

Update to the Resource and Governance Scrutiny Committee and the Constitution and Nomination Committee on the report provided on 22 June 2023 and 12 July 2023

Local Elections 2023 action – Developing an Elections Outreach Pack and establishing an Elections Act Forum

- 1.1 The Electoral Services Unit presented a report to the Resource and Governance Scrutiny Committee meeting of 22 June 2023 and the Constitution and Nomination Committee meeting of 12 July 2023 to provide an update on the Elections Act and an overview of its impact at the 4 May 2023 local election. An action requested from those meetings was for the Electoral Services Unit to develop an engagement campaign throughout the summer as part of consultations on the polling district review (which has subsequently been delayed until summer 2024) and the annual canvass. This would include engaging with the likes of MACC and the Our Manchester VSCE Fund, the universities, Age Friendly Manchester, Breakthrough UK to reach disabled groups, the Council's Neighbourhoods service, homelessness services and the care and veterans' sectors to reach a wide range of communities and groups. Members also requested that further information on this be shared with councillors to distribute at events.
- 1.2 Over the summer, direct engagement has been made with a wide range of community sectoral groups (including those noted above) to discuss what type of information they may need on the Elections Act and elections in general. A detailed spreadsheet of contacts has also been gathered with support from the Communications Team and the EDU Team. More detailed engagement has also taken place with the Manchester Disabled People's Forum, with Age Friendly Manchester and senior Neighbourhoods and Communications officers. The Elections Team are presenting on the 29 August to the Corporate EDI Leaders Group to encourage internal dissemination and support external outreach of election core messages. All of this activity has assisted us in developing the type of material that would be useful in an Elections Outreach pack.
- 1.3 In conjunction with this, the Elections Team are discussing wider engagement activity with the Strategic Elections Lead Officer at GMCA. This will help complement activity for the GM Mayoral Elections and the UK general election, at which 4 of the 6 constituencies in Manchester will require close cooperation with Oldham, Rochdale, Tameside and Trafford Councils.
- 1.4 Following discussion with this wide range of stakeholders, an Elections Act / Outreach Forum is planned for 10 October 2023. This will launch a Manchester Elections Outreach Pack, seek support for the dissemination of ongoing core communications around elections in 2023/4, and allow stakeholders to feedback any needs and requirements they may have in supporting such activity.
- 1.5 In addition, the Elections Team are in contact with the chairs and coordinators of the CHEM Sounding Boards to present the Outreach Pack to them and seek their support for similar ongoing dissemination of elections materials. These meetings are also being planned for October and November.
- 1.6 The Elections Outreach Pack will include factsheets on the following areas:
 - The Elections Act – explaining existing and new duties of the Act.
 - Voter ID – explaining the types of ID required at a polling station and how to apply for a Voter Authentication Certificate.

- Accessibility and elections – explaining the equipment and materials to support disabled voters and those voters where English is not their first language.
- Equality issues and elections – explaining the support that is available to different parts of the community to support them in voting.
- Polling stations – explaining how voters find their local polling station, what the role of the Presiding Officer and Poll Clerks is and what type of support is offered at each station.
- Registration – explaining how voters can register for an election.
- New Parliamentary constituencies – explaining changes that will be in place for the next UK general election and the new constituencies in Manchester.

- 1.7 There will also be a generic PowerPoint presentation available on request to use for local groups. The factsheets will be placed on the 'Elections and Voting' section of the 'Council and Democracy' part of the Council's website. They will also be disseminated pro-actively to the groups in the Elections Act Forum. Further discussion is taking place with the Council's Neighbourhoods Teams to consider ways these materials can be actively used and disseminated through the many forums they engage with throughout 2024, and particularly before the combined local / mayoral election in May 2024 and the upcoming general election, whenever that is held.
- 1.8 All elected members will receive the Elections Outreach Pack in October 2023 at the same time as the Forum is held. Members are encouraged to disseminate it through their own local networks.
- 1.9 Whilst this engagement has taken place, the annual canvass continues throughout the summer and where possible, communication messages have been going out to voters to encourage electoral registration and to be aware of the new duties of the Elections Act, such as signing up for a Voter Authentication Certificate if required.
- 1.10 Whilst this activity, and the work undertaken within the annual canvass, is aligned to help our residents in making voting as accessible and straightforward as possible, they also aid effort to increase turnouts for the forthcoming local and mayoral elections and future polls going forward. Appendix 1 and 2 show turnouts for both elections in recent years.
- 1.11 Further updates and progress will be provided to either committee as requested.

Appendix 1

Recent turnouts in Manchester City Council elections

Year	Turnout
2021	29.40%
2022	24.98%
2023	25.49%

Appendix 2

Recent turnouts in Greater Manchester Combined Authority Mayoral elections

Year	Turnout
2017	28.90%
2021	34.74%