

Report to COUNCIL

Review of Polling Places and Polling Districts

Report of the Chief Executive / (Acting) Returning Officer

Officer Contact: Heather Moore, Assistant Director of Governance

Report Author: Jenna Madeley, Head of Elections and Land Charges

17th September 2025

Reasons for the Decision:

To consider the Council's draft proposals for the review of polling districts and polling places.

Recommendations

1. To note the submissions made to the Council in respect of the review of polling districts and polling places.
2. That the polling districts and polling places as set out in the scheme contained in Appendix 1a and Appendix 1b and in the maps found in Appendix 2 be adopted.
3. That the scheme contained in Appendix 1a and Appendix 1b be adopted in relation to both Parliamentary and Local Government Elections.
4. That the Council requests that the Electoral Registration Officer makes the necessary amendments to polling districts for the 1 December 2025 electoral register.
5. That authority continues to be delegated to the Chief Executive to make, where necessary, alterations to the designation of any polling place prior to the next full review, in consultation with ward councillors and group leaders.

Review of Polling Places and Polling Districts

1 Introduction

This report sets out the findings and recommendations of a review of polling districts and polling places conducted by Oldham Council in accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983.

The purpose of this review is to ensure that:

- All electors have reasonable facilities for voting.
- Polling places are accessible to electors with disabilities, so far as is reasonable and practicable.
- The configuration of polling districts reflects the current electorate and provides for efficient polling arrangements.

This review has considered the current arrangements.

2. Current position:

Glossary of Terms

A polling district is defined as a geographical area created by the sub-division of a constituency or ward into smaller parts.

A polling place is a designated area (e.g., a designated building) for a polling district into which polling stations are located.

A polling station is the room or area within a polling place where voting is conducted.

Polling Districts and Places

Under the Representation of the People Act 1983 it is the Council's duty to divide constituencies into polling districts and it has the power to divide wards into polling districts at local government 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 local government arrangements and this review includes local government arrangements.

The allocation of polling stations is the responsibility of the Returning Officer for the election concerned. On occasion, it may be necessary to change the designation of a polling place outside the statutory review process. This usually occurs as a result of premises being closed or unexpectedly becoming unavailable, often at short notice. 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 and ward councillors.

The Returning Officer adopts a practice where, following each election, any issues in respect of the suitability of a polling place or a polling station is immediately addressed to ascertain whether there is a need to seek alternative accommodation. Polling places are therefore regularly reviewed and updated which reduces the number of issues that need to be addressed in polling place reviews.

3. Aim of the Review

In conducting a review, the Council should, when designating polling districts, seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.

In designating polling places, the Council has an obligation that it will:

- a) Seek to ensure that all electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- b) Seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places it is responsible for are accessible to all electors who are disabled.
- c) Have regard to the accessibility for disabled persons to potential polling stations in the place.
- d) Other than in special circumstances, locate the polling place in the polling district it serves.
- e) Ensure the polling place is small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the polling district how they will be able to reach the polling station.

The focus of the review was to identify wherever possible, polling places/ stations (including temporary stations) which met set criteria relating to the location, facilities, accessibility, health and safety and space.

Public notice of the review was given on 16 June 2025 when information about the review was published on the Council's website. All members were also informed of the review and invited to submit comments and representations. Details on the current arrangements and the proposed changes of the Returning Officer were also posted on the Council's website

In undertaking the review, the authority ensured that: -

- All electors have reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- In so far as is reasonable and practicable, that polling places are accessible to those who are disabled.
- The accessibility needs of disabled persons had been considered.

The ten Greater Manchester Local Authorities work with the Disabled People's Panel on elections to identify and implement measures to improve the accessibility of polling stations for disabled voters and to raise awareness about the different options for voting and the assistance available and this has been taken into consideration.

Several principles were followed in determining the identification of suitable buildings for use as polling places. These included:

- Location and accessibility to electors within the polling district
- Size – can it accommodate more than one polling station if required?

-
- Accessibility – is the building accessible to all those entitled to vote at the polling station?
 - Availability – is the building readily available in the event of an unscheduled election?
 - Facilities available in the venue including parking, heating, lighting, toilet facilities and security.
 - Public buildings -the election rules allow the Returning Officer the free use of buildings maintained by the council including schools maintained by the authority and free schools. These will be identified in the first instance.
 - Private buildings – in the absence of suitable public owned buildings, churches, clubs and other private sector buildings conveniently located and accessible to electors are considered for designation as the polling place.
 - Mobile units – in the absence of any suitable public or private building in or adjacent to the polling district a mobile will be considered for designation as a polling place. Given the difficulties of heating, lighting, security, comfort of staff and electors, the negative reaction from residents living close to the site of a mobile and the significantly higher cost of locating a mobile polling station, these are considered only as a last resort.
 - The potential impact on election turnout of moving the polling station to a different location.

4. Polling Place/ Station Visits

Election Officers have undertaken visits to polling stations since May 2025. The purpose of these visits was to assess the suitability of existing arrangements and identify alternatives where required, as well as taking into consideration the implications of planned electorate growth as a result of residential development. This work then assisted in developing the Returning Officer's representations.

5. Responses to the Consultation

Responses from the consultation period have been assessed by the elections team and implemented in the proposals where possible and reasonable to do so. All representations will be published at the close of the review.

During the consultation, the majority of feedback supported retaining or improving accessibility of existing polling sites. A small number of alternative suggestions were received but were not adopted as they either fell outside the polling district or did not provide step-free or practical facilities.

6. The Proposals

The proposals for consideration are: These proposals apply to both Ward and Parliamentary Constituency elections, ensuring consistency of arrangements across local and national polls in line with statutory requirements.

Chadderton North

As part of the polling district review for Chadderton North, a number of changes have been introduced to improve accessibility and reflect local community needs. District CN1 (St Herberts Parish Centre) has been split, with voters in the mapped area redirected to Mills Hill Primary School. Similarly, CN2 (St Herberts Parish Centre) has been divided to allow voters in the Park Estate area to cast their vote at North Chadderton School. Districts CN3 (Mills Hill Primary School) and CN4 (North Chadderton School) remain unchanged. Two new districts have been created: CN5 (North Chadderton School) for voters in the Park Estate area, and CN6 (Mills Hill

Primary School) for voters in the mapped area outlined in Appendix 2. These adjustments ensure polling places are appropriately distributed, accessible, and aligned with community geography. All stations have step-free access and facilities suitable for disabled electors, ensuring compliance with accessibility duties.

Coldhurst

As part of the polling district review for Coldhurst, the majority of districts remain unchanged, with minor adjustments to polling place locations and naming. District CO2 (previously Mobile Unit on Channing Nursery Car Park) remains in place, though the polling site name and address have been updated to Mobile Unit on EdStart Car Park, Maygate, Off Chadderton Way, Oldham, OL9 6TR. District CO5 (Mobile Unit CO5) has been relocated, with the polling unit now sited on land at Fletcher Close opposite Belton Walk, Oldham, OL9 6TG. These changes ensure polling sites are accurately described, appropriately located, and continue to provide convenient access for electors. All sites have been assessed for accessibility, with the relocation of CO5 ensuring step-free access and improved proximity to the residential community it serves.

Hollinwood

As part of the polling district review for Hollinwood, one change has been implemented in District HO3. The polling place previously designated as a Mobile Unit at the Avenues & Hollins Residents & Tenants Association has been replaced with the Avenues & Hollins Residents & Tenants Association building itself, located on First Avenue, Limeside, Oldham, OL8 3SH. This change removes the reliance on a mobile unit, providing a permanent and more accessible polling venue for electors. The new designation is recorded under polling station number 32 in ward proposals and 35 in constituency proposals. The permanent building at Avenues & Hollins Residents & Tenants Association offers improved facilities and accessibility compared with the previous mobile unit.

St James

As part of the polling district review for St James, a change has been made to District SJ5. The polling place previously located at Fresh Church, 105 Coleridge Road, Oldham, OL1 4RJ, has been relocated to Sholver Community Centre, Sholver Lane, Oldham, OL1 4NT. This adjustment provides a more suitable and accessible venue for electors in the area, as recommended during the consultation, and is recorded under polling station number 90 in ward proposals and 105 in constituency proposals. The relocation to Sholver Community Centre provides a larger, fully accessible venue with dedicated parking and acts as a cost saving exercise due to the building already being used for district SJ1.

Waterhead

As part of the polling district review for Waterhead, a change has been made to District WA1. The polling place previously located within Waterhead Academy Sports Campus has been replaced with a Mobile Unit situated at the same site on Counthill Road, Moorside, Oldham, OL4 2PY. This adjustment ensures continuity of location while altering the polling provision and is recorded under polling station number 104 in ward proposals and 120 in constituency proposals. The mobile unit provision at Waterhead Academy Sports Campus has been confirmed to be fully accessible and in a consistent location with prior arrangements.

Further Changes for Parliamentary Constituency Elections

In addition to the changes outlined above, which apply equally to both ward and constituency elections, further amendments are required to constituency-level polling station allocations to ensure polling places can accommodate high electorates and anticipated turnout. These changes primarily involve the creation of double or triple stations within existing polling places. The following adjustments are proposed:

- Chadderton South (CS4, South Chadderton Youth Centre): Change from single to double station (Stations 19 & 20).
- Coldhurst (CO3, OBA Millennium Centre): Change from single to double station (Stations 26 & 27).
- Royton North (RN5, St Paul's Primary School): Change from single to double station (Stations 54 & 55).
- Royton South (RS1, Royton Park Bowling Club): Change from single to double station (Stations 56 & 57).
- Royton South (RS3, Blackshaw Lane Primary School): Change from single to double station (Stations 60 & 61).
- Werneth (WE1, Freehold Community School): Change from double to triple station (Stations 62, 63 & 64).
- Alexandra (AL4, Alt Academy): Change from single to double station (Stations 72 & 73).
- Crompton (CR1, Crompton Primary School): Change from double to triple station (Stations 75, 76 & 77).
- Crompton (CR2, St Mary's Church): Change from single to double station (Stations 78 & 79).
- Crompton (CR3, Rushcroft Primary School): Change from single to double station (Stations 80 & 81).
- Saddleworth North (SN2, St Thomas Church Hall): Change from single to double station (Stations 83 & 84).
- Saddleworth South (SS1, Uppermill Civic Hall): Change from single to double station (Stations 88 & 89).
- Saddleworth South (SS5, Greenfield Methodist Church): Change from single to double station (Stations 93 & 94).
- Saddleworth West & Lees (SW1/SW5, Springhead Football Club): Change from single to double station (Stations 95 & 95/1).

-
- Shaw (SH3, Shaw Lifelong Learning Centre): Change from single to double station (Stations 117 & 118).
 - Waterhead (WA7, St Barnabas Parish Hall): Change from single to double station (Stations 126 & 127).
 - Failsworth East (FE2, Higher Failsworth Primary School): Change from single to double station (Stations 130 & 131).
 - Failsworth East (FE3, St John's Church): Change from single to double station (Stations 132 & 133).
 - Failsworth West (FW5, Ridgefield Community Centre): Change from single to double station (Station 141 & 142).
 - Failsworth West (FW6, Canterbury Hall): Change from single to double station (Station 143 & 144)

These constituency-level adjustments are required solely to ensure adequate facilities within polling places where elector numbers exceed Electoral Commission guidelines for single stations. They do not affect the boundaries of polling districts or the location of polling places.

The polling districts and polling places not listed above have no changes and will remain the same, as per Appendix 1a & 1b.

7 Options/Alternatives

7.1 N/A

8 Preferred Option

8.1 Options are detailed in the body of the report.

9 Consultation

9.1 Details of consultation are included in the body of the report.

10 Financial Implications

10.1 N/A

11 Legal Implications

11.1 N/A

12 Equality Impact, including Implications for Children and Young People

12.1 N/A

13 **Key Decision**

13.1 No

14 **Key Decision Reference**

14.1 N/A

15 **Background Papers**

15.1 None

12 **Appendices**

12.1 The proposed amendments to polling districts and polling stations for both Constituency and Ward elections, are detailed in the attached proposals in Appendices 1a and 1b and accompanying maps at Appendix 2.