February 2023

Subject: Proposed Redesignation of Polling Places for 4 May 2023
Elections

Report of: The Chief Executive

Summary or Purpose of the report

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

Blackley and Broughton Constituency
Crumpsall (polling districts 1CRB, 1CRF)

Manchester Central Constituency
Ancoats & Beswick (polling district 2ABE),
Hulme (polling districts 2HUB, 2HUF, 2HUG)
Piccadilly (polling districts 2PYB, 2PYF)

Manchester Gorton Constituency
Gorton & Abbey Hey (polling districts 3GAB, 3GAG)
Levenshulme (polling district 3LEB),
Longsight (polling districts 3LOB, 3LOD, 3LOF)
Whalley Range (polling district 3WRD)

Manchester Withington Constituency
Chorlton (polling district 4CLB)
Chorlton Park (polling district 4CPA)
Didsbury West (polling district 4DWB)

Wythenshawe and Sale East Constituency
Baguley (polling district 5BAF)
Northenden (polling district 5NOA)

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 4 May 2023 elections, which cannot be reported to the Committee on 1 February 2023, 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 the Constitutional and Nomination Committee.

Wards Affected:

Crumpsall, Ancoats & Beswick, Hulme, Piccadilly, Gorton & Abbey Hey, Levenshulme, Longsight, Whalley Range, Chorlton, Chorlton Park, Didsbury West, Baguley and Northenden.

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	<p>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.</p> <p>The Council’s scheme of polling districts and polling places is a key part of the city’s governance arrangements.</p> <p>Changes of the scheme are required ahead of 4 May 2023 Local Elections.</p>
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 £5000 due to new designations, and the hiring of polling places and the reduction in schools being used.

Financial Consequences – Capital

None

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

Appendices:

None

1. Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the preparations for the local government elections taking place on the 4 May 2023, 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.
- 1.2 Last year the Council needed to re-designate a total of 10 polling places. This year the number of polling places requiring redesignation currently stands at 19. Of these, two are returning to an established polling place which was not available last year due to building work, and Gorton Library remains a polling place, but in a new location. Further details are outlined in the report.
- 1.3 Building on the successful work undertaken last year the Elections Team continues to work closely with the Education Directorate (as and when required), schools, community and faith organisations 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 the 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 2022 Elections. They have also identified alternatives for those polling places which are still unavailable for a variety of reasons (such as building work and remaining concerns with the Covid-19 virus), including identifying and assessing alternatives which may exist.
- 3.2 When assessing the suitability of polling places an assessment of the following issues needs to be taken fully into account:
- the proximity of the polling place to populated areas and relevant electors
 - accessibility
 - signage
 - the management and configuration of the polling station
 - the capacity of polling places to accommodate more than one polling station if necessary
 - 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 two polling places in the Crumpsall ward, within the Blackley and Broughton Constituency (polling districts 1CRB and 1CRF).

4.1.1 Crumpsall Ward – 1CRB

The designated polling place for polling district 1CRB is currently Crumpsall Lane Primary School. Details have been received highlighting concerns in obtaining the presence of a keyholder to open and close the building on the day of the election.

Due to this staffing situation at Crumpsall Lane Primary School, officers have decided to mitigate any risk by moving across the road to Crumpsall Methodist Church on Lansdowne Road. While the Church is not located within the polling district, it is on the edge of the neighbouring polling district, and there is minimum risk of voter confusion given that it is a short distance from the school.

4.1.2 Crumpsall Ward – 1CRF

The designated place for polling district 1CRF is currently St Anne's Parish Hall. This was designated as the polling place for the 5 May 2022 elections due to the usual polling place at Cravenwood Academy having ongoing building work.

This building work is now complete, so it is proposed that electors in 1CRF can return to vote at Cravenwood Academy.

5. Manchester Central Constituency

5.1 Changes are required for one polling place (2ABE polling district) in the Ancoats and Beswick ward, and for two polling places (2HUB and 2HUF/2HUG) in the Hulme ward, and one polling place (2PYB/2PYF) in the Piccadilly ward, within the Manchester Central Constituency.

5.1.1 Ancoats and Beswick – 2ABE

Victoria Square is currently the designated polling place for electors in polling district 2ABE. Due to the increase in the electorate for this polling district a new polling station was felt to be necessary as the community room at Victoria Square could not accommodate a triple polling station, which may be necessary for busier elections.

Officers have agreed with the owners of the Halle St Michaels building that it will become the proposed place for electors in polling district 2ABE. The building is just across the road from Victoria Square, and it is a much larger space.

5.1.2 Hulme – 2HUB

St Wilfrid's Enterprise Centre is the designated polling place for electors in polling district 2HUB. The Enterprise Centre now has a permanent hirer of the space and there are no other available spaces in the building.

Officers have agreed with the owners of the Ascension Church on Stretford Road for it to become the proposed place for electors in polling district 2HUB. It is close to the previous polling place, and it is still located within the Polling District.

5.1.3 Hulme – 2HUF / 2HUG

St George's Garden residential development is currently the designated polling place for electors in 2HUF / 2HUG. However, this site is no longer available for hire.

Officers have agreed with Urban Splash to return to the polling place, a meeting room in its site at Timber Wharf, 16 – 22 Worsley Street. This was not available in 2022 due to issues around the Covid-19 pandemic, but it is now available again for use.

5.1.4 Piccadilly – 2PYB / 2PYF

The Performance Space at Central Library is currently the designated polling place for electors in 2PYB / 2PYF, as well as for electors in the neighbouring polling district 2DGC, where the Central Library is located.

An opportunity was presented to the elections team to hire a space in the Portland Street Townhouse, which is managed by the same company that manages another city centre hotel location also used as a polling place. This allows electors in 2PYB / 2PYF to have their own dedicated polling station again. Portland Street Townhouse is in the 2PYB polling district.

6. Manchester Gorton Constituency

6.1 Changes are required for one polling place (3WRD) in the Whalley Range ward, one polling place (3LEB) within the Levenshulme ward, three polling places (3LOB, 3LOD and 3LOF) within the Longsight ward, two polling places (3GAB and 3GAG) within the Gorton and Abbey Hey ward. These are all within the Manchester Gorton Constituency.

6.1.1 Whalley Range – 3WRD

Since the closure of the English Martyrs Parish Centre this polling district has not had its own dedicated polling station. St Margaret's C of E Primary School, in a neighbouring polling district, is currently the designated polling place but it has been a very busy station and a new polling place for 3WRD was required.

Officers have agreed with the owners of the Gita Bhavan Hindu Temple for it to be the polling place for 3WRD. The Temple Hall is a large space with good parking facilities.

6.1.2 Levenshulme – 3LEB

Crowfoot Park Primary School is currently the designated polling place for electors in polling district 3LEB. Building work has meant access to the room used in the election is currently no longer secure for its use as a polling place.

Officers are proposing that Jain Community Centre on Leedale Street is to be used as the proposed polling place for electors in 3LEB. This is in the process of being arranged and an update will be brought to the Committee meeting.

6.1.3 Longsight – 3LOB/3LOD

St Agnes CE Primary School is currently the designated polling place used for the 5 May 2022 Local Elections. Due to building work taking place, St Agnes will not be available for use in 2023. The school has always traditionally been a busy polling station given electors from two polling districts have used it.

To reduce congestion in these polling districts, officers have agreed with the owners of the Jabez Group on Slade Lane that the community centre – KSS Community Hub, will be the proposed polling place for 3LOB. They are keen to serve the local community and the hall is a really good size.

In 3LOD officers have identified Rushford Park as the proposed polling place, also on Slade Lane. The modern events hall contained at this sports venue is also a really good size and again the club is keen to be involved with the local community.

6.1.4 Longsight – 3LOF

The designated polling place for electors in 3LOF is Old Hall Drive Academy. Due to a recent flood, the space previously used within the building is no

longer available for use, and due to limited space within the rest of the building there is no capacity for use as a polling place.

Alternative options within 3LOF polling district are being investigated and an update will be brought to the Committee meeting

6.1.5 Gorton and Abbey Hey – 3GAB

The designated polling place for electors in polling district 3GAB is Gorton Library. The original building on Cambert Lane has now closed and in December 2022 the library reopened within the new Gorton Hub building on Garratt Way. The proposed polling place for the 4 May 2023 local elections will remain at the library, but in its new location, which remains in the same polling district.

6.1.6 Gorton and Abbey Hey – 3GAG

The designated polling place for electors in 3GAG is Old Hall Drive Academy. (also designated polling place for Longsight – 3LOF as detailed in 6.1.4). As this venue is no longer available for use, officers have been in contact with the owners of the Parish Hall at Sacred Heart & St Francis RC Church on Levenshulme Road and have agreed for it to be the proposed polling place for 3GAG.

7. Manchester Withington Constituency

7.1 Changes are required for one polling place (4CLB) in Chorlton ward, one polling place (4DWB) in the Didsbury West ward, and one (4CPA), in the Chorlton Park ward within the Manchester Withington Constituency.

7.1.1 Chorlton – 4CLB

Chorlton Library is the designated polling place for electors in 4CLB. Information has been received confirming that Chorlton Library will be closed whilst refurbishment work is undertaken, making it unavailable for the elections in May 2023.

Alternative options within 4CLB polling district are being investigated and an update will be brought to the Committee meeting.

7.1.2 Didsbury West – 4DWB

The designated polling place for electors in 4DWB is the Manchester College Fielden Campus. This site has now been sold.

Officers have been in contact with the owners of Didsbury Mosque and agreed that it will be the proposed polling place for electors in 4DWB. Didsbury Mosque is located across the road from the Fielden Campus, and they are supportive of accommodating a polling station.

7.1.3 Chorlton Park – 4CPA / 4CPD

The designated polling place for electors in polling district 4CPA is Loreto High School, but it has informed the Electoral Services Unit of extensive building work reducing available space at the school.

After consultation with local councillors, it is proposed that electors from 4CPA will vote at Chorlton Park Primary School, which is the designated polling place for 4CPD. It is hoped that this is a temporary designation and Loreto High School can return to being the designated polling place for future elections, once building work has been completed.

8. Wythenshawe and Sale East Constituency

8.1 Changes are required for two polling places (5BAF and 5NOA) in the Baguley ward and the Northenden ward, within the Wythenshawe and Sale East Constituency.

8.1.1 Baguley – 5BAF

The designated polling place for electors in polling district 5BAF used to be the Word of Life Community Church, but it closed two years ago, and electors used Newell Green Primary School as an alternative in 2022.

The Word of Life Community Church has now been taken over by a new group and is known as the Church of Restoration, Anglican Missionary Congregations (AMC). Officers have agreed with the owners for it to return as the proposed polling place for electors in this polling district.

8.1.2 Northenden – 5NOA

The closure of the Northenden Campus, which has been the designated polling place for the last two years, through a temporary structure, has meant for 2023 a new location is needed for electors in polling district 5NOA.

Officers have agreed with the owners to use the Parish Hall at St Michaels & All Angels Church, Orton Road in Northenden as a proposed polling place for electors in 5NOA. It is hoped this change will create a permanent polling station in this polling district as in the last few years the location has had to be changed. The Parish Hall is centrally located within the polling district.

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 communications 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.