



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.

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