



SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING THURSDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2015 TO CONSIDER MOVING TO ALL-OUT ELECTIONS

**THE MEETING WILL COMMENCE AT
3.30PM OR AT THE CLOSE OF THE
ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL ON THE
SAME DAY, WHICHEVER IS LATER**

AGENDA AND REPORTS

South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne, Cambridge
CB23 6EA

OUR LONG-TERM VISION

South Cambridgeshire will continue to be the best place to live, work and study in the country. Our district will demonstrate impressive and sustainable economic growth. Our residents will have a superb quality of life in an exceptionally beautiful, rural and green environment.

OUR VALUES

We will demonstrate our corporate values in all our actions. These are:

- Working Together
- Integrity
- Dynamism
- Innovation

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The law allows Councils to consider a limited range of issues in private session without members of the Press and public being present. Typically, such issues relate to personal details, financial and business affairs, legal privilege and so on. In every case, the public interest in excluding the Press and Public from the meeting room must outweigh the public interest in having the information disclosed to them. The following statement will be proposed, seconded and voted upon.

"I propose that the Press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item number(s) in accordance with Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that, if present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended)."

If exempt (confidential) information has been provided as part of the agenda, the Press and public will not be able to view it. There will be an explanation on the website however as to why the information is exempt.

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: The Chairman and Members of the
South Cambridgeshire District Council

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that an extraordinary meeting of the **COUNCIL** will be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, FIRST FLOOR** at **3.30 P.M.**, or at the close of the ordinary meeting of Council on the same day, whichever is later, on

THURSDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2015

and I am, therefore to summon you to attend accordingly for the transaction of the business specified below.

DATED 16 September 2015

JEAN HUNTER
Chief Executive

The Council is committed to improving, for all members of the community, access to its agendas and minutes. We try to take all circumstances into account but, if you have any specific needs, please let us know, and we will do what we can to help you.

AGENDA

- 1. APOLOGIES**
To receive any apologies for absence from Members.
- 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
To receive any declarations of interest from Members.
- 3. CONSIDERATION OF MOVING TO ALL-OUT ELECTIONS**
The Civic Affairs Committee is scheduled to consider the attached report at its meeting on 24 September 2015 at 11.00am. Any recommendations from the Civic Affairs Committee will be reported to Council.

Any resolution to change the Council's election cycle will require the support of two thirds of those Members present and voting.

(Pages 1 - 12)

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR VISITORS TO SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE HALL

Notes to help those people visiting the South Cambridgeshire District Council offices

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Security

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- **Do not** use the lifts to leave the building. If you are unable to use stairs by yourself, the emergency staircase landings have fire refuge areas, which give protection for a minimum of 1.5 hours. Press the alarm button and wait for help from Council fire wardens or the fire brigade.
- **Do not** re-enter the building until the officer in charge or the fire brigade confirms that it is safe to do so.

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You are not allowed to bring into, or display at, any public meeting any banner, placard, poster or other similar item. Failure to do so, will result in the Chairman suspending the meeting until such items are removed.

Disturbance by Public

If a member of the public interrupts proceedings at a meeting, the Chairman will warn the person concerned. If they continue to interrupt, the Chairman will order their removal from the meeting room. If there is a general disturbance in any part of the meeting room open to the public, the Chairman may call for that part to be cleared. The meeting will be suspended until order has been restored.

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Agenda Item 3



South
Cambridgeshire
District Council

Report To: Civic Affairs Committee
Lead Officer: Head of Legal and Democratic Services

24 September 2015

Moving to All-out Elections

Purpose

1. This report is to ask the Civic Affairs Committee whether it wishes to make a recommendation to Council on whether to resolve to move to all-out elections.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that after reviewing the appended consultation responses, the Civic Affairs Committee should decide whether to:
 - (a) Recommend to Council that it **should resolve** to move from elections by-thirds to all-out elections with effect from the ordinary day of elections in May 2018.

OR

- (b) Recommend to Council that it **should not resolve** to move to all-out elections, thus retaining a pattern of electing by thirds.

AND

- (c) Recommend to Council that it **makes an order** to change the ordinary day of elections for parishes in the district so that they all elect councillors in 2018 and every four years thereafter.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. To help inform the Council decision on whether to resolve to move to all-out elections.

Background

4. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is about to start a review of the electoral arrangements of South Cambridgeshire District Council. The review has been instigated due to an increasing imbalance across the district in the number of electors represented by each councillor.
5. The review is scheduled for implementation in May 2018 with an all-out election scheduled for 2018 to take place using revised ward boundaries.
6. In advance of the review starting formally, the Council needs to decide whether it wishes to continue to elect by thirds, or whether it wishes to make a resolution to move to all-out elections.

7. Currently the Council elects district councillors by thirds. This means that a third of its seats are contested in each of three years out of four. A resolution to move to all-out or whole council elections would see all district seats contested in the same year.
8. If an authority wants to consider this matter it needs to have carried out appropriate consultation with stakeholders. The Civic Affairs Committee decided to start consulting on this potential change at its July meeting. The results of this consultation are appended to this report. Any resolution must then be made by a specially convened meeting of Council and requires the support of two thirds of voting members. If the Council does make such a resolution, it must publish an explanatory document and give notice to the Electoral Commission. If the Council makes a resolution, it may not pass another resolution within the next 5 years.

Considerations

9. The Council may make a resolution to move to all-out elections at any point, but the issue has been raised now in light of the forthcoming review.
10. If the Council retains elections by thirds then the LGBCE will look to adopt a pattern of three member wards across the district. If the Council resolves to move to all-out elections then the LGBCE will adopt a more mixed warding pattern with one, two and three member wards being proposed as appropriate.
11. If the Council opts to retain elections by thirds, then any submission it subsequently makes on a proposed council size must be divisible by 3.
12. All-out elections will be held in 2018 irrespective of whether a resolution is made by Council, as this is standard practice in areas that have new warding arrangements. If Council does not resolve to move to all-out elections then after the 2018 polls the Council will revert back to holding elections by thirds, with a third of its seats being contested again in 2019. If it does make a resolution to move to all-out elections from 2018, then all seats would next be contested in 2022.
13. A resolution to move to all out elections can only be made by a special meeting of Council and only with the support of two thirds of the voting members.
14. In July the Council started to consult with local individuals and organisations (including Parish Councils) to get their views on whether such a resolution should be made. The response included a diverse range of opinions and has been broken down and supplied as an appendix
15. All Parish Councils in South Cambridgeshire currently hold their elections in a year in which a corresponding district seat is contested. This helps to improve turnout in parish elections and minimises the likelihood of a standalone parish council election, which would be likely to cost the parish council considerably more money.
16. If the Council does make a resolution to move to all-out elections, it also has the power to make an order to change the year of election for parishes in the district to bring them in line with elections to the district council. Any order made by the Council may make transitional provision to allow for the retirement of existing parish councillors at times different from those that would otherwise apply.

Options

17. The Committee may either decide to

- (a) Recommend to Council that it **should resolve** to move from elections by-thirds to all-out elections with effect from the ordinary day of elections in May 2018.

OR

- (b) Recommend to Council that it **should not resolve** to move to all-out elections, thus retaining a pattern of electing by thirds.

18. It will also need to decide whether to recommend to Council that an order be made to change the year of parish council elections in South Cambridgeshire so that all parishes elect in 2018 and every four years thereafter.

Implications

19. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Financial

20. Significant savings will be made if the Council does move to all-out elections. Retention of elections by thirds will result in three member wards across the district with all electors voting in every SCDC election year. Each of these election years would incur similar costs to a single all out election (not including the implications of potential combined polls).

Legal

21. The Council may resolve to move to all-out elections under provisions made in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Localism Act 2011.

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

22. Extensive consultation was carried out via the Council's website, direct mailing to Parish Councils and through the Council's consultation panel. Responses are appended to this report and reflect a variety of views.

Background Papers

No background papers were relied upon in the writing of this report.

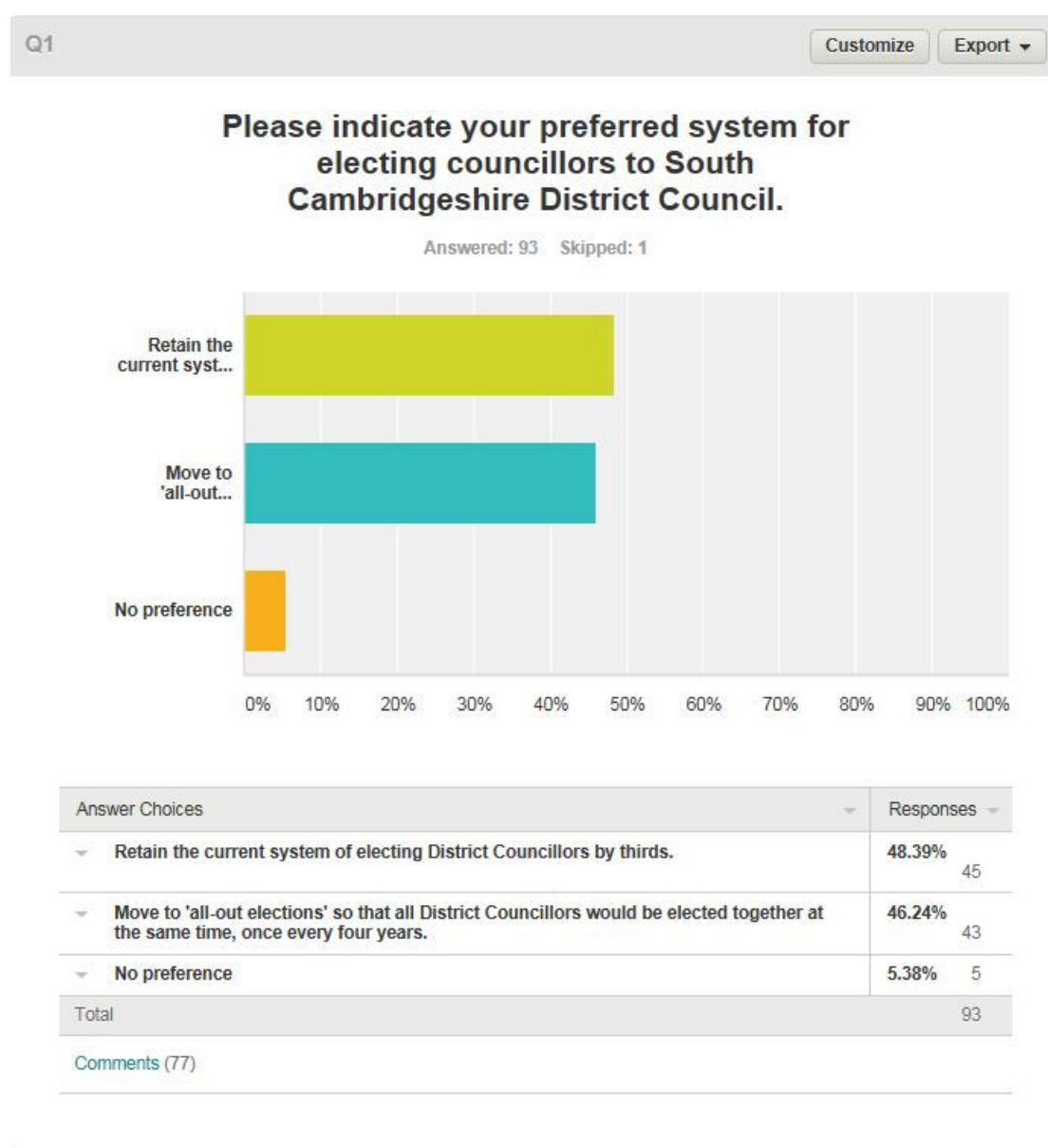
Report Author: Andrew Francis – Electoral Services Manager
Telephone: (01954) 713014

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Consultation on moving to all-out elections

The consultation was open between the middle of July and 18 September. To include with the reports for Civic Affairs Committee the responses were reviewed on 15 September. Any further responses will be reported verbally to the committee.

Comments are reported exactly as supplied.



Comments in favour of retaining the current system

- Given the mix of communities across the district cannot see how all wards can be single member 2) All out elections are likely to lead to a more political Council - harder for the valued local independent member to be elected 3) Current strong political control and cabinet model ought to be delivering strategic direction/vision - change to election system won't alter that!

- It prevents major changes which could provoke alarming swings in policy or strategy. (Ha! That assumes the whole mess isn't continually run by the Conservatives.)
- I stand in the Histon district for the Green Party. If all three happened at the same time then I presume we would have to field all three councillor candidates at the same time. As a small party we would be hard pressed to do this in every ward.
- If cost savings are required, then one way to save costs without completely changing the 'thirds' approach, would be to hold elections for all councillors in a multi-councillor ward in the same year. So instead of being 1/3 of all councillors being elected each year, it would become 1/3 of all wards would have an election each year. The reason for maintaining the thirds approach is that the support that candidates receive from their local political parties would be highly diluted if it had to be spread across all wards at the same time.
- Elections by thirds makes the council more democratically accountable to the electorate as it means there is elections every year, once the county council elections are taken into consideration.
- YOUR SURVEY OUGHT TO GIVE A THIRD OPTION FOR OTHER SUGGESTIONS. I WOULD SUGGEST ELECTING COUNCILORS FOR PERIODS OF FOUR YEARS AND 25% OF COUNCILLORS STANDING DOWN OR HAVE ONE YEAR OUT OF THE FOUR WITH OUT A ELECTION . oR GO FOR FIVE YEARS 25% STANDING DOWN EACH YEAR AND NO LOCAL ELECTION ON A GENERAL ELECTION YEAR. BE BOLD! a WHOLE NEW COUNCIL TAKE TIME TO BED IN AND A LOSS OF CONTINUITY THERE FOR A SLOWING DOWN OF DECISION MAKING AND PROGRESS. THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT THIS ALL STANDING AT THE SAME TIME.
- Continuity
- Percieve increased cost but no value add
- To provide continuity when new councillors are elected into their role. This should also smooth out any issues that may result in elections during times of broader political issues popular or unpopular policies may have a certain highlight at time of district elections and therefore affect opinion.
- My reason is to prevent the elections becoming overwhelmingly politicised. We become acquainted with our local councillors for what they personally represent and the degree to which they carry out their role effectively. This is more important than a party mandate. Please do not inflict upon us a change towards a structure of 'party label' which is failing so miserably at national level. Local independence is worth paying for.
- ENSURES NEW BLOOD THROIUUGHOUT
- Seems to be working OK so no change
- Continuity
- At Hatley parish Council meeting on 21st July 2015, District Councillor Bridget Smith spoke about the likely changes, explaining the potential pros and cons of annual one-third elections in every ward and quadrennial elections for all councillors. She then added political activists prefer the current system of annual one-third elections in selected wards because it keeps them up to speed with fighting elections and allows them to budget time and money accordingly. This is a view I totally agree with - finding candidates is difficult at the best of times, but it will become far more difficult if instead of, say, seven out of 19 (as typically happens at the moment) it becomes that

perhaps 25 out of 57 new candidates for each individual party. The danger is some wards might have no candidates or two or three paper candidates who have no association with the ward - is that good for democracy? And a further point - you claim quadrennial elections will be cheaper than annual elections, but you provide no figures to back this up. The sheer manpower required to man all the polling stations and the complexities of the counting must be a big number in itself, never mind the recruitment, training and hidden costs because (like the activists' argument) council staff become rusty. Councillors must think very carefully about this issue - and if they believe the current system of annual one-third elections in selected wards is right for local democracy and in the best interests of SCD, they must be prepared to fight the Boundary Commission rather than letting it ride roughshod over them and the Council.

- Continuity and the ability to adjust the composition of the council on a regular basis.
- This ensures that national or regional political issues featuring at the time of election do not adversely affect the local council make up of the district authority, which could be to the detriment of local issues being fairly and properly addressed during the four years following.
- It provides a smoother transition for ongoing projects and policies
- As you indicate, there will not arise a situation where a change in voting habits results in a council almost all of whose members are new. Mentoring by more experienced councillors is a great idea. Also, as you say, "if it's not broke, don't fix it."
- Don't like a static council hanging for four years
- The current method is the least disruptive and short term financial gains would be lost against the long term financial losses of all out elections where members could be changed completely causing a blame culture towards the previous councillors.
- Having the possibility of a completely inexperienced set of councillors is not good. Keeps the politics out - more directly accountable.
- More continuity rather than a potential sweeping change every 4 years. New councillors can learn the ropes from existing ones.
- On balance I think the current system works well and maintains some continuity of purpose between the existing Councillors and the newly elected Councillors. Whilst I appreciate there may be a marginal cost saving in a move to "all-out elections" and a potentially faster route to changing the political make up of the council I still believe the current system gives the best overall result for the electorate at large.
- It is important for electorate to be able to hold councillors to account on an annual basis. It also avoids potential massive change in Council membership.
- I think it's important that there's a gradual change/turnover of officials rather than all changing at once because although I can see the benefits of just one cost/disruption in the 4 year period, the potential issues of so many new people starting all at the same time without the benefit and experience of some people already being in post and remaining in post to bring the new ones on, far out ways this in terms of ongoing productivity and continuity of approach.
- believe it creates a more stable council if not all posts changed as once
- While there are arguments for both scenarios, I think that continuity is the main requirement as seen by residents, you are more likely to have a councillor who will take a longer term interest in a particular issue than one who is about to stand for re-

election. For this same reason, I do not think that single-councillor wards are a particularly good thing. However, if reducing the total number of councillors and switching to three councillors per ward, I worry that we will end up with wards that are too large to be manageable. While it is not proposed in the documents, I would like to know if having two-councillor wards with one councillor up for election every two years has been considered. This would reduce the number of elections from 3 every 4 years to 2, while retaining continuity and keeping the number of wards more reasonable.

- If the all out system was adopted we would not have the continuity of process that we have now and new councils would take time to 'bed down'. Also it is likely that it wouldn't be a 4 year council but a 3 to 3.5 year council as every one will be campaigning at the end to get re-elected. (Compare parliament and us senate.)
- All out elections are more likely to be influenced by national issues current system keeps it more focused on local issues
- It has worked well for local elections, similarly in other organisations
- The possibility of only having one councillor per district is a bleak one. Our District Councillors are a valuable asset, provide lots of help, advice and information to all their PCs and would end up spreading themselves very thinly if they were reduced to only one.
- I am concerned that if all councillors are elected at the same time, once every four years, there could well be an influx of new councillors which could affect the continuity of service while they are trained and getting up to speed.
- The current system allows for stability the transfer of knowledge as new councillors are elected. An All-out system could result in a complete change of councillors with no clear hand-over process. Voters often vote in local elections on national issues which are not really relevant to local politics. With all-out system, you could find a short-term national issue could impact for the next 4 years on local representation. At least with thirds system, this type of blip can be readjusted. I am responding here as an individual, although I am a current parish councillor and was a district councillor until 2011.
- Helps to keep continuity within the Council, rather than potential for a large change in Cllrs in one go.
- I think it is better when the council changes gradually and when the newly elected councillors can learn from the ones already on the council. With this system we can avoid sudden change of the entire council which can be detrimental to the council's performance.
- Provides cover for absences within the Ward and also mixes levels of experience/inexperience and enables mentoring/learning. Enables voters to align more with local issues at the time of voting rather than following main political issues much less frequently if the 'all-out' system used
- New councillors can learn from more experienced councillors. It is better for voters to focus on local issues and the candidates' views on these, rather than on party political issues which would dominate in an all-out election scenario.

Comments in favour of moving to all out elections

- I actually think that there should be elections in a third of the wards every year, to provide continuity. However, I think that in multi-seat wards ALL councillors should be

up for election at the same time, with voters having as many votes as there are seats. This would mean that you might get a more representative spread of councillors.

- Simpler and cheaper to administer
- permits a more strategic policy making capability reduces costs improve voter turnout better and more equitable correlation between the voters and their representatives
- 3 councilor wards in rural areas would lead to a loss of close local representatives.
- I think that it is a fairer system and less costly to administer - the latter being of primary importance
- Simpler, ensures clear objectives, possibly cheaper.
- For all the reasons that you give -- but particularly to up the profile when they do occur, so that more people vote. Also to save money.
- People more likely to vote and get new people/ new ideas into council or change councillor instead of having same person over & over who may not actually represent our particular concerns well.
- I believe this to be a fairer system - it allows the voters to have their say on the performance of the council. retaining the thirds system is too diffuse
- Lower cost, more efficient, hopefully improve long term planning
- people standing for more than one seat when voted out will no longer be able to do so. If I could i would stop people standing as both district and county councillor too.
- Firstly; What with EU elections, National Parliamentary elections and local Council elections, we have too many election 'occasions'. This adds to the National boredom level with the electoral process. It is about time we simplified. Secondly; The political 'swing' tends to be a powerful driver of voter intentions. Political efficiency would be enhanced by holding all levels of election at the same time. That way some degree of concordance would be obtained. In turn, the Country would benefit by having a broad consensus of 'majority' opinion. Political change would be rendered more efficient because opposition at every 'political level' would be reduced. Effective change would be enhanced, and ineffective change would be exposed more efficiently. Committed political 'players' would be unlikely to agree with this outcome as being desirable, but they would be considering the issue from a biased position. Committed political players who were delivered as the majority at all levels would be more effectively placed to drive home their 'majority' policies....whatever they were. Ineffective political policies would be quickly exposed and rejected more effectively at subsequent elections.
- Seems sensible and cost effective
- Save money
- I think in a time of austerity it would be better to go to the all-out elections. It would enable voters to scrutinise Councillors mandates and hold them to account when promises are not kept. Being able to plan long term is always more cost effective and provides a more efficient service for users.
- More focus to the voting might encourage more people to vote. Budget savings as elections are expensive. Easier process for voters to understand. Unlikely that all councillors will change so there should still be experienced councillors to guide newer members

- This would give continuity and all cllrs would be at the same point in their term of office
- Could increase turnout, less disruptive for polling stations, allows proper longterm planning.
- The argument put forward is well justified
- It will be simpler and would encourage the move to PC elections every four years too. Our district councillor is very effective, attending PC meetings and giving advice.
- Moving to all out elections might increase the vote, if they were combined with the General Election vote. As it stands, there are so many elections, and this contributes to a lowering of the vote. This will also give a more representative council in relation to the electorate's voting pattern. In the current system, if you are in a 3 member ward, and more of the electors favour a particular party than any other, then the ward will be represented by 3 councillors, all from that party, even if the majority of the electors do not vote for that party. To some extent, this can be improved by moving towards a single tranferable vote system. However, if all votes are cast on one occasion (and ideally this is combined with a single, tranferable vote system), then it makes it possible for a more representative council to be elected.
- cost savings , school disruption to a minimum,
- It will save the council time and money if it is done once every four years rather than what you have now. Paper work will be saved as well.
- Simpler system, lower costs, four-year policy commitment, less confusing than one-third, more appropriate representation
- It was agreed that this would be more efficient and cost effective route to take.
- Easier administration
- All out elections are simpler, less disruptive and more cost effective
- I think it is clearer model and is simpler for the electorate to understand.
- Provides for better planning, gives voters incentive to vote.
- Much simpler and cheaper, and more likely to preserve or increase the number of single member wards. I hope the boundary review will speed the creation of a single authority with the City of Cambridge. The present arrangement is long past its sell-by date given the interaction and interdependence of the two authorities.
- Cambourne needs to have its own ward Councillors with the same boundaries as the current Cambourne Parish or a larger Parish if the District Council changes the boundary with Caxton Parish to encompass West Cambourne. The all-out elections option would allow smaller single member or two member wards. Cambourne could be a 2 member ward or split between into 2 single member wards - Cambourne West and Cambourne East but this depends on the number of councillors. Another reason it would be consistent with other authorities. The County Council, Police Commissioner, Parish Councils are all elected for 4 years. The EU and National elections are every 5 years. It is only the District Council that is elected by thirds in this area. Yet another reason is mandate. Any political party can put forward an manifesto for elections. This should be put to whole of the electorate rather than just some wards at certain times of the electoral cycle. There is some debate about the political parties unable to get the number of candidates to stand at an all out election.

Yet they will have to at the all out election in 2018 because of boundary changes. If they can do this at one all-out election they can do this at all. The Conservatives are saying that election by thirds will mean the District would be divided into 3 member wards. In the rural areas this will mean large areas for Councillors to cover. Single member wards would allow smaller wards of single members covering smaller areas.

- Seems to be logical and easier to understand, possibly cheaper as well
- The option to retain elections by thirds in their current state is not possible. Retaining elections by thirds would see three member wards across the district which would be completely inappropriate for south cambs given its largely rural nature.
- Much easier to weed out corrupt, self serving, anti-deocratic councillors that have clearly plagued this administration for far too long!
- This method of election would remove unnecessary duplication of effort and expense.

Comments from those with No Preference

- I would be concerned about the potential lack of continuity and experience if all were re-elected at the same time. Presumably some previous councillors would retain their seats, but there could be situations where there are many new and inexperienced people trying to "learn the ropes" together, which may interrupt good governance.
- Thirds offers continuity - but you would move to multiple representatives per ward.. All-out is the only offer for single person wards. I do not favour either. What about the status quo?
- Little Abington has one District Councillor. The Parish Council would be concerned if the Electoral Boundary Review resulted in larger wards, groupings that were not community based recognising that smaller villages often have shared interests e.g the traffic problems on the A1307 towards Suffolk. It would be detrimental if wards were too large for District Councillors to provide the level of support for local tax payers to which Little Abington has long been accustomed.
- The Parish Council took a vote and was evenly split on this matter. Some considered that the current system was good because it ensures some continuity whilst others considered the all-out system to be more cost effective and felt this was more important.

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