

28 November 2023

Report of	Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer	Author	Sarah Cheek ☎ 282271
Title	Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places		
Wards affected	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.

Appendix A



Proposed Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places

Dated: Monday 16th October with revision on Wednesday 15th November

Appendix A - Proposed Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places

Polling District	Polling Place	Polling Station	Status
Berechurch Ward			
AA Berechurch	Berechurch & Rainsborowe Road Polling Districts	C3 Centre	Under Review
AB Willows & Monkwick	Willows & Monkwick and Barnhall Polling Districts	Thomas Lord Audley School	Status Quo
AC Mersea Road	St Margaret's Church Hall Stansted Road	St Margaret's Church Hall Stansted Road	Status Quo
AD Blackheath	Polling District of Blackheath	Orchard Baptist Church Blackheath	Status Quo
EC Cherry Trees	Sexton Close	Cherry Trees Community Hall	Status Quo
Castle Ward			
AE Jumbo	Quaker Meeting House	Quaker Meeting House	Status Quo
AF Castle	Castle Methodist Church	Castle Methodist Church	Status Quo
AG Riverside	The Celtic Rose Centre	The Celtic Rose Centre	Status Quo
AH Cowdray Avenue	Belle Vue Social Club	Belle Vue Social Club	Status Quo
Greenstead Ward			
BH Hawthorn Avenue	Greenstead Community Centre	Greenstead Community Centre	Status Quo
BI Avon Way	Greenstead Ward	Forest Road Meeting Hall	Status Quo
BJ Greenstead Road	Hythe Community Centre, Ventura Drive	Hythe Community Centre	Amend
BM Longridge	Hazelmere Junior School	Hazelmere Junior School	Status Quo
Highwoods Ward			
AN East Highwoods	Highwoods Ward	St Johns & Highwoods Community Centre	Status Quo
AO West Highwoods	Jack Andrews Drive	The Ark Church, Highwoods	Status Quo
AP Myland East	Jack Andrews Drive	The Ark Church, Highwoods	Status Quo

Appendix A - Proposed Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places

Polling District	Polling Place	Polling Station	Proposal
Lexden & Braiswick Ward			
AQ Trafalgar	Lexden & Braiswick and Prettygate Wards	Praiseway Church Straight Road	Status Quo
AS East Lexden	East Lexden Polling District	Colchester Croquet Club	Amend
AT Braiswick	Woods Bowling Pavilion	Woods Bowling Pavilion	Status Quo
EJ Aldham	Polling District of Aldham Village	Aldham Village Hall	Status Quo
ET Eight Ash Green	Eight Ash Green Village Hall	Eight Ash Green Village Hall	Status Quo
EU West Bergholt	Orpen Memorial Hall	Orpen Memorial Hall	Status Quo
Marks Tey & Layer Ward			
GA Birch	The Parish of Birch	Birch Memorial Hall	Status Quo
GB Layer De La Haye	Queen Elizabeth Hall New Cut	Queen Elizabeth Hall Annexe	Status Quo
GC Layer Marney	Layer Marney Polling District	Layer Marney Tower	Status Quo
GD Layer Breton	The Parish of Birch	Birch Memorial Hall	Amend
GE Messing	The Parish of Messing	Messing Village Hall	Status Quo
GF Inworth	The Parishes of Messing & Inworth	Messing Village Hall	Status Quo
GG Gt Wigborough	Peldon and the Wigboroughs Polling Districts	Peldon & Wigboroughs Community Hall	Status Quo
GH Lt Wigborough	Peldon and the Wigboroughs Polling Districts	Peldon & Wigboroughs Community Hall	Status Quo
GI Salcott	The Parish of Salcott	Salcott Old School Hall	Status Quo
GJ Virley	The Parish of Salcott	Salcott Old School Hall	Status Quo
GL West Stanway	Marks Tey & Layer Ward	Stanway Village Hall	Status Quo
GM Copford	The Parish of Copford	Copford Village Hall	Status Quo
GN Easthorpe	The Parish of Easthorpe	Easthorpe Church Hall	Status Quo
GO Marks Tey	Polling District of Marks Tey	Marks Tey Parish Hall	Status Quo

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Polling District	Polling Place	Polling Station	Proposal
Mersea & Pyefleet Ward			
EO Abberton	Abberton & Langenhoe Polling District	Abberton & Langenhoe Village Hall	Status Quo
EP East Mersea	The Parish of East Mersea	East Mersea Village Hall	Status Quo
EQ Fingringhoe	The Parish of Fingringhoe	Fingringhoe Village Hall	Status Quo
ER Langenhoe	The Parish of Abberton	Abberton & Langenhoe Village Hall	Status Quo
ES Peldon	Peldon Polling District	Peldon & Wigborough Community Hall	Status Quo
EV West Mersea	The Parish of West Mersea	The Mersea Centre	Status Quo
Mile End Ward			
AU Bergholt Road	Mile End Road	Myland Parish Halls	Status Quo
AV Mile End Road	Mile End Road	Myland Parish Halls	Status Quo
AW Turner Road	Highwoods Country Park	Highwoods Country Park Visitor Centre	Status Quo
New Town & Christ Church Ward			
AI Christchurch	Christ Church	Christ Church Hall	Status Quo
AJ Hamilton Road	Hamilton Road Polling District	The Pegasus Club	Amend
AX St Johns Green	YMCA Magdalene Street	YMCA Community Hall	Status Quo
AZ Canterbury	St Stephens Church Canterbury Road	St Stephens Church Centre	Status Quo
Old Heath & The Hythe Ward			
AK Scarletts	Winsley Square Polling District	Worsnop House	Status Quo
AL Barnhall	Abbots Community Hall Ladbroke Drive	Abbots Community Hall	Status Quo
AM Old Heath	Old Heath Community Centre D'Arcy Road	Old Heath Community Centre	Status Quo
AY Hythe	Hythe Community Centre, Ventura Drive	Hythe Community Centre	Status Quo
BA Winsley Square	Worsnop House Old Heath Road	Worsnop House	Status Quo
ED Rowhedge	The Parish of Rowhedge	Rowhedge Village Hall	Status Quo

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Polling District	Polling Place	Polling Station	Proposal
Prettygate Ward			
AR Home Farm	Prettygate Ward	Coco Care (Oldstone Church) Hall	Status Quo
BB East Prettygate	Plume Avenue United Reform Church	Plume Avenue United Reform Church	Status Quo
BC West Prettygate	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints	Status Quo
BD James Carter	Straight Road Community Centre	Straight Road Community Centre	Status Quo
Rural North Ward			
EA Dedham	The Parish of Dedham	The Assembly Rooms High Street	Status Quo
EB Langham	The Parish of Langham	Langham Community Centre	Status Quo
EE Boxted	The Parish of Boxted	Boxted Village Hall	Status Quo
EF Fordham	The Parish of Fordham	Fordham Village Hall	Status Quo
EG Great Horkesley	The Parish of Great Horkesley	Great Horkesley New Village Hall	Status Quo
EH Little Horkesley	The Parish of Little Horkesley	Little Horkesley Village Hall	Status Quo
EI Wormingford	The Parish of Wormingford	Wormingford Village Hall	Status Quo
EK Chappel	The Parish of Chappel & Wakes Colne	Chappel & Wakes Colne Village Hall	Status Quo
EL Great Tey	The Parish of Great Tey	Great Tey Village Hall	Status Quo
EM Mount Bures	The Parish of Mount Bures	Mount Bures Village Hall	Status Quo
EN Wakes Colne	The Parish of Chappel & Wakes Colne	Chappel & Wakes Colne Village Hall	Status Quo
Shrub End Ward			
BE Rainsborowe Road	Shrub End Community & Sports Centre	Shrub End Community & Sports Centre	Status Quo
BF Shrub End	Shrub End Polling District	Paxman Academy	Status Quo
BG Lordswood Road	The Community Hall (Musket Club)	The Community Hall (Musket Club)	Status Quo

Appendix A - Proposed Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places

Polling District	Polling Place	Polling Station	Proposal
St John & St Annes Ward			
BK St Annes	St Annes Church Compton Road	St Annes Church	Status Quo
BL Churnwood	Oak Tree Community Centre	Oak Tree Community Centre	Status Quo
BN Ipswich Road	St Johns Church Community Centre	St Johns Church Community Centre	Status Quo
BO Parsons Heath	Friars Grove Primary School	Friars Grove Primary School	Status Quo
Stanway Ward			
GP Stanway	Stanway Village Hall	Stanway Village Hall	Status Quo
Tiptree Ward			
GK Tiptree Grove	Tiptree Grove Polling District	Tiptree United Reformed Church	Status Quo
GQ Tiptree Church	St Luke's Church	St Luke's Church Extension	Status Quo
GR Tiptree Heath	Tiptree Heath Primary School	Tiptree Heath Primary School	Status Quo
GS Tiptree Maypole	Tiptree Ward	St Luke's Church Extension	Status Quo
Wivenhoe Ward			
EW University	University of Essex	Student Centre University of Essex	Status Quo
EX Wivenhoe Cross	Broomgrove School	Broomgrove School	Status Quo
EY Wivenhoe Quay	William Loveless Hall	William Loveless Hall	Status Quo
EZ Broome Grove	Broomgrove School	Broomgrove School	Status Quo

Appendix B - Explanation of Proposed Changes to Polling Places and Polling Stations
Appendix B

Below is an explanation of any proposed changes to Polling Places and Polling Stations

Polling District	AA – Berechurch
Ward	Berechurch
Current Polling Station	Plum Hall Common Room, Nancy Smith Close, Berechurch Road, CO2 7QU
Background	<p>We currently use the Colchester Borough Homes site Plum Hall. With the polling station located in the Common Room. This is a small room, similar in size to the typical front room. The space of the room is limited and there is no where for the furniture to be stored elsewhere. Accessibility is less than ideal as the normal entry point goes through the communal front door of the flats, with voters then passing through a corridor on to which individual residential flat front doors open onto. There is a door out onto the patio garden but, this is not level access and it is not accessible. Parking is limited as it is a residential site. The polling station is at the northern tip of the polling district, whilst accessible from the main road it is not central.</p>
Recommendation	<p>We are pleased that we have found an alternate venue, we recommend that the C3 Centre is used as the polling station instead. This community church centred on the former garrison building by Abbey Field Medical Centre. As it serves the community and is on the same site as the medical centre it will be well known to the local community. The site is simply huge so space will not be an issue inside the building. It is accessible with level access and electric outer doors. It is also accessible in terms of being on the main road and having plenty of dedicated car parking spaces. Whilst the site is outside the confines of the polling district and the ward, the site is easily accessible for the bulk of the electorate due to the geography of the district.</p> <p>However, this polling station is still under review due to the cost of the premises. The Electoral Services Team hope to negotiate.</p> <p>The recommendation for the polling place therefore includes the polling district itself and the district that the C3 is in – to meet the requirements of the polling place definition.</p>
Proposed Polling Place	Berechurch and Rainsborowe Road Polling Districts
Proposed Polling Station	The C3 Centre, Ypres Road, Colchester CO2 7FD

Appendix B - Explanation of Proposed Changes to Polling Places and Polling Stations

Polling District	AJ - Hamilton Road
Ward	New Town & Christ Church
Current Polling Station	Hamilton Primary School, Constantine Road, CO3 3GB
Background	Whilst it is not always possible or practical, as far as possible, we avoid using any school as a polling station.
Recommendation	We are pleased that we have found an alternate venue, we recommend that the Pegasus Club on Abbey Fields is used as the polling station going forward. This venue is equally central to the bulk of the electorate within the district. It meets the main criteria in being able to offer adequate space, accessibility, facilities, and parking.
Proposed Polling Place	Hamilton Road Polling District
Proposed Polling Station	Pegasus Club, Circular Road North, CO2 7SU

Polling District	AS – East Lexden
Ward	Lexden & Braiswick
Current Polling Station	Kingswode Hoe School, 8 Sussex Road, Colchester CO3 3QJ
Background	Whilst it is not always possible or practical, as far as possible, we avoid using any school as a polling station. We had previously used Kingswode Hoe School and for one election we also used St Mary's Girls School.
Recommendation	We are pleased that we have found an alternate venue, The Colchester Croquet Club which we have used as a polling station successfully in recent years. Whilst there are some elements of the site that may not be ideal these are negated by other factors. There is not level access to the walkway that leads to the site but, the playing field allows the stepped access to be circumvented. This has been agreed by the site, Electoral Services and our Health & Safety Officer. The size of the carpark is limited, however, there is some off-road parking and the centrality of the polling station to the polling district negates some of this problem. In recent years, neither of these theoretical problems have presented any issue that has been flagged by the polling station staff or voters.
Proposed Polling Place	East Lexden Polling District
Proposed Polling Station	Colchester Croquet Club, Elianore Road, Colchester CO3 3RX

Appendix B - Explanation of Proposed Changes to Polling Places and Polling Stations

Polling District	BI – Avon Way
Ward	Greenstead
Current Polling Station	Forest Road Meeting Hall, Forest Road, CO4 3XG
Background	There are three polling stations within the site and going by the Electoral Commission's ratios for polling stations per electorate and staff there should be a fourth station, but the polling station is not suitable to allow this.
Recommendation	Following the consultation period and representation from two ward councillors the decision has been taken to continue to use this premises until the full polling district and polling place review commences, following the Electoral Boundary Review. However, should there be any significant changes this will be reviewed again. In the meantime, we continue to use the Forest Road Meeting Hall as the polling station.
Proposed Polling Place	Greenstead Ward
Proposed Polling Station	Forest Road Meeting Hall, Forest Road, CO4 3XG

Polling District	BJ – Greenstead Road
Ward	Greenstead
Current Polling Station	St John Ambulance Colchester, Greenstead Road, Colchester CO1 2SL
Background	We historically used the St John Ambulance centre on Greenstead road as the polling station for this district. Whilst the venue itself was fine we were not always able to book the venue for use as a polling station. However, due to the nature of the venue's primary purpose as a provider for medical training courses it is difficult to book. Especially, for elections on short notice. This led to the need for a portacabin to be located on the Hythe Tesco Superstore carpark, which is far less than ideal. Considering these difficulties, we had to sort a more reliable venue. The nearest available venue was the Hythe Community Centre. This has served as an adequate polling station for this district. The accessibility, size, and parking of the venue are more than satisfactory.
Recommendation	We continue to use the Hythe Community Centre as the permanent venue.
Proposed Polling Place	Hythe Community Centre, Ventura Drive
Proposed Polling Station	Hythe Community Centre, Ventura Drive, Colchester, CO1 2FG

Appendix B - Explanation of Proposed Changes to Polling Places and Polling Stations

Polling District	GD – Layer Breton
Ward	Marks Tey & Layer Ward
Current Polling Station	St Mary's Church, Layer Breton
Background	The suitability of St Mary's Church is limited. Accessibility is the main problem. This has been overcome by mitigatory measures such as the hiring of a portaloos (for the use of staff), lights and a ramp.
Recommendation	We recommend that Birch Memorial Hall is used as the polling station for the Layer Breton polling district going forward. This is a site that is fit for purpose as a polling station and can accommodate another polling station inside. This will reduce the additional cost of the measures we put in place to overcome the unsuitability of St Mary's Church as a polling station. Whilst it may be further for people to travel to vote in person, due to the rural nature of Layer Breton a large portion of voters would likely have driven to the polling station at the church as it was. We will of course write to the electors in the polling district to advise of the change and invite them to apply for a postal vote, with a letter. The change will also be flagged again on their poll cards.
Proposed Polling Place	The Parish of Birch
Proposed Polling Station	Birch Memorial Hall, Birch, Colchester CO2 0LZ

Appendix C

Below is a summary of the responses received as part of the Consultation

1. Feedback from Councillor Julie Young regards Greenstead Ward

- Greenstead is the ward with the largest electorate and the lowest turnout percentage so changes here should be given some additional scrutiny.
- Greenstead is the ward with the lowest car ownership, and this should be taken into consideration when considering the location of the polling stations.
- The Hythe community centre deters voters compared to when it was in the St Johns Ambulance station.
- The polling station should be left at Forest Road. The possibility of using Unity Primary Academy could be explored but using Greenstead Social Club is not a reasonable alternative.

2. Feedback from Councillor Tim Young regards Greenstead Ward

- Low turnout is a significant issue in Greenstead Ward and the proposed change would make it worse.
- Whilst the limitations of Forest Road Meeting Room are understood, possible adaption to make it more acceptable as a Polling Station.

3. Feedback from Councillor Sam McLean regards regarding Hamilton Road polling district

- Councillor Sam McLean commented that he was pleased to hear this and the parents of Hamilton will be too.

4. Feedback from Councillor Dave Harris regards St Margaret's Church Hall

- The front entrance is not disabled friendly. Although there is a side entrance that is. Consideration could be given to a modification at front entrance of Church with a permanent ramp.

5. Feedback from the Acting Returning Officer for Colchester

- The Acting Returning Officer for Colchester has no objections.

6. Feed back from the Acting Returning Officer for Harwich and North Essex

- The Acting Returning Officer did not foresee any objections to the recommendations.