

## Manchester City Council Report for Resolution

**Report to:** Constitutional and Nomination Committee – 31 January 2024

**Subject:** Proposed Redesignation of Polling Places ahead of the 2 May 2024 Local and GM Mayoral Elections

**Report of:** The Chief Executive

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### 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 (in the future UK Parliamentary election these wards will be within the Blackley & Middleton South constituency)**

Cheetham (polling district 1CTD)  
Moston (polling districts 2MOC / 2 MOJ)

**Manchester Central Constituency**

Piccadilly (polling district 2PYB / 2PYF)

**Manchester Gorton Constituency (in the future UK Parliamentary election these wards will be in the Gorton & Denton constituency)**

Burnage (polling district 4BUC)  
Longsight (polling districts 3LOB / 3LOD)

**Manchester Withington Constituency**

Didsbury East (polling districts 4DEJ)  
Didsbury West (polling district 4DWA / 4DWB)

**Wythenshawe and Sale East Constituency**

Sharston (polling district 5SHD)  
Woodhouse Park (polling district 5WPB)

### 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, which 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 2 May 2024 elections, which cannot be reported to the Committee on 31 January 2024, 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:** Burnage, Cheetham, Didsbury East, Didsbury West, Longsight, Moston, Piccadilly, 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	<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 2 May 2024 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 these proposed changes to polling place arrangements will save the Council £195 due to new designations and combining some polling stations.

**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 and GM mayoral elections taking place on the 2 May 2024, officers have undertaken work 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 18 polling places. This year the number of polling places requiring redesignation currently stands at 9. Elections Officers are in discussion with several other building owners and there may be a number of additional changes that will be tabled prior to the meeting. Of these changes, some are due to issues with the availability of schools and others are due to feedback from the public, local councillors, and the building owners. Each of the changes have been discussed with local ward councillors, who have indicated their support for the change. 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, 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 available for use, where they were not available at the 2023 Local Council Elections. They have also identified alternatives for those polling places which are still unavailable for a variety of reasons (such as building work, issues with school space, flooding etc), 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,
  - suitable and visual signage,
  - the management and configuration of the polling station,
  - the capacity of polling places to accommodate more than one polling station, if necessary, particularly with the slightly longer voting process as voters must produce a form of photo ID,
  - 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 one polling place in the Cheetham ward and one polling place in the Moston ward, within the existing Blackley and Broughton Constituency.

#### **4.1.1 Cheetham Ward – 1CTD**

The designated polling place for polling district 1CTD is currently the Cheetham Hill Welcome Centre.

Following a request and discussions with local ward councillors, consideration has been made by officers to return the polling station back to St Chad's RC Primary School on Balmfield Street, which was unavailable for use in 2023. The polling station would be in the school's community room, and the school are keen to host it again following discussion with officers.

Officers propose that electors in 1CTD revert to St Chad's RC Primary School for the May 2024 local and mayoral combined election.

#### **4.1.2 Moston Ward - 2MOC / 2MOJ**

The designated place for polling district 2MOC / 2MOJ is currently St Mary's Church of England Primary School.

The school have asked if they could withdraw their school to be used as a polling station due to its impact on wider school attendance. Officers have

visited staff at FC United of Manchester at Broadhurst Park on Lightbowne Road, which is located close to the school and who have indicated they would be keen for their community facilities to be used on polling day. Their function room is a bright and modern space. Whilst it is on the first floor, the venue has a lift, and the Elections Team will provide security to direct electors to the polling station.

Officers are proposing that FC United of Manchester be used as the polling place for 2MOC / 2MOJ for the May 2024 local and mayoral combined election.

## **5. Manchester Central Constituency**

5.1 Changes are proposed for one polling place (2PYB / 2PYF) in the Piccadilly ward. This is within the Manchester Central Constituency.

### **5.1.1 Piccadilly - 2PYB / 2PYF**

The designated place for polling places 2PYB / 2PYF is the Portland Street Townhouse Hotel.

Due to feedback on the location from polling station staff and some electors, officers are proposing to change the polling place to a meeting room in the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel at One Piccadilly Place, close to Piccadilly Train Station. This is in the process of being arranged and an update will be brought to the meeting.

## **6. Manchester Gorton Constituency**

6.1 Changes are proposed for one polling place (3LOB / 3LOD) in the Longsight ward. This is within the Manchester Gorton Constituency.

### **6.1.1 Burnage – 4BUC**

The designated place for polling places 4BUC is a temporary polling station at the car park in front of the Albion Inn on Burnage Lane.

The pub has been sold for residential accommodation and work to change its use is expected imminently. This could impact on using the car park. Officers are in discussion with other sites and local councillors on finding an alternative polling place and an update will be brought to the meeting.

### **6.1.2 Longsight – 3LOB / 3LOD**

The designated places for polling places 3LOB / 3LOD are currently Rushford Park and the KSS Community Hub.

These buildings were used in the 2023 local elections as the existing polling station, St Agnes CE Primary School, was unavailable due to building work. That building work has now been completed, and local councillors have

requested that the polling station reverts back to St Agnes Primary School, who are happy to host a station. The school is in a central and well-known location for the two polling districts.

Officers are proposing that electors in 3LOB / 3LOD revert back to St Agnes CE Primary School for the May 2024 local and mayoral combined election.

## **7. Manchester Withington Constituency**

7.1 Changes are proposed for a polling place (4DEJ) in the Didsbury East ward, within the Manchester Withington Constituency.

### **7.1.2 Didsbury East – 4 DEF / 4DEJ**

The designated polling station for polling place 4DEJ is Parrs Wood High School.

The room allocated for the polling station at Parrs Wood High School has become unsuitable due to accessibility issues at this location. Unfortunately, as this is a small polling district, officers have been unable to find a suitable replacement within the polling district itself. Officers see the most effective decision is to move the polling station to a neighbouring polling district, until we can undertake a detailed polling district review later this year and split the 4DEJ polling district along the lines it was previously. East Didsbury Methodist Church in polling district 4DEF has enough space to accommodate a second polling station within it.

Officers are proposing that the polling place for electors in 4DEJ will be East Didsbury Methodist Church (an existing polling place for electors located in polling district 4DEF) for the May 2024 local and mayoral combined election.

### **7.1.3 Didsbury West – 4DWA / 4DWB**

The designated place for polling district 4DWA is currently Didsbury United Reformed Church.

The church has recently been sold and is not available for use as a polling station. Officers are in discussion with the owners of Didsbury Mosque, which is the location for polling district 4DWB, to become a double polling station for both polling districts. An update will be brought to the meeting.

## **8. Wythenshawe and Sale East Constituency**

8.1 Changes are required for one polling place (5SHD) in the Sharston ward, and one polling place (5WPB) in the Woodhouse Park ward. These are within the Wythenshawe and Sale East Constituency.

### **8.1.1 Sharston – 5SHD**

The designated place for polling district 5SHD is currently the Haveley Hey Community School.

The school's governing body have asked to withdraw the school to be used as a polling station due to logistical issues in closing a part of the school that then impacts on other parts of the school. Following discussion with local councillors, officers have visited St John's Catholic Club on Greenwood Road.

The club are happy to accommodate a polling station within their venue and they are offering use of the main function room, which is large and accessible.

Officers are proposing that the polling place for 5SHD will be St John's Catholic Club for the May 2024 local and mayoral combined election.

#### 8.1.2 Woodhouse Park – 5WPB

The designated place for polling district 5WPB is currently Manchester Enterprise Academy.

As the school is now at full capacity, elections officers have struggled at times to find a suitable and accessible space within the school to act as a polling station and that at the same time would also meet the schools' needs.

Following discussions with the school, officers believe that the school can no longer provide a suitable space for electors to vote.

Having reviewed the situation in this polling district, officers believe electors will be better served by moving the polling station to Wythenshawe Forum.

The Forum is keen to accommodate a polling station. There is good access to the room, which is fully accessible, and the building is well used by the local community. The room being used on polling day is accessed from the main foyer of the Forum and as such will be easily signposted for electors entering from either side of the forum.

Officers are proposing that the polling place for 5WPB will be Manchester Forum for the May 2024 local and mayoral combined election.

### **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, and other polling places being pursued, 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.

- 10.2 A polling place finder <https://www.wheredoivote.co.uk> 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.