

28 November 2023

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Sarah Cheek</b> ☎ 282271
<b>Title</b>	<b>Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	All		

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request that the Committee recommends to Full Council that it approves the revised schedule of polling districts and polling places within the City of Colchester area.

## 2. Recommended Decisions

- 2.1 To recommend to Full Council that the revised schedule of polling places set out in Appendix A and the explanation of changes contained at Appendix B of this report be approved.
- 2.2 To delegate to the Returning Officer authority to approve an alternative polling place if any polling place becomes unavailable or found to be unsuitable in the run up to an election.

## 3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 Consideration has been given to the suitability, accessibility, of each polling place and station and, in particular the situation of the polling station for ease and convenience to the elector.

## 4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The alternative to the proposed changes is to keep the status quo until a full review of polling districts and places can be undertaken following the Electoral Review in 2026.

## 5. Background Information

- 5.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Electoral Administration Act 2013 require each local authority to undertake periodic reviews of polling districts and polling places for UK Parliamentary elections every five years. In accordance with these Acts, this review had to be completed by 31 January 2025. The last compulsory review took place in 2020.
- 5.2 Polling districts are geographical areas created by sub-dividing the Colchester electoral area into smaller parts for voting. Each polling district must be allocated a polling place which is a building or area in which the polling stations will be situated.

- 5.3 Although the statutory requirement is to review the polling districts and polling places used at parliamentary elections, they will also be used at Local Government elections and any future referendums. Polling district boundaries will therefore not cross existing Parliamentary constituency or Local Government ward boundaries.
- 5.4 However, due to the current electoral review being undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission England and their advice that it would not be appropriate to undertake a full review of polling districts at this stage the Council has not undertaken a full review of the current polling districts within the City area.
- 5.5 Following the publication by the Local Government Boundary Commission England of its final new warding pattern recommendations in 2026 a full review of the polling districts and places will be undertaken.
- 5.6 Whilst not carrying out a full review the opportunity has been taken to undertake a consultation on polling stations to ensure that the Council meets its obligation to keep these under regular review.
- 5.7 In response to the consultation and taking into account voter accessibility and venue availability the following changes to polling places have been made and which are included in the details in Appendix A and Appendix B:

**Berechurch:** polling place expanded to enable flexibility to use the C3 Centre as an alternative polling station to Plum Hall

**Greenstead:** to formalise the change of polling station from St John Ambulance to the Hythe Community Centre

**Lexden and Braiswick:** polling station changed to the Colchester Croquet Club from Kingswood Hoe School

**Marks Tey and Layer:** changed polling place to Birch and formalised the polling station from St Mary's Church Layer Breton to Birch Memorial Hall.

**New Town and Christchurch:** polling station changed to the Pegasus Club from Hamilton Road School

## **6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

- 6.1 As far as is reasonable and practicable the polling places are accessible. Where new polling places are being used, the accessibility has been assessed as being suitable.
- 6.2 Polling places will be kept under constant review and equality and accessibility considerations will form part of the process.

## **7. Strategic Plan implications**

- 7.1 Electoral arrangements form part of the Council's governance arrangements which in turn forms parts of the Council's commitment to customer excellence which underpins the Council's Strategic Plan.

## **8. Consultation**

- 8.1 Councillors and the public were consulted as part of a consultation which ran from 16 October 2023 until 6 November 2023 and the comments received are attached at Appendix C to this report.

## **9. Publicity Considerations**

- 9.1 During the period of consultation, maps, current polling districts, elector numbers, and any other relevant information was available for public inspection on the Council's website.
- 9.2 The final schedule of polling districts and polling places will be published on the Council's website and will be published in the run up to an election.

## **10. Health and Safety and Risk Management Implications**

- 10.1.1 Each polling station is risk assessed for Health and Safety purposes.

## **11. Financial and Environmental and Sustainability Implications**

- 11.1 None identified.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix A – Proposed schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places.
- Appendix B – Explanation of changes to Polling Places and Polling Stations.
- Appendix C – Responses received during public consultation.