Chelmsford City Council Governance Committee

18 November 2026

Targeted Interim Polling District Review

Report by:
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Purpose
To seek the Committee's approval of a targeted amendment to polling district boundaries, transferring Bishop Hall Lane from the Marconi ward (Rectory Lane polling district) to the Lawns ward (Springfield Chelmer polling district) so that polling district arrangements align with the existing Chelmsford City Council ward boundaries ahead of the upcoming local elections. This is a limited alignment exercise and does not constitute a comprehensive review of polling districts or a change to City Council ward boundaries.

Recommendations
1. That the Committee approve the transfer of Bishop Hall Lane from Rectory Lane polling district back to Springfield Chelmer polling district, to align polling district arrangements with the existing Chelmsford City Council ward boundaries ahead of the upcoming local elections.
2. That the Committee note that this is a targeted interim amendment to polling district arrangements only and does not alter City Council ward boundaries or constitute a comprehensive review of polling districts or polling places.

Summary of Key Points
- Approval is sought to transfer Bishop Hall Lane from Rectory Lane polling district back to Springfield Chelmer polling district to ensure polling arrangements align with existing City Council ward boundaries ahead of the May 2027 elections.
- The change restores the arrangements that existed before the 2026 Essex County Council elections and does not alter any ward or county division boundaries. A wider review is not considered appropriate at this stage due to ongoing uncertainty around Local Government Reorganisation.

- If approved, affected electors will vote at Springfield Hall Park Clubhouse and the change will be reflected in the electoral register published on 1 December 2026. No objections had been received at the time of publication.

1. Introduction

1.1. This report seeks approval for a targeted polling district amendment affecting Bishop Hall Lane. The street must be transferred from Rectory Lane polling district back to Springfield Chelmer polling district to align polling arrangements with the existing Chelmsford City Council ward boundaries ahead of the local elections scheduled for May 2027. Bishop Hall Lane is included in The Lawns ward for Chelmsford City Council elections and this has remained unchanged since the 2023 local elections. The current polling district arrangement arose as part of changes made to accommodate revised Essex County Council boundaries.

1.2. The amendment restores the polling district arrangements that applied to Bishop Hall Lane before the 2026 Essex County Council elections. It is a necessary alignment exercise, not a comprehensive review, and does not change City Council ward or county division boundaries.

2. Background

2.1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England completed a review of Essex County Council divisions, with the revised boundaries implemented for the 2026 county elections. Bishop Hall Lane moved from Springfield, to Chelmsford West county division. Following an interim polling district review in 2025 to accommodate the new county boundaries, the street was transferred from Springfield Chelmer to Rectory Lane polling district for those elections. The only properties on Bishop Hall Lane are blocks of student halls of residence, currently accounting for approximately 40 registered electors. Students may be eligible to register at both their home and term-time addresses, subject to meeting the residence requirements at each. This does not permit voting more than once in the same election.

2.2. A review of Chelmsford City Council ward boundaries was due ahead of the 2027 City Council elections. It had been anticipated that this might align the city ward boundary with the revised county division boundary at Bishop Hall Lane, although no outcome was guaranteed. The review was cancelled following the announcement of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). With LGR subsequently postponed, the City Council elections are again due in 2027, on existing ward boundaries. The polling district arrangements must therefore be amended to reflect the existing boundaries.

2.3. The Council completed a full compulsory review of polling districts and polling places across the city in 2024, followed by an interim review in 2025 to accommodate the revised Essex County Council division boundaries. A compulsory review is undertaken every five years to examine polling districts and polling places

comprehensively. The next full review is scheduled for 2028/29.

2.4. Given the continuing uncertainty over LGR and the future configuration of councils in Essex, a further comprehensive review is not considered appropriate at this stage. A wider review would be better informed once the outcome and future electoral boundaries are known, allowing polling arrangements to be considered together on that basis. In the meantime, the Council must make this targeted amendment to ensure that the forthcoming elections can be administered on existing City Council ward boundaries.

3. Proposal

3.1. It is proposed to transfer Bishop Hall Lane from Rectory Lane polling district back to Springfield Chelmer polling district ahead of the May 2027 elections. This restores the street's previous polling district allocation and aligns it with the existing City Council ward boundary, including the street in The Lawns ward.

3.2. The polling station for Rectory Lane polling district is Essex Boys and Girls Club. The polling station for Springfield Chelmer polling district is Springfield Hall Park Clubhouse. Under the proposal, Bishop Hall Lane electors voting in person would return to Springfield Hall Park Clubhouse. No new polling station is proposed.

3.3. A notice commencing the targeted review was published on 4 November 2026, inviting comments from any interested parties or stakeholders. The Acting Returning Officer for the Chelmsford constituency commented in support of the proposals:

'As the Acting Returning Officer for the Chelmsford constituency, I support the proposed polling district boundary changes, which align the polling district boundaries with the Chelmsford City Council ward boundaries for the upcoming election.'

3.4. No other comments have been received at the time of publication of this report. Officers will continue to monitor responses until the closing date and report any comments received subsequently to the Committee before it determines the proposal.

3.5. Subject to the Committee's approval, the changes will be reflected on the published register on 1st December 2026. Affected electors will be informed of the change, and poll cards will identify Springfield Hall Park Clubhouse as their polling station. In addition, notices can be displayed at the entrances to the accommodation blocks nearer the election. These would highlight the change of venue and explain postal and proxy voting options, including how to apply and the relevant deadlines.

4. Conclusion

4.1. The transfer of Bishop Hall Lane back to Springfield Chelmer polling district is necessary to align polling arrangements with the existing City Council ward boundaries for the May 2027 elections. It restores the arrangements in place before the 2026 county elections without altering electoral boundaries or undertaking a

wider review prematurely.

4.2. The Council has already completed a full review in 2024 and an interim review in 2025, and a further comprehensive review would be better considered once the future arrangements arising from Local Government Reorganisation are known. The Committee is therefore asked to approve the proposed change so that the May 2027 elections can be administered on the correct ward boundaries, with a full review to follow in accordance with the statutory review timetable.

List of appendices:

None

Background papers:

Electoral Commission Guidance – Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

Corporate Implications

Corporate Implication	Response
Legal/Constitutional	Under Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, the Council has a duty to keep polling districts and polling places under review and may undertake interim reviews between compulsory review periods where local circumstances require it. Responsibility for exercising the Council's polling district review functions is delegated through the Council's Constitution to the Governance Committee.
Financial	No significant financial implications arise from the proposal. Any costs associated with updating electoral records, poll cards and elector communications will be met from existing budgets.
Potential impact on climate change and the environment	No direct impact on climate change or the environment has been identified.
Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030	No direct contribution to achieving net zero has been identified.
Personnel	None. The proposal will be implemented by existing staff.
Risk Management	Failure to amend the polling district could result in a mismatch between polling district arrangements and City Council ward boundaries for the 2027 elections. The proposal mitigates this risk and ensures electoral arrangements remain accurate.
Equality and Diversity	Electors will continue to have reasonable access to a polling station.
Health and Safety	No specific health and safety implications have been identified.

Digital	Electoral management systems, mapping records and the electoral register will require updating to reflect the approved polling district amendment.
Other	None.

Equality Impact Assessment

Assessment of impact

Using the information above, assess if the policy / function could potentially disproportionately impact on different protected groups.

Specify if the potential impact is positive, could adversely impact or if there is no impact. If an adverse impact, indicate how the impact will be mitigated.

Please note any data used in the impact assessment should be anonymised and with due regard given to data privacy in line with GDPR.

Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Age What will the impact be on different age groups such as younger or older people?		Yes – potential		The longer journey could affect some electors because of age-related mobility needs. The only property affected is student halls; this does not establish residents' ages or access needs.	Both venues are fully accessible and within a 15-minute walk of the street. Clearly notify electors of the change and offer assistance with access enquiries.
Disability Consider all disabilities such as hearing loss, dyslexia etc as well as access issues for wheelchair users where appropriate		Yes – potential		The increased distance could disadvantage electors with mobility impairments. Both venues are fully accessible and within a 15-minute walk, although individual journey times and needs vary.	Maintain accessible premises and voting assistance; provide clear information and respond to individual access needs. Explain postal and proxy voting options without treating them as a substitute for accessible in-person voting.

Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Pregnancy and maternity Pregnant women and new and breastfeeding Mums			No specific impact identified.		
Marriage or Civil Partnership Could this policy discriminate on the grounds of marriage or civil partnership			No specific impact identified.		
Sex Is the service used by people of both male and female biological characteristics or intersex and are the sexes given equal opportunity?			No specific impact identified.		
Gender reassignment Is there an impact on people who are going through or who have completed Gender Reassignment?			No specific impact identified.		

Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Additionally, is there an impact on people with different gender identity?					
Religion or belief Includes not having religion or belief			No specific impact identified.		
Sexual Orientation What is the impact on people of different sexual orientation such heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual people?			No specific impact identified.		
Race Includes ethnic or national origins			No specific impact identified.		

Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Are there any other groups who could find it difficult to access or make use of the policy / function? For example: low income / people living in rural areas / single parents / carers and the cared for / past offenders / long-term unemployed / housebound / history of domestic abuse / people who don't speak English as a first language / people without computer access etc.			No additional specific impact identified.		

Public Representations on Equality Impacts

The review notice published on 4 November 2026 invited comments until 16 November 2026. None had been received at report publication. Officers will monitor responses and report any access or equality concerns to the Committee before its decision.

Equality Impact Assessment Conclusion

Decision	Explanation
☐ **Continue the policy with no changes**	Continue the policy with no changes. The amendment is mandatory to align polling district arrangements with the existing City Council ward boundaries.

[For example: evidence suggests no potential for discrimination / all opportunities have been taken to advance equality.]	Measures to support anyone who may be affected are already set out in the report and assessment, including accessible polling facilities, clear notification of the venue change and information about postal and proxy voting.
☐ **Continue the policy with adjustments** *[For example: Low risk of negative impact / actions or adjustments would further improve positives or remove a potential negative impact.]*	
☐ **Adverse impact but continue** *[For example: Negative impact has been objectively justified.]*	
☐ **Suspend or withdraw the policy for further review / consideration of alternative proposals** *[For example: High risk of negative impact for any group / insufficient evidence / need to involve or consult with protected groups / negative impact which cannot be mitigated or justified / unlawful discrimination etc.]*	

Consultees:

Any interested members of the public are invited to comment. The Acting Returning Officer for Chelmsford.

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

None.