

**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL**

**10 DECEMBER, 2008**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE**

**OUTCOME OF THE CONSULTATION ON POTENTIAL CHANGES TO THE ELECTORAL CYCLE**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report provides Council with the outcomes of the consultation recently undertaken regarding the electoral cycle. The report gives the Council options to change the electoral cycle.

**2. Recommendation(s)**

2.1 Council is recommended to either:-

a) continue with the current electoral cycle (election by thirds);

OR

b) with effect from 2011 adopt the electoral cycle of whole Council elections every 4 years

**3. Conclusions and Reason(s) for the Recommendation(s)**

3.1 Following the recent public consultation, Council can chose whether or not to change the existing electoral arrangements of "election by thirds" (with no election in the fourth year) with the alternative regime of "all out elections" for all 41 councillors once every 4 years. This decision is a local choice for the Council in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

3.2 The two recommendations referred to at Section 2 above are presented following the public consultation undertaken during Summer 2008. The consultation concluded with overall support of 73.2% for a change to elections for the Council for all 41 seats once every 4 years.

**4. Background**

4.1 At its meeting on 25 June, 2008 the current Council resolved to:-

Council minute:

**Consultation on Changes to Electoral Arrangements**

"Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer (Enclosure 15.1 – 15.6 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That a consultation process be commenced in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement In Health Act 2007 on whether the Council should change to whole Council Elections every 4 years as from 2011".

- 4.2 A consultation exercise was subsequently undertaken which included the Citizen's Panel; consultation with elected Members (District, County and Parish); the option for the public to express their views using the Council's website; a questionnaire included in Chase Matters and consultation forms for public opinion distributed at the Community Forums.
- 4.3 Attached as Annex A to this report is the summary of the outcome of the consultation as presented by the PR and Marketing Manager. This report concludes that a total of 637 responses were received and overall, 73.2% opted for a change to electoral arrangements of elections once every 4 years for all Council seats.
- 4.4 At Annex B is the report of Quality Fieldwork and Research Services, who consulted on behalf of the Council with the Citizen's Panel. Their report gives the details of the outcome of that consultation according to Ward and respondent profile.
- 4.5 Having undertaken the consultation Council may now determine whether or not the electoral cycle should be changed. If the Council were to change the electoral cycle to once every 4 years for all Council seats, an information leaflet would have to be produced and made available to the public informing of that change. In addition, the Electoral Commission would be notified of the change.
- 4.6 In the event that the Council determines to support the decision to undertake elections once every 4 years, the respective term of effected Members will be automatically extended / reduced until the election in May 2011.

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Section 1

Background

The background to this report is contained in the report to Council on 25 June, 2008, which presented the option to Council, following public consultation, the choice of changing the electoral cycle.

Section 2

Details of Matters to be Considered

The Council will need to consider the relative advantages and disadvantages of changing the electoral arrangements in terms of the impact on the community, local democracy and local politics.

Section 3

Contribution to CHASE

The manner in which citizens exercise their democratic right of electing a local councillor underpins the Council's corporate objectives as expressed by CHASE. Some academic research has indicated that all out elections once every 4 years can stimulate local democracy by increasing voter participation. On the other hand, continuing with the current regime of elections of the third of the councillors ensure more regular turnover of representatives for communities. Either way, the electoral regime that mandates elected representatives to make decisions concerning the district underpins the corporate objectives of the Council.

Section 4

Financial Implications

The current cost of District Council Elections is estimated to be £102,000 for each election year.

The cost of all out elections every four years is estimated to be £170,000.

As a result of the current timing of elections only marginal savings will occur over the current budget timetable 2009-10 to 2011-12 however annual savings of £34,000 per annum will be achieved thereafter for each 4 year budget cycle.

The above savings include postages, rent of premises, presiding officer and poll clerks etc and further savings are anticipated as more detailed work is undertaken by the Chief Executive as Returning Officer, regarding potential financial consequences and changes in staffing arrangements with a further saving of at least £14,000 per annum envisaged.

The consultation exercise undertaken by the Council by using the Citizen's Panel totalled £3,045. This was within the allocated budget. The cost of producing an information leaflet to advise citizens in a change in electoral cycle to once every 4 years (if this were to be the case) would be in the region of £4,020.00.

Section 5

Human Resource Implications

A review of the human resource implications as a result to a change in electoral cycle of elections every 4 years would need to be undertaken. Irrespective of the change to an electoral cycle, the electoral canvas would continue to be undertaken every year, and the Council would still need to accommodate any by-elections and parish elections during any 4-year period. Nevertheless, a review in the next 12 months of the human resource implications in a change to elections every 4 years would need to be undertaken by the Returning Officer.

Section 6

Legal Implications

The legal implications of this report are referred to throughout.

Section 7

Section 17 (Crime Prevention)

There are no crime prevention matters arising directly as a result of this report.

Section 8

Human Rights Act Implications

There are no Human Rights Act matters arising directly as a result of this report.

Section 9

Data Protection Act Implications

There are no Data Protection Act matters arising directly as a result of this report.

Section 10

Risk Management Implications

There are no risk management matters arising directly as a result of this report.

Section 11

Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no Equality and Diversity matters arising directly as a result of this report.

Section 12

**Other Options Considered**

The two options open to the Council are explained in the main body of the report.

**Section 13**

**List of Background Papers**

Council report, "Consultation on Changes to Electoral Arrangements" 25 June, 2008.

**Annexes**

Annex A - summary of the outcome of the consultation

Annex B - report of Quality Fieldwork and Research Services