

## PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

**Subject:** Polling Place, Polling District and Polling Station alterations  
**Committee:** City Council  
**Date:** 24 September 2012  
**Cabinet Member:**  
**CMT Member:** Assistant Director for Democracy and Governance  
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**Ref:** E3/Review/Council Elections 2012  
**Key Decision:** No  
**Part:** I

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### **Purpose of the report:**

Following each election the Electoral Services Team undertakes a review of administrative and related matters. Any lessons learnt can then be incorporated into future electoral planning.

The City Council has a statutory duty to divide the local authority area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each district.

This report concentrates on alterations to polling districts, polling places and polling stations and also highlights problems encountered using mobile polling units.

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### **Corporate Plan 2012 – 2015:**

This report complies with statutory obligations and requirements. No specific relationship with the Corporate Plan.

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### **Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land**

If all recommendations are accepted the City Council may potentially save between £53,000 and £70,000 on potential future capital bids, by not needing to replace as many mobile polling units, with possible on-going revenue savings at each election of £9,000 on maintenance and setting-up costs.

### **Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management and Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion:**

The annual elections review and programme of polling district and station reviews should provide for improved voting facilities and connect further with other statutory requirements such the Disability Discrimination Acts and general health and safety requirements.

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### **Recommendations & Reasons for recommended action:**

That the following is implemented from 16 October 2012: -

1. The Manadon Hall at Tavistock Road is allocated as polling station for Polling Place/Polling District EF, replacing Crownhill Methodist Church.

Reason: The new location is more central to the polling area, would be located inside the ward boundary and save using a mobile unit (also refer to recommendation number 7).

2. Polling Place/Polling Districts EG and EH is merged forming a new Polling Place/Polling District to be known as EG using Derriford Reformed Church as the polling station.

Reason: This will save using or replacing a mobile unit and help comply with the Disability Discrimination Act. It should be noted that the new larger style mobile unit cannot be located on the current site.

3. Voters of Polling Place/Polling District LB as specified in this report are transferred to Polling Place/Polling District LC.

Reason: Shorter distance to travel to new polling station.

4. The Tabernacle Christian Fellowship Church, Gordon Terrace is allocated as polling station for Polling Place/District MA and that the streets in the immediate vicinity of the new location are transferred to this new polling area from Polling Place/Polling District MB.

Reason: An old style mobile unit is currently allocated. The current site and no other sites within the Polling Place/Polling District area are either available or safely capable of accommodating a new larger style mobile unit. Consequently there is no choice but to move to the nearest permanent building.

5. Polling Place/Polling Districts PG and PH are merged forming a new Polling Place/Polling District to be known as PG using St Pauls Community Church as the polling station.

Reason: Only 68 voters turned out to vote at the Efford Youth Centre (Polling District PH) at the 2012 local elections and merger would not cause too much inconvenience to the voters.

6. Crownhill Methodist Church is allocated as polling station for Polling Place/Polling District HB and that the Polling Place/Polling District is modified to incorporate the areas specified in the report.

Reason: Replacement for Brake Farm Community Resource Centre which closed in December 2011 (also refer to recommendation 1).

7. Weston Mill Primary School is temporarily allocated as polling station for Polling Place/Polling District BA.

Reason: Temporary replacement whilst St Philips Church Hall is rebuilt.

8. Voters of Polling Place/Polling District SC as specified in this report are transferred to Polling Place/District SA with Plympton St Mary's C of E Infants School, Market Road allocated as the polling station.

Reason: This will save using or replacing a mobile unit, complying with the Disability Discrimination Act and it should be noted that a new larger style mobile unit cannot be located on the current site.

9. Polling Place/Polling District UF is divided as specified in this report with voters allocated St Matthews Church (to be known as Polling Place/Polling District UF) and Elburton Methodist Church (to be known as Polling Place/Polling District UD) as respective polling stations.

Reason: see 11 below.

10. Polling Place/Polling District UD is divided between polling districts UC and the current UF as specified in this report. Voters allocated to Polling Place/Polling District UC would vote at Goosewell Primary School and the voters allocated to UF would vote at Elburton Methodist Church, and this new station will be known as Polling Place/Polling District UD (as stated in recommendation 10).

Reason: This will save using two schools, namely Elburton Primary School and Coombe Dean Academy, providing a further days education for primary school pupils and save parents rearranging child care provisions

11. Polling Place/Polling Districts CB and CC are merged forming a new Polling Place/Polling District to be known as CB using St Boniface Church Hall as polling station.

Reason: St Budeaux Baptist Church (CB) is no longer available for use as a polling station.

12. The official list of Polling Places, Polling Districts and Polling Stations is updated accordingly in line with the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Electoral Administration Act 2006.

Reason: Statutory requirement

That the following is noted: -

1. Austin Farm Primary School will be re-instated as polling station for Polling Place/Polling District HE

Reason: The Children's Centre used at the 2012 local elections did not prove to be successful.

2. St Barnabas Church Hall will replace Stuart Road Primary School as polling station.

Reason: One less school being used as a polling station, providing a further days education for primary school pupils and save parents rearranging child care provisions.

3. Mutley Baptist Church to replace the Swarthmore Centre – Polling Place/Polling District LE.

Reason: New location more suitable and less congested.

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**Alternative options considered and reasons for recommended action:**

N/A

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**Background papers:**

Letters and email correspondence in connection with the annual review  
 Electoral Administration Act 2006  
 Representation of the People Act 1983

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**Sign off:**

Fin	<b>PG/CorpSF DC1213001. 31.08.12</b>	Leg	<b>DS</b>	HR		Corp Prop		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member											
Have you consulted the Cabinet Member(s) named on the report? No											

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Following each election the Electoral Services Team undertakes a review of administrative and related matters. As part of the review process comment is invited from Elected Representatives, Political Parties, Candidates and Election Agents and staff at all levels of the process as well as comments noted from members of the public. Any lessons learnt from these comments can then be incorporated into future electoral planning.
- 1.2 As the City Council has a statutory duty to divide the local authority area into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each district, this report will concentrate on details in relation to comments received and alterations recommended in relation to polling districts, polling places and polling stations. The City Council has a statutory duty to keep polling places and districts under review.
- 1.3 The report also highlights significant problems encountered using the 'old style' mobile polling units and recommendations to use alternative premises, where practicable.

## **2.0 Context and Review Definitions**

- 2.1 Comments received outlined various suggestions for review such as suitability of permanent locations, suitability of mobile units in general and use of schools.
- 2.2 General summary of Council review objectives and definitions: -
- Where practicable to have more accessible and convenient polling stations;
  - Reduce the number of schools used to afford students with a further days education (in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny recommendations established in 2003);
  - Use suitable buildings rather than mobile units (in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny recommendations established in 2003);
  - Reduce the use of mobile polling units (or portacabins) to accord, as far as practicable, with the Disability Discrimination Acts and health and safety requirements.

Polling District – A polling district is a geographical sub-division of an electoral area (constituency or ward).

Polling Place – A polling place is the area in which the Returning Officer selects the polling station. In Plymouth polling places represent the same area as the polling district to allow a greater degree of flexibility in deciding where a polling station should be located.

Polling Station – The polling station is the room or building where the poll takes place.

The City Council has a statutory duty to keep polling places and polling districts under review and to authorise changes. It is the Returning Officer's role to select the polling stations.

## **3.0 Mobile polling units**

- 3.1 Issues relating to the use of mobile units have been highlighted in previous reports to the City Council; the following has been once again highlighted.

### 3.2 Old style units – small towable type -

- Ramps are too steep due to the limited area afforded by the location that mobiles tend to be sited on - Scope recommends a slope of no more than 1:20 and the Disability Discrimination Acts 1:12.
- The ramps are also difficult to secure in a perfectly rigid position. Wet weather causes difficulties.
- Doors are not of suitable width for wheelchairs or motorised units.
- Units are very small even for a moderate to large turnout of voters - two or three voters tends crowd the unit.
- The units are claustrophobic and facilities too basic, making staff recruitment extremely difficult.

This clearly demonstrates that accessibility and size are a real cause for concern and of course the fact that they do not comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) or SCOPE recommendations should not be missed

Following the 2012 local elections a number of complaints have been received going as far as the Equalities Officer in Social Inclusion, who re-emphasised the DDA and equalities requirements. It has, therefore, been decided that no old style units will be used in future, unless sanctioned for use in an absolute critical emergency. These old units will be replaced either by hiring-in (short-term) or purchasing new units (long-term) or reducing the number required by using an available building or merging polling districts or redefining boundaries.

### 3.3 New style – larger steel units

Since 2008, the City Council has purchased 7 new large steel units as replacement for some of the old units at a cost of around £17,500 per unit (2012 prices), with a cost of £2,500 to site one unit. It also costs just over £10,000 per annum to maintain all units (old and new).

As these units are 'low level', some will only require the smallest of ramps and although space inside is limited wheelchairs and most motorised units will be able to gain access.

However, as the new units are much larger than the old style units more space is required to locate them. A good number of the current sites are no longer suitable and appropriate action must be taken. Please see table of suggested alterations below.

It is also clear that the use any type of mobile unit should only be considered as a 'last choice' solution as such units will never completely fulfil all legislative and voter requirements.

### 3.4 Results of the Polling Place, District and Station review requiring a Council decision

Ward / Polling Place / Polling District / Polling Station	Suggested Alterations	Ward member response
<p><b>Ward:</b> Budshead  <b>Polling Place/District:</b> EF  <b>Polling Station:</b> Crownhill Methodist Church</p> <p>Reference: Recommendation 1</p>	<p>Current polling station is located in Eggbuckland Ward and could replace a building/mobile unit used in that ward (see Eggbuckland ward below).</p> <p>Replacement polling station for EF: Manadon Hall, Tavistock Road (and which is located in the Budshead ward)</p>	<p><b>Agreed:</b> 2 members  <b>No comment:</b> 1 member</p>
<p><b>Ward:</b> Budshead  <b>Polling Place/District:</b> EG &amp; EH  <b>Polling Stations:</b> Mobile unit at Thirlmere Gardens and Derriford Reformed Church</p> <p>Reference: Recommendation 2</p>	<p>Merge polling districts saving one mobile unit</p>	<p><b>Agreed:</b> 2 members  <b>No comment:</b> 1 member</p>
<p><b>Ward:</b> Compton  <b>Polling Place/District:</b> LB &amp; LC  <b>Polling Stations:</b> Compton CE Primary School and Compton Methodist Church</p> <p>Reference: Recommendation 3</p>	<p>Transfer voters living in Compton Vale area – Polling District LB to Polling District LC. This will enable these electors to vote at Compton Methodist Church and provides a shorter distance to travel.</p> <p>This involves transferring 311 voters - Beechcroft Road, Blandford Road, Park Road and Priory Road.</p>	<p><b>Agreed:</b> 1 member  <b>No comment:</b> 2 members</p>
<p><b>Ward:</b> Drake  <b>Polling Place/District:</b> MA  <b>Polling Station:</b> Mobile unit at Royal Eye Infirmary</p> <p>Reference: Recommendation 4</p>	<p>As there are no locations within the existing polling district to site a larger style mobile unit (see above) it is necessary to look to adjacent areas for accommodation.</p> <p>The Tabernacle Christian Fellowship Church is the nearest (approximately two-three minutes walk from the existing mobile site). This would also necessitate transferring 134 voters from polling district MB (Glen Park Avenue, Gordon Terrace, Napier Terrace, Restormel Road, Restormel Terrace, Sutherland Road, Victoria Terrace).</p>	<p><b>Agreed:</b> 1 member  <b>Not Agreed:</b> 1 member</p>

<b>Ward / Polling Place / Polling District / Polling Station</b>	<b>Suggested Alterations</b>	<b>Ward member response</b>
Continued	(As at 31 July: Tabernacle Church placing proposal before Church Board)	
<b>Ward:</b> Efford and Lipson <b>Polling Place/District:</b> PG & PH <b>Polling Station:</b> St Pauls Community Church and Efford Youth Centre  Reference: Recommendation 5	Merge polling districts.  Only 68 people turned out to vote at the Efford Youth Centre at the local elections (PH).	<b>Agreed:</b> 3 members
<b>Ward:</b> Egguckland <b>Polling Place/District:</b> HB <b>Polling Station:</b> Brake Farm Community Resource Centre (Mobile unit used at local elections as emergency replacement)  Reference: Recommendation 6	Brake Farm Community Resource Centre closed in December 2011. This location can be replaced with Crownhill Methodist Church (also see above Budshead ward above).  The following roads would be transferred from Polling District HC - Alexandra Road, Morshead Road and Tavistock Road to Polling District HB.	<b>Agreed:</b> 2 members <b>No comment:</b> 1 member
<b>Ward:</b> Ham <b>Polling Place/District:</b> BA <b>Polling Station:</b> St Philips Church Hall  Reference: Recommendation 7	The current location is due for demolition in August 2012 and a replacement is required.  Replacement: Weston Mill Primary School situated in polling district BB.  St Philips Church will be available from 2014 when rebuilt.	<b>No comment:</b> 3 members
<b>Ward:</b> Plympton Erle <b>Polling Place/District:</b> SA <b>Polling Station:</b> Mobile unit at Valley Road  Reference: Recommendation 8	Replace mobile unit with Plympton St Mary's C of E Infants School, Market Road and transfer a number of voters from polling district SC (St Mary's Church not available for use).  The following roads would be transferred: Almeria Court, Amados Drive, Horse Shoe Drive, Kennel Hill Close, Longbrook Barton, Market Road, Merafield Drive, Old Priory, Priory Mill, Rock Terrace.	<b>Agreed:</b> 2 members



<b>Ward / Polling Place / Polling District / Polling Station</b>	<b>Suggested Alterations</b>	<b>Ward member response</b>
<p><b>Ward:</b> Plymstock Dunstone  <b>Polling Place/District:</b> UF  <b>Polling Station:</b> Elburton Primary School</p> <p>Reference: Recommendation 9</p>	<p>Polling Place/Polling District UF to be divided.</p> <p>The new boundary would run along Elburton Road with voters on the Sherford Road side allocated St Matthews Church and this district would be allocated the letters UF. The remaining voters allocated Elburton Methodist Church and allocated the letters UD.</p> <p>This would save a school being used.</p> <p>Also see below for additions to one of these new polling districts.</p>	<p><b>No comment:</b> 3 members</p>
<p><b>Ward:</b> Plymstock Dunstone  <b>Polling Place/District:</b> UD  <b>Polling Station:</b> Coombe Dean School/Mobile units used at Charnhill Way and Blackstone Close at 2012 local elections</p> <p><b>Continued</b></p>	<p>Divide Polling District UD between Polling Districts UC and UF.</p> <p>A number of voters would vote at Goosewell Primary School with the remainder allocated Elburton Methodist Church.</p> <p>UD voters allocated to Elburton Methodist Church: -</p> <p>Andurn Close - Blackstone Close - Charnhill Close - Charnhill Way - Coach House Mews - Coltness Road - Dunstone Lane - Dunstone View – Gara Close - Hogarth Close - Hogarth Walk – Langdon Court – Mena Park Close - Mena Park Road – Netton Close - Raphael Close - Raphael Drive - Renoir Close - Reservoir Road (9 – 41 &amp; 2 – 26) - Springfield Avenue - Springfield Close - Springfield Lane - Springfield Rise - Springfield Road (141 – 177) - Wembury Road - Woodview Park</p>	<p><b>No comment:</b> 3 members</p>

<b>Ward / Polling Place / Polling District / Polling Station</b>	<b>Suggested Alterations</b>	<b>Ward member response</b>
<p><b>Continued</b></p> <p>Reference: Recommendation 10</p>	<p><b>Continued</b></p> <p>UD voters allocated to Goosewell Primary School:</p> <p>Douglas Drive - Fletcher Crescent - Fletcher Way - Furzehatt Avenue - Furzehatt Park Road - Furzehatt Rise - Furzehatt Road - Furzehatt Way - Great Churchway - Higher Churchway - Mid Churchway - Springfield Road (179 – 209 and 200 – 212</p> <p>This would save using an Academy or two mobile units.</p>	<p><b>No comment: 3 members</b></p>
<p><b>Ward:</b> St Budeaux <b>Polling Place/District:</b> CB &amp; CC <b>Polling Station:</b> St Budeaux Baptist Church / St Boniface Church Hall</p> <p>Reference: Recommendation 11</p>	<p>Merge polling districts.</p> <p>St Budeaux Baptist Church is no longer available and merger at the local elections worked well.</p>	<p><b>Agreed: 3 members</b></p>

### 3.5 Changes not requiring a Council decision

<b>Ward / Polling Place / Polling District / Polling Station</b>	<b>Suggested Alterations</b>	<b>Ward member response</b>
<p><b>Ward:</b> Egguckland <b>Polling Place/District:</b> HE <b>Polling Station:</b> Austin Farm Primary School (Children's Centre used at 2012 local elections)</p>	<p>At the 2012 local elections The Children's Centre proved to be inadequate and Austin Farm Primary School must be re-instated.</p>	<p><b>Agreed: 2 members</b> <b>No comment: 1 member</b></p>
<p><b>Ward:</b> Stoke <b>Polling Place/District:</b> JA <b>Polling Station:</b> Stuart Road Primary School</p>	<p>St Barnabas Church Hall to replace Stuart Road Primary School.</p> <p>This would save a school being used, but provide a polling station on the very edge of the polling district.</p>	<p><b>Agreed: 2 members</b> <b>Not Agreed: 1 member</b></p>

<b>Ward / Polling Place / Polling District / Polling Station</b>	<b>Suggested Alterations</b>	<b>Ward member response</b>
<b>Ward:</b> Compton <b>Polling Place/District:</b> LE <b>Polling Station:</b> Swarthmore Centre	Mutley Baptist to replace the Swarthmore Centre.	<b>Agreed:</b> 1 member <b>No comment:</b> 2 members

**Timothy Howes**  
**Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer**