

# Cheltenham Borough Council

## Council – 13 October 2025

### Interim review of polling districts, polling places, and polling station for St Mark's Ward

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#### **Accountable member:**

Councillor Peter Jeffries, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets

#### **Accountable officer:**

Paul Jones, Deputy Chief Executive

#### **Ward(s) affected:**

St Mark's Ward

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#### **Key Decision:** No

#### **Executive summary:**

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable and to ensure that the polling stations are accessible to all electors including those with special needs.

A consultation exercise has been completed, and consideration has been given to the views put forward.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Council approves: -
    - To change the polling place / station for electors in polling district OA to vote at The Common Ground, Cheltenham, Brooklyn Road (formerly St Marks & Hesters Way Community Association).
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## **1. Implications**

### **1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications**

There are no financial implications as result of changing polling stations.

**Signed off by:** Jon Whitlock Head of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer),  
jon.whitlock@cheltenham.gov.uk

### **1.2 Legal implications**

The council has a statutory duty to review its polling districts, polling places and polling stations. The council must seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. The council must seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

**Signed off by:** One Legal – legalservices@onelegal.org.uk

### **1.3 Environmental and climate change implications**

As the changes suggested are ensuring there is increased accessibility for electors to travel to polling stations, this has a positive environmental implication, reducing barriers to sustainable and active travel when voting within the borough.

**Signed off by:** Maizy McCann, Climate Officer, Maizy.mccann@cheltenham.gov.uk

### **1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities**

This report contributes to the following Corporate Plan Priorities: Securing our future

- Reducing inequalities, supporting better outcomes
- Taking care of your money

### **1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications**

Both polling stations have been reviewed and assessed to ensure that they are as accessible as possible to all electors.

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## **2 Background**

2.1 A full review of polling districts, places, and stations was conducted in 2024. The function room at the Umbrella public house was designated as the polling place/station for polling district OA. However, following concerns from councillors and the location being outside St Mark's Ward, it was necessary to identify a

suitable alternative within the ward.

### **3 Reasons for recommendations**

3.1 To ensure that all electors have reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable and that polling stations are accessible to all electors.

3.2 The venue is a well-known location with plenty of parking.

### **4 Alternative options considered**

4.1 Two other venues were considered as set out in the paragraphs below.

4.2 St Mark's Church Hall, Church Road

This venue was proposed by the Returning Officer. However, feedback received during the consultation highlighted concerns regarding accessibility, particularly due to limited general and disabled parking provision.

4.3 Rowanfield Community Hub, Rowanfield Junior School, Alstone Lane

This venue was assessed but deemed unsuitable, as the entrance door did not meet the required width for accessibility.

### **5 Consultation and feedback**

5.1 A consultation was carried out and proposals and comments on the review were requested from the following:

- Member of Parliament for Cheltenham
- Borough Councillors for St Mark's Ward
- County Councillor for St Mark's and St Peter's Electoral Division
- Local Political Parties
- Hesters Way and Cheltenham Libraries
- Community Associations within the area
- Disability Groups
- Religious Organisations within the ward

5.2 Following the closure of the consultation period for the review, in addition to formal comments for the Parliamentary Returning Officer for Cheltenham constituency (see paragraph 5.8 below) correspondence was received from six other sources.

5.3 Councillor Richard Pineger highlighted the need for a more cohesive and practical approach to polling arrangements in St Mark's Ward. While the proposal to use St Marks Church Hall is potentially viable, he raised concerns about limited parking, and the additional costs associated with introducing a separate venue. He noted that the ward previously operated with two polling

locations the one being The Common Ground, Cheltenham, (formerly St Marks & Hesters Way Community Association). He recommended consolidating polling at The Common Ground (formerly St Mark's & Hesters Way Community Association) a centrally located venue, to improve accessibility and reduce voter confusion.

5.4 Cheltenham Labour Party expressed significant reservations about the proposal to use St Mark's Church Hall citing limited on-street and disabled parking. They also raised concerns about the venue's location, suggesting it may negatively impact on voter turnout, particularly for electors living furthest from the site who may lack access to private transport. They proposed using The Common Ground, Cheltenham, (the former St Marks & Hesters Way Community Association) for both polling districts OA and OB given its central location within the ward and better accessibility.

5.5 Councillor Sandra Holliday supported the proposal for St Mark's Church Hall but suggested that polling district OA would be better served by moving to The Common Ground (formerly St Marks & Hesters Way Community Association). She noted that the venue is more centrally located, has parking and will help reduce voter confusion.

5.6 Councillor David Willingham supported the move to St Mark's Church Hall, but emphasised that, if implemented, the polling district boundaries should be re-drawn to form a more sensible split between the two polling districts.

5.7 Two additional comments were received from electors within the ward. One recommended using The Common Ground, (formerly St Marks & Hesters Way Community Association) for both polling districts OA and OB citing its central location. The other raised concerns about the proposal of St Mark's Church Hall, noting not centrally located within polling district OA, limited parking (including only one disabled space), and poor proximity to the R bus route. The elector suggested The Common Ground, (formerly St Marks & Hesters Way Community Association) be the polling place for polling district OA as well as polling district OB, highlighting its off-street parking, accessibility to those with disabilities, proximity to public transport and central location within the ward.

5.8 Comments from the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) for Cheltenham constituency are set out in appendix iii.

## **6 Key risks**

6.1 Electors in polling district OA unsure of the location of their polling station.

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**Report author:**

Kim Smith, Electoral Services Manager, kim.smith@cheltenham.gov.uk

**Appendices:**

- i. Risk Assessment
- ii. Equality Impact Assessment
- iii. ARO comments
- iv. St Mark's Ward list of polling districts, places and stations for publication
- v. Map of St Mark's Ward detailing polling districts and polling stations

**Background information:**

N/A

## Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

| Risk ref | Risk description   | Risk owner | Impact score<br>(1-5) | Likelihood score<br>(1-5) | Initial raw risk score<br>(1 - 25) | Risk response | Controls / Mitigating actions  | Control / Action owner     | Deadline for controls/ actions |
|----------|--|------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
|          | If the polling district or polling station changes, electors may be unsure of location of polling station. | RO         | 2                     | 3                         | 6                                  | Reduce        | <p>Poll card with note highlighting that the polling station has changed. Helpline and contact details included on the poll card. Poll cards are delivered at least four weeks before an election</p> <p>Press and social media releases to inform residents to check their poll card and that their polling station may have changed</p> <p>Poll card to include a link to election webpage and 'Find my polling station'</p> | Electoral Services Manager | March / April 2026             |

## Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment (Screening)

### 1. Identify the policy, project, function or service change

#### a. Person responsible for this Equality Impact Assessment

|                                   |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Officer responsible: Kim smith    | Service Area: Electoral Services  |
| Title: Electoral Services Manager | Date of assessment: 7 August 2025 |
| Signature: Kim Smith              |                                   |

#### b. Is this a policy, function, strategy, service change or project?

Other

If other, please specify: Interim review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

#### c. Name of the policy, function, strategy, service change or project

Review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

Is this new or existing?

**Already exists  
and is being  
reviewed**

**Please specify reason for change or development of policy, function, strategy, service change or project**

**Interim review undertaken to appoint suitable polling place for polling district OA**

#### d. What are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes and who is likely to benefit from it?

Aims:

For Council to approve the recommendations in the report.

Objectives:

To ensure that every polling place within the Borough is accessible to all electors, with particular consideration given to the needs of disabled individuals.

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
|           |  |
| Outcomes: | All polling places have been assessed to ensure that they meet the accessibility requirements. |
| Benefits: | All electors have reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.    |

| e. What are the expected impacts?  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| Are there any aspects, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could have an impact on the lives of people, including employees and customers. | <b>No</b>                 |
| Do you expect the impacts to be positive or negative?  | <b>No impact expected</b> |
| Please provide an explanation for your answer:   |                           |
| The changes that have been recommended should make the polling places more convenient for the electors.  |                           |

**If your answer to question e identified potential positive or negative impacts, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.**

| f. Identify next steps as appropriate    |           |
|--|-----------|
| Stage Two required                       | <b>No</b> |
| Owner of Stage Two assessment            |           |
| Completion date for Stage Two assessment |           |

**Please move on to Stage 2 if required ([intranet link](#)).**



