

DECISION-MAKER:	COUNCIL		
SUBJECT:	ELECTORAL CYCLE AND OTHER GOVERNANCE MATTERS		
DATE OF DECISION:	19 NOVEMBER 2014		
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES		
<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

None.

BRIEF SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to advise Council on the outcome of consultation on a possible move from elections by thirds to election of the whole council once every four years. In addition, other issues were consulted upon, specifically the form of governance of the Council (Leader and Cabinet or directly elected mayor) and the number of councillors, and the results of the consultation on these matters are also referred to in this report.

Council is therefore asked to decide if the electoral cycle for Southampton City Council should remain as elections by thirds or changed to whole-council elections every four years, and also to determine how it wishes to approach the other governance issues consulted upon

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) That the Council notes the results of consultation in relation local elections and governance issues;
- (ii) That the Council determines whether or not it wishes to reduce the number of councillors and, if so, for the Director of Corporate Services to inform the Local Government Boundary Commission for England that the Council wishes to undertake an electoral review.
- (iii) That the Council determines whether or not, in principle, it wishes to change its current governance model from a Leader and Cabinet model to a directly-elected Mayor model, and if it resolves to do so, notes that the formal process as required by the Local Government Act 2000 would be commenced by the Director of Corporate Services.
- (vi) That the Council decides if the present process of elections by thirds should be changed to whole-council elections once every four years.
- iv) If the Council chooses to determine that the authority's electoral cycle should be changed to whole-council elections once every four years, the date of implementation.
- (vi) If the Council chooses to change the electoral cycle to whole-Council elections once every four years, the Council authorises the Director of

Corporate Services to issue the necessary public information leaflet as required by the legislation and undertake any further actions necessary to give effect to the content of this report.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Having consulted on the proposal for changing the electoral cycle and other governance matters, it is now a decision for Full Council as to whether or not the Council wishes to change the electoral cycle and how it wishes to approach the other governance matters.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

2. The Council has the option for deciding whether or not to change the electoral cycle, or the other governance matters, having taken into account the consultation process followed.

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

INTRODUCTION

3. On 17th September 2014, a report was considered by Council which provided advice on its ability to opt for whole-council elections rather than by the current method of elections by thirds. A copy of that report is attached at Appendix 1. Council noted its ability to alter the electoral pattern for this authority, and asked that consultation be undertaken to ascertain their preference for either continuing to elect councillors by thirds or move to whole council elections every fourth year. In addition, Council requested that the consultation also asked for views upon the governance model (Leader and Cabinet or directly-elected mayor) and the number of councillors.
4. Under the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, councils such as Southampton that elect by thirds can move to whole-council elections by passing a resolution at a special meeting of the Full Council, the resolution will only be deemed carried if there are two-thirds majority of those voting in favour of a proposed change to the electoral cycle.
5. If an authority wishes to move from thirds to whole-council elections, it must:
 - a. Consult such persons as it thinks appropriate on the proposed change;
 - b. Convene a special meeting of council;
 - c. Pass a resolution to change by a two-thirds majority of those voting;
 - d. Publish an explanatory document on the decision and make this available for public inspection; and
 - e. Give notice to the Electoral Commission.

CONSULTATION

6. The Council is obliged to take reasonable steps to consult such persons as it thinks appropriate on the proposed change. The consultation activity by Southampton City Council was made up of the following
 - a. The publication of background information and a survey on the Council's website seeking views on the possible changes to the council electoral cycle and other matters previously referred to. Hard

copies of the consultation survey were also available in the Gateway Office, at all Southampton libraries and Local Housing Offices and on request from the Council.

- c. Issuing of a press release which was picked up and covered by a number of local media outlets.
 - d. Social media promotion through various council-owned Twitter feeds and Facebook pages, pointing people to the online and hard copy surveys. This included a sponsored Facebook post to improve reach.
 - e. Promoted via an advert on internal and external Stay Connected emails during the consultation period, and as a specific item in relevant Stay Connected e-alerts.
 - f. Key organisations in the City including Southampton Voluntary Services, Business South, Hampshire Chamber of Commerce, the NHS and Hampshire Constabulary were also made aware that the consultation was taking place and asked to disseminate this information among their contacts.
7. In summary, the results of the consultation exercise were as follows (with full details being set out in Appendix 2)
 8. A total of 1438 responses were received to the consultation. The main question the survey relating to the frequency of the electoral cycle for Southampton City Council showed that very slightly more respondents, 55%, were in favour of moving to whole council elections compared to 45 % who preferred election by thirds.
 9. There was also a split opinion in relation to future governance models with 52% of respondents preferring to retain a Leader and Cabinet Model while 48% were in favour of moving towards a directly elected Mayor.
 10. The final question, which related to the number of councillors in the City, showed the strongest consensus among respondents with over two thirds, 69%, of respondents favouring a reduction in number to 32, while 31% of respondents were in favour or maintaining current number of 48 councillors.
 11. In September, Full Council requested that information was sought from other councils who have changed their electoral cycle to whole-council elections. Relatively few have responded with details. Those that have, have all indicated that their prime motivation was to provide medium term stability and, in particular, production of longer-term budget strategies. All those that responded have indicated that the change has, in their view, benefited the authority in that regard.

PROGRAMME OF FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS

12. The current electoral cycle is as follows:
 - European Parliamentary elections – every five years

- UK Parliamentary elections – every five years
 - Police and Crime Commissioner elections – every four years
 - Southampton City Council elections – every three out of four years
13. In addition, the Localism Act 2011 allows for local referenda to be held and there is always the possibility of national referenda.
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| 2015 | Southampton City Council Elections & UK Parliamentary General Election |
| 2016 | Southampton City Council Elections & Police and Crime Commissioner Elections |
| 2017 | None |
| 2018 | Southampton City Council Elections |
| 2019 | Southampton City Council Elections & European Parliamentary Elections |
| 2020 | Southampton City Council Elections & UK Parliamentary Elections |
14. If in November Council resolves to move to whole-council elections, it is a decision for the Councillors at that Special Meeting as to when they wish to implement this.

DIRECTLY ELECTED MAYORS

15. The Local Government Act 2000 introduced new governance arrangements for all local authorities with population of over 85,000. Councils had to adopt one of three systems: a mayor and cabinet; a mayor and council manager or a leader and cabinet. Southampton adopted a leader and cabinet model.
16. Several changes to the system have taken place since its introduction. The mayor and council manager option has been abolished and in England authorities may now resolve to introduce an elected Mayor. However, an authority may still choose to hold a referendum on the issue.
17. Alternatively, authorities can be obliged to hold a mayoral referendum if five per cent or more of the local population sign a petition demanding one. The Government may also compel an authority to hold a referendum. The result of a mayoral referendum is binding on a local authority.
18. Authorities which change their governance arrangements as a result of referenda, can only make further change following a further referendum and where a local authority has held a referendum on its governance arrangements, a further referendum may not be held for ten years,
19. Should Council propose to make a change in its governance arrangements, there is a process set out under the Local Government Act 2000 which the Council will have to follow, including drawing up formal proposals for the change setting out a range of details, including a timetable and transitional arrangements. These then have to be advertised in accordance with the Act, following which the local authority will then be required to pass a further formal resolution in order to make the changes to the governance arrangements.

REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS

20. Where a council wishes to reduce the total number of councillors to be elected to the council, this can only be given effect following a review carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).

The LGBCE is an independent body set up by Parliament. It carries out electoral reviews, the main of which is to:

- a. To deliver electoral equality for voters;
 - b. Establish electoral areas (wards) for local authorities that reflect, as far as possible, community identities in that area; and
 - c. Promote effective convenience of local government.
21. An electoral review would examine the proposed new electoral arrangements for the authority which would include:
- a. The total number of councillors to be elected;
 - b. The names, number and boundaries of wards;
 - c. The number of councillors to be elected from each ward.
22. The LGBCE carry out views on request and in their guidance acknowledge that councils may wish to make changes to their electoral arrangements in order to improve the way they represent and serve people in the area. Requests have been made where councils believe they have too many (or too few) councillors for them to work most effectively.
23. In summary, the process that an LGCBE electoral review would undertake would be that the Commission would gather information about the authority and brief the authority on the process. There would then be a consultation on the council size followed information gathering on new ward boundaries. The Commission then publishes draft recommendations and consults on those and then publishes final recommendations which are placed before both House of Parliament for approval. If accepted by Parliament, the new arrangements come into force at the next local elections, which are automatically all-out elections.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital/Revenue

24. The resource implications were set out in the attached September 2014 report. It should be noted that a move to whole-council would see a saving of some £170,000 for those years where elections would no longer be held by thirds, but where the council elections are not combined with other elections. Where they would otherwise be combined, the saving would be less.
25. It is worth noting that by-elections are more likely to occur under a four year system because vacancies will need to be refilled, rather than left to be filled each May, as is sometimes the case under the current arrangements.

Property/Other

26. None.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

27. Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (as amended).

Other Legal Implications:

28. None.

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

29. None.

KEY DECISION? ~~Yes~~/No

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED: All

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

- 1 Report to Full Council on 17th September 2014
2. Results of the consultation exercise

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. None.

Equality Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out. Yes/No

Other Background Documents

Equality Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:

Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
1. None	