



Have your say on local elections

We would welcome your views on whether changes should be made to the way that future SCDC elections are held. The Council is also consulting all parish councils about the proposals. This consultation will not affect the 2006 local elections.

The present system – ‘electing by thirds’

Currently, elections for one third of SCDC seats are held three years out of every four (in May). This means that all seats are elected once during that period. Wards with a single district councillor have an election once every four years. Residents in wards with more than one seat get to choose a representative two or three times during the four-year cycle. In every ward, elections to parish councils are held at the same time as an election to SCDC.

The proposed change - ‘all out’ elections

Some councillors have suggested that it would be better if elections to all seats on SCDC took place together at the same time, once every four years. The timing of elections to some parish councils would be changed so they would still coincide with the SCDC elections. The district and parish council elections would be kept separate from the four-yearly elections to the County Council (probably two years apart).

Pros and cons

Councillors have already had some initial discussions about the merits of each case. Here are some of the points that have been made.



Did you know?
The District Council is made up of 57 councillors, representing different parts of South Cambridgeshire. A councillor's normal term of office is four years, unless elected in an unscheduled by-election. Whilst some wards have one councillor, others are represented by two or three. These arrangements will continue whether the Council keeps the present system or makes the proposed change.

The case for the present system ‘electing by thirds’

- It can help voters to focus on local issues, which might otherwise be drowned out by national issues and campaigning by political parties.
- It can allow more gradual change at SCDC, rather than the possibility of big political change every four years. New councillors can learn from more experienced ones.
- "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."
- It can keep councillors on their toes and accountable to their local electorate, particularly in wards with more than one district councillor.
- The proposed change could confuse voters by holding all district and parish council elections at the same time.

The case for the proposed change to ‘all out’ elections

- It could raise the local profile of the elections. Every voter could consider the local issues and choose their councillors at the same time.
- It could provide greater certainty in planning ahead over four years, with less risk of annual changes of power and policy. New councillors could still learn from more experienced ones.
- It could save £80,000 every four years in the costs of running elections.
- It could increase accountability through greater public interest and higher voter turn-out, particularly in wards with more than one district councillor.
- The present system can cause confusion and voter fatigue through frequent elections in multi-councillor wards.

Local elections system reply slip



Please tick one box below.

- I support SCDC's present system of ‘electing by thirds’ (electing a third of SCDC's seats in three years out of every four).
- I support the proposed change to ‘all out’ elections for SCDC (so that all district councillors would be elected together at the same time, once every four years).

Any other comments:

Name:

Address:

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Please return this form in an envelope, no later than Friday 28 April 2006, to: Electoral Services, South Cambridgeshire District Council, FREEPOST (CB860), Cambridge CB3 6BR. Your personal details will be kept confidential.

Next steps

Please let us know your views by completing the reply slip and returning it to SCDC (free of charge) by Friday 28 April 2006. You can also tell us your preference by calling 08450 455 213 (24-hour voting line) or replying via the website at www.scambs.gov.uk

Following this consultation, the views received from residents and parish councils will be taken into account this summer, when SCDC will decide whether or not to go forward with the proposed change. If SCDC agrees to support the proposals, we would then make a formal application for this change to the Secretary of State.