

Subject: Four Yearly Elections Local Referendum Results

Report to: Full Council 9 November 2017

Report by: Head of Organisational Development

SUBJECT MATTER/RECOMMENDATIONS

This report advises Council of the outcome of the local Referendum on a possible change from 'elections by thirds' to election of the whole Council once every four years.

The Council is asked to decide if the electoral cycle of Great Yarmouth Borough Council should remain as 'elections by thirds' or should be changed to whole Council elections.

Recommendation:

- 1) That Council decides whether or not to change to whole Council elections once every four years
- 2) Subject to the decision in recommendation one, it is recommended that the whole Council elections would take effect from May 2019.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On 17 January 2017, a report was considered by Full Council which asked if they wished to consider a potential change in the electoral cycle for Great Yarmouth from 'elections by thirds' to the election of the whole Council once every four years. The report also asked Full Council to authorise consultation with interested parties on the proposal. Full Council gave approval to hold a non-binding Referendum on the same date as the Norfolk County Elections in May 2017.
- 1.2 A further report was considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on 7 February 2017 and Members were advised that it was not appropriate to combine the Local Referendum with the Norfolk County Elections in May 2017. Approval was given by the Policy and Resources Committee to commence a postal vote process and this commenced on 25 August 2017

and closed on 3 September 2017.

- 1.3 The question asked on the referendum was ‘**should the council change its election cycle to whole council elections every four years or retain the existing system of election by thirds**’?

2. REFERENDUM RESULTS

- 2.1 The council sent out 73,236 postal votes. Of these, a total of 23,785 ballot papers were returned.

- 2.2 The votes were as follows:-

Answer	No. of votes
Retain	7213 (30.4%)
Change	16519 (69.6%)
Total of valid votes	23732
Total number of rejected ballot papers	51

3. OPTIONS/TIMESCALES

- 3.1 The following options are available to Council:-

- A) No change
- B) Introduce a change to electoral systems from elections in thirds to election by whole in 2018
- C) Introduce a change to electoral systems from elections in thirds to election by whole in 2019
- D) Introduce a change to electoral systems from election in thirds to election by whole from 2020.

Option C would combine the Council election with 12 parish elections.

Option D would combine the Council election with the Police and Crime Commissioner and 7 parish elections.

- 3.2 Should Council decide to change to whole Council elections, selecting 2019 as the year to change would allow Council to have adequate time to prepare for the change. An election in 2019 would also be combined with 12 parish elections.
- 3.3 Council may not resolve to conduct whole council elections in 2021 as this is a County Council election year.
- 3.4 If Council resolves to change to whole Council elections, it will be unable to pass another resolution to change the scheme before the end of five years beginning with the day on which the earlier resolution was passed.

4. **CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1 The Local Government Act 1972 provides the electoral scheme for Local Authorities in England. Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 as amended by Localism Act 2011, if a Council wishes to move from 'elections by thirds' to whole Council elections, it must:-
 - Consult such persons as it thinks appropriate on the proposed change
 - Convene a special meeting of Council to consider the proposed change
 - Pass a resolution to change by a two thirds majority of those voting
 - Ensure that the year for the first ordinary whole Council election is specified in the resolution. This cannot be the same year(s) as whole council elections for the County Council
 - Publish an explanatory document on the decision and make this available for public inspection
 - Give notice to the Electoral Commission
- 4.2 On passing a resolution for whole Council elections, Council becomes subject to the following electoral scheme:-

- Ordinary elections are to be held in a) the year specified in the resolution and b) every four years afterwards
- All councillors are to be elected in each year in which ordinary elections are held
- On the fourth day after ordinary elections are held a) the councillors elected in those elections are to come into office and b) the sitting councillors are to retire
- Ordinary elections of councillors of the Council under the previous electoral scheme are to be held in accordance with that scheme in any year that a) is earlier than the year specified in the resolution for whole-council elections and b) is a year in which, under the previous electoral scheme, ordinary elections of councillors of the council are due to be held.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Should the Council agree to move to whole Council elections, there would be saving of circa £120,000 over each four year period.
- 5.2 This is based on an approximate cost of 'elections by thirds' resulting in an annual cost of £80,000 in each of the three years (total cost would be £240,000) versus a one off cost for whole council elections every four years of approximately £120,000.

6. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The legal power to change from 'elections by thirds' to whole Council elections is contained within the Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Any change in the electoral cycle would require an amendment to the Constitution.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) That Council decides whether or not to change to whole Council elections once every four years
- 2) Subject to the decision in recommendation one, it is recommended that the whole Council elections would take effect from May 2019.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Areas of consideration: e.g. does this report raise any of the following issues and if so how have these been considered/mitigated against?

Area for consideration	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	Yes
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	Yes
Existing Council Policies:	Constitution
Financial Implications:	Detailed in the report
Legal Implications (including human rights)	Detailed in the report
Risk Implications:	NA
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	NA
Crime & Disorder:	NA
Every Child Matters:	NA