



**Report to: Council, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022**

**Report of: Corporate Director - Planning and Governance**

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**Subject: COUNCIL ELECTORAL CYCLE**

**1. Recommendation**

- 1.1 Council notes the outcome of the public consultation detailed in this report and at Appendix 1;**
- 1.2 Council determines whether:-**
- a) To continue with the current elections regime of elections by thirds; or**
  - b) To change to whole council elections every 4 years as from 2024; and**
- 1.3 If the Council chooses to change the electoral cycle to whole council elections once every four years, the Council authorises the Corporate Director - Planning and Governance to issue the necessary public information as required by legislation and undertake any further actions necessary to give effect to the Council's resolution.**

**2. Background**

- 2.1** The Policy and Resources Committee resolved on 14 December 2021 to commence a consultation process with a view to determining if the electoral cycle for Worcester City Council should be changed to whole council elections every 4 years from 2024.
- 2.2** Having consulted on the proposal for changing the electoral cycle, it is now a decision for Full Council as to whether or not the Council wishes to change the electoral cycle.
- 2.3** Prior to passing any resolution to convert the electoral cycle to whole council Elections, the Council must have taken reasonable steps to consult with such persons as it thinks appropriate on the proposed changes.
- 2.4** The Council undertook a consultation which ran for 3 weeks and closed on 13 February. The consultation was publicised via a press release, on the website and via social media. The Council also wrote to statutory organisations in the city and the wider county area. The residents' panel was also alerted to the consultation.
- 2.5** In total 329 responses were received to the consultation. A summary of the response data is attached at **Appendix 1**. Overall a majority of respondents supported a move to whole council elections although a sizeable minority preferred to remain with the current arrangements (by thirds). It has been clarified that elections by halves is not an option for this Council and therefore the only choice is between remaining with elections by thirds or moving to whole council elections.

2.6 Reasons given by consultees for preferring elections by thirds included that it provided a regular refresh of political debate and political ideas and that this arrangement had served the Council well so there was no compelling reason to change it. Reasons given by consultees for preferring whole council elections included that this would provide a better use of public resources and provide more stability over a longer political period.

### **3. Preferred Option**

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 To seek a Council resolution on whether the electoral cycle for Worcester City Council should be changed to whole council elections every 4 years from 2024, or stay as it is.
- 3.3 If the Council resolves to move to whole Council elections then it must approve the date by which this change should be effective. In view of the fact that the Boundary Commission requires the Council to hold a whole council election in 2024 in any event, this is proposed as the date at which the Council's resolution to change would be implemented.
- 3.4 Following adoption of any resolution to move to whole council elections, in order to make the change legally effective, the Council is required to publish the details in a "scheme" (eg on its website) and give notice to the Boundary Commission of this change.

### **4. Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 There is no obligation to change the Council's electoral cycle but Members had agreed to consider and debate the matter as part of the preparatory work for the Boundary Commission's Electoral Review of Worcester City Council.

### **5. Implications**

#### **5.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications**

It is possible that moving to whole council elections will result in a financial saving for the Council over time, although there are a number of factors to consider, including the availability of funding for specific elections.

#### **5.2 Legal and Governance Implications**

Under the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, councils 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 vote in favour of a proposed change to the electoral cycle. If the Council so resolves, it will be unable to change the scheme again for at least five years. There are statutory arrangements which must be met once the Council resolution is passed including a requirement to publicise the fact that a resolution has been passed and produce an explanatory document; and to notify the Local Government Boundary Commission for England of the resolution.

### 5.3 Risk Implications

There are no significant risks identified.

### 5.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

Any change to the electoral cycle would be published on the Council's website and publicised with stakeholders.

### 5.5 Equality Implications

There are no specific equality implications identified for either electoral cycle option. Elections must be delivered in such a way as to ensure the needs of people with protected characteristics are considered and appropriately accommodated.

The demographics of those responding to the public consultation are summarised in **Appendix 1**.

### 5.6 Human Resources Implications

None identified.

### 5.7 Health and Safety Implications

None identified.

### 5.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

Regular review and debate of the Council's governance and electoral arrangements is one mechanism by which the residents and businesses of Worcester can be assured that the Council is responsive to their needs and interests.

## **Appendix 1: Consultation summary**

<b>Ward(s):</b>	<b>All Wards</b>
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<b>Background Papers:</b>	<b>None</b>