



**Oversight and Governance**

Chief Executive's Department  
Plymouth City Council  
Ballard House  
Plymouth PL1 3BJ

Please ask for Democratic Support  
T 01752 305155  
E [democraticsupport@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:democraticsupport@plymouth.gov.uk)  
[www.plymouth.gov.uk](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk)

Published 15 November 2024

## CITY COUNCIL

Monday 25 November 2024  
1.00 pm  
Council Chamber

**Members:**

Councillor Tuohy, Chair

Councillor Murphy, Vice Chair

Councillors Allen, Allison, Aspinall, Bannerman, Mrs Beer, Blight, Briars-Delve, Mrs Bridgeman, Coker, Cuddihee, Cresswell, Dann, Darcy, Dingle, Evans OBE, Finn, Freeman, Gilmour, Goslin, Haydon, Hendy, Holloway, Krizanac, Laing, Lawson, Loveridge, Lowry, Luggier, McCarty, McLay, McNamara, Moore, Morton, Ney, P.Nicholson, S.Nicholson, Noble, Penberthy, Penrose, Poyser, Raynsford, Reilly, Ricketts, Simpson, M.Smith, R.Smith, Sproston, Steel, Stephens, Stevens, Taylor, Tippetts, Tofan, Ms Watkin and Wood.

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business overleaf.

You can watch any of our webcast meetings on [YouTube](#). For further information on attending Council meetings and how to engage in the democratic process please follow this link - [Get Involved](#)

**Tracey Lee**

Chief Executive

# **City Council**

## **Agenda**

### **1. Apologies**

To receive apologies for absence submitted by councillors.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

### **3. Council's electoral cycle**

**(Pages 1 - 24)**

# City Council



Date of meeting:	25 November 2024
Title of Report:	<b>Council's electoral cycle</b>
Lead Strategic Director:	Tracey Lee (Chief Executive)
Author:	Liz Bryant (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer)
Contact Email:	Liz.bryant@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Electoral Cycle 2024
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

## Purpose of Report

To present to the Council the information contained in the Briefing Report at Appendix A and the results of the public consultation contained in the Consultation Report at Appendix B in order for it to make a determination as to whether to make a change to its electoral cycle arrangements.

## Resolution:

1. The Council determines whether to make a change in its electoral cycle arrangements by agreeing the following resolution:

This Council determines to move to whole Council elections every four years commencing on the first ordinary day of elections in May 2027 (a two thirds majority of those voting being required to make such a change), and to present the result of its resolution to the Boundary Commission.

### Reason:

To inform the Local Government Boundary Commission for England of the outcome of the decision to enable them to move forward with their consultation on the city's boundary review and warding patterns.

## Alternative options considered and rejected

At its meeting on 21 November 2022 the Council specifically asked for consideration of a move to whole council elections, therefore no other electoral cycle option has been considered.

## Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The Corporate Plan commits the Council to engaging with and listening to our residents, businesses and communities. The Council's values include a commitment to Plymouth being a place where people can have their say about what is important to them, and where they are empowered to make change happen. The recommendations of this report seek to deliver these commitments in respect of a key element of the Council's democratic arrangements.

## Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

To continue with elections by thirds over a ten-year period (2021 – 2031) would cost an estimated £2.66 million, dependent on which year a UK General Election is held. Should the Council to move to whole council elections after 2027 it is estimated that over the same 10-year period this would cost £1.26 million and save £1.4 million over 10 years. Further detail is outlined in the attached briefing report.

### Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

It is difficult to calculate the carbon footprint of the current model of elections. However, should the Council move to all out elections, it would have a reduced carbon footprint as a result of: reduced printing of election materials e.g. ballot papers / postal votes and a reduction in facility hire e.g. heating etc.

### Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

\* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

### Appendices

\*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report							
B	Consultation summary							

### Background papers:

\*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Sign off:**

Fin	DJN. 24.25. 127	Leg	LS/00 0033 90/12 /LB/1 4/11/ 24	Mon Off	LS/00 0033 90/12 /LB/1 4/11/ 24	HR		Asset s		Strat Proc	
-----	-----------------------	-----	--	------------	--	----	--	------------	--	---------------	--

Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Liz Bryant, Monitoring Officer

Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes

Date agreed: 14/11/24

This page is intentionally left blank

# ELECTORAL CYCLE BRIEFING REPORT

25 November 2024



## I. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Plymouth City Council has operated its current electoral cycle of 'election by thirds' since 2003, before which a cycle of 'all out' elections every four years was in place.
- 1.2. The Council's Local Government Association Peer Challenge in 2022 recommended that the Council reviews its current arrangements, although it made no recommendation as to what cycle the Council should adopt.
- 1.3. At its meeting on 21 November 2022, the City Council agreed to undertake a public engagement on the future Electoral Cycle for the Council.
- 1.4. The current administration has requested that the Council seeks feedback from the public and other city stakeholders as to whether the current electoral cycle best serves the Council and the city.
- 1.5. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is in the process of undertaking an electoral review of Plymouth City Council's size and warding arrangements. The process and implications of this are covered in section eight of this report.
- 1.6. This briefing sets out the policy, financial and legal context relating to local government electoral cycles and arrangements for consultation.

## 2. CYCLES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN ENGLAND

- 2.1. Plymouth City Council has 57 Councillors and currently elects by thirds. This means that one third of the Councillors are elected to office in three years out of four years, and in the fourth year there are no elections, which is known as a fallow year.
- 2.2. Election by halves is where half of the Councillors are elected every 2 years. Whole council (all out) elections are where all Councillors are elected to office once every four years.
- 2.3. Currently 333 councils in England hold all out elections. 103 councils elect by thirds. Seven (7) councils elect by halves.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.4. Plymouth City Council is one of the 16 out of 55 Unitary Authorities in England which elects by thirds. The remaining 39 hold all out elections every fourth year. No unitary authority holds elections by halves. Amongst metropolitan districts, 33 of 36 elect by thirds.
- 2.5. Of the 29 local authorities in the Southwest Region, 26 councils hold all out elections, two (2) by thirds and one (1) by halves.

## 3. POLICY CONTEXT AND COMPARISONS

- 3.1. The Electoral Commission, the independent body which oversees elections, recommended in its publication '[The cycle of local government elections' \(2004\)](#) that local authorities 'in England should hold whole council elections, with all councillors elected simultaneously, once every four years'.<sup>2</sup>
- 3.2. The Electoral Commission recommended a move back to whole council elections in order to provide "stronger local democracy", "greater clarity" for the electorate and to encourage "greater understanding" of elections.
- 3.3. Various studies have been carried out on the impact of different electoral cycles on voter turnout in local elections in England. Because there are a number of other factors affecting

turnout in any given year, such as combined local and parliamentary elections, it is difficult to draw strong conclusions. Research commissioned by the Electoral Commission shows that turnout is marginally greater among Councils conducting all out elections than among those who elect by thirds, based on a comparison between districts, London Boroughs and metropolitan districts.

3.4. The table below sets out some of the advantages and disadvantages of each cycle. This includes learning from the Electoral Commission and research from other authorities who have reviewed their election cycle.

	<b>Election by thirds</b>	<b>All out elections</b>
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Process known and understood</li> <li>▪ More opportunities for voters</li> <li>▪ Councillors and political parties held to account by voters more regularly</li> <li>▪ Local issues not confused with national issues</li> <li>▪ Allows for gradual change at the Council</li> <li>▪ Can ensure that the political composition of authorities more accurately reflects the local political context</li> <li>▪ Continuity of Councillors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Electorate can vote on four-year manifestos and long-term commitments</li> <li>▪ Clearer opportunity for the electorate to change the political composition of the Council</li> <li>▪ Electors more likely to understand the election cycle</li> <li>▪ Fewer elections may mean less election fatigue and voter apathy</li> <li>▪ Reduced costs. By holding a local election every year costs around £380k every year. If we move to conducting elections every four years, it is estimated that we will save £1.4m over 10 years, dependent on when the UK General Election is held.</li> </ul>
<b>Dis-advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Electorate can vote on four-year manifestos and long-term commitments</li> <li>▪ Clearer opportunity for the electorate to change the political composition of the Council</li> <li>▪ Electors more likely to understand the election cycle</li> <li>▪ Same electoral cycle as Police and Crime Commissioner and elections which take place every four years</li> <li>▪ Fewer elections may mean less election fatigue and voter apathy</li> <li>▪ Reduced costs. By holding a local election every year costs around £380k every year. If we move to conducting elections every four years, it is estimated that we will save £1.4m over 10 years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Risk that some electors will disengage</li> <li>▪ Risk that such a change would be perceived as less democratic</li> <li>▪ A large turnover of councillors may lead to disruption, particularly if the direction of the council is changed significantly</li> <li>▪ Political complacency</li> <li>▪ May lead to more by-elections taking place and an increase in costs.</li> <li>▪ Potential loss of experienced councillors</li> <li>▪ Less frequent elections could be detrimental to encouraging candidates to stand for election as the opportunity to serve on the Council will be less frequent</li> </ul>



#### 4. ELECTORAL CYCLE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. To continue with elections by thirds over a ten-year period (calculated between 2022 to 2032) would cost an estimated £2.66m. Should the Council to move to whole council elections after 2027 it is estimated that this would cost £1.26m across a ten-year period and save £1.4m dependent upon when the UK General Election is held.
- 4.2. Whole council elections will be held in 2027 notwithstanding whether a resolution is made by Council as this is required by law as part of the review process in areas that have new warding arrangements.
- 4.3. It is important to note that were the Council to move to whole council elections, costs for each individual election will rise marginally. Additional costs could include:
- printing costs (ballots papers are likely to be longer);
  - postal vote opening costs;
  - costs at the count (no change for time spent on verification but longer time in sorting and counting of votes) to include additional counting assistants, count supervisors etc.
- 4.4. The estimated revenue cost of running a single all-out election is £420k.
- 4.5. The table below provides estimated costs under whole council and election by thirds cycles. It should be noted that the costs in these tables are estimates. Actual costs and savings may vary depending on the number of by-elections, general elections and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections.

Year	Election/s	All out elections every four years	Elections in thirds
2021	Local		
2022	Local		
2023	Local	£420,000	£380,000
2024	Local, Police & Crime Commissioner, UKPGE	£0	£200,000
2025	Fallow Year	£0	£0
2026	Local	£0	£380,000
2027	Local	£420,000	£380,000
2028	Local, Police & Crime Commissioner	£0	£280,000
2029	UKPGE	£0	£0
2030	Local	£0	£380,000
2031	Local	£420,000	£380,000
2032	Local, Police & Crime Commissioner	£0	£280,000
<b>Total Costs</b>		<b>£1,260,000</b>	<b>£2,660,000</b>

## 5. LEGAL CONTEXT

- 5.1. Legislative change introduced under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and amended by the Localism Act 2011 provided Local Authorities with the option of changing their electoral cycle.
- 5.2. To move to whole council elections, the council must fulfil the requirements of sections 32 – 36 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 which relate to consultation and resolution of council.
- 5.3. This requires that the council must not pass any resolution to change its electoral cycle unless it has taken reasonable steps to consult such persons as it thinks appropriate on the proposed change; this is not further prescribed in legislation.
- 5.4. The result of any consultation or advisory poll conducted under the act is advisory in nature and does not commit the Council or any other entity to a particular course of action.

## 6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1. A full analysis of the consultation process is included at Annex B.
- 6.2. The consultation was run primarily online with a survey; however steps were taken to ensure it was fully accessible and in addition, in-person/online meetings were held to provide information and encourage responses to the consultation:
- 6.3. Two sessions were arranged with the Youth Parliament on the 04 September and 11 September 2024. This received a positive response with the young people commenting on the importance of this issue in the session and generated over 100 hard copy survey responses.
- 6.4. Three online sessions were arranged with Councillors on the 18, 19 and 20 September.
- 6.5. Representatives from the Council's Elections Team attended Plymouth Area Disability Action Network (PADAN) on the 13 September to raise awareness of the consultation and encourage responses to the consultation.
- 6.6. The consultation was widely promoted through residents' newsletters, printed press and social media. An email was also sent to all registered electors.
- 6.7. In summary the consultation results were as follows:
  - A total of **7,051** responses were received to the online survey:
  - Change to 'Whole Council Elections' – **4,063** (57%)
  - Keep the current system – **2,443** (35%)
  - No preference – **545** (8%)
- 6.8. Stakeholder letters were received from four major organisations across the city, all indicating that they would support a change to 'whole council elections'.
- 6.9. When the result was analysed against the demographic information collected (respondent information/representation, age, health/disability and postcode district) in all but one category the majority selected change to 'whole council elections'. The category that selected 'keep the current system' as the preferred option were those that indicated that they were a serving MP or Councillor (28 respondents with 16 selecting keep the current system).
- 6.10. The main reasons why respondents selected a change was in relation to resources and democracy - save money, simpler process and align with the general election cycle. Also, stability was a recurring theme – effective governance, consistency time to implement decisions.

- 6.10. The main reason for selecting keep the current system was also around democracy and stability, citing better accountability and continuity.
- 6.11. The Audit and Governance Committee reviewed the consultation responses and were satisfied with the process and result of the consultation and formally commended the matter to Full Council for a decision.

## **7. DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

- 7.1. A vote to change the election system must be passed by a majority two thirds of voting members at a specially convened meeting to consider the resolution.
- 7.2. The resolution must specify the year for the first ordinary elections of the council at which all councillors are to be elected.
- 7.3. If the resolution is passed, then the council must produce an explanatory document available for public inspection and give the Local Government Boundary Commission for England notice that it has passed the resolution.
- 7.4. There is then a detailed process for the implementation of the change to the electoral cycle that is detailed through the Act and related guidance.
- 7.5. Members should note that should a resolution be passed, the election system cannot be changed to a different model within 5 years.

## **8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND: PLYMOUTH ELECTORAL REVIEW**

- 8.1. The Council was informed in November 2021 that the Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) intends to undertake an electoral review in Plymouth. This is in line with its duties in law to carry out such a review 'from time to time'. The last review of this type in Plymouth was in 2001.
- 8.2. The purpose of an electoral review is to consider the number of councillors elected to the council, the names, number and boundaries of the wards and the number of councillors to be elected to each ward. After the review, the Council will be required to have an 'all out' election, where every seat is contested.
- 8.3. The Council noted on 16 September 2024 Full Council meeting that the Boundary Commission will only start their review when the Council has made its decision on its election cycle.
- 8.4. The LGBCE has given the council a new review timetable which confirmed that the implementation of any changes will take effect from May 2027.
- 8.5. Plymouth City Council's election cycle consultation was conducted from 24 July to 22 September 2024.
- 8.6. Full Council will make its decision on whether to remain thirds on its election cycle or to change to all-out on 25 November 2024.
- 8.7. The Council will formally notify the LGBCE of its decision on 25 November 2024 in respect of the election cycle.
- 8.8. As soon as formal notice is received, the Boundary Commission will start their full electoral review. The Council's electoral cycle decision will inform the Boundary Commission's recommendations for consultation on Council size, warding patterns and corresponding number of councillors per ward.

- 8.9. Any new arrangements arising from the Boundary Commission's review will be laid before Parliament in the spring of 2026 and will take effect in May 2027.
- 8.10. Irrespective of whether Council decides to remain with the current electoral cycle or change to all out elections, the law mandates that PCC must hold an election by thirds in May 2026, followed by all-out elections in May 2027 which is when any new warding arrangements will take effect.

## **9. DECISION TO BE TAKEN**

- 9.1. Council is invited to consider the contents of this report, including the results of the consultation exercise, the arguments for and against both electoral cycle options and then make a decision as to whether the Council should make a change to whole council elections from May 2027.

# ELECTORAL CYCLE CONSULTATION REPORT

October 2024



## I. BACKGROUND

In November 2022, the City Council agreed to undertake a public engagement on the future Electoral Cycle for the Council. Following this, on 20 March 2023 Audit and Governance Committee approved the consultation question and Full Council on the 24 June 2024, delegated authority to Audit and Governance Committee to finalise the details of the consultation process, which it did on 23 July 2024.

The consultation was carried out over an eight-week period from 24 July to 22 September 2024 and engaged with stakeholders across the city on whether they would like to change to 'whole council elections' to elect their local councillors or keep the current system.

The legislation governing a potential move to whole council elections is the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The Act gives the Council power to move to whole council elections. It also requires the Council to consult such persons as it thinks appropriate on the proposed change. Councils undertaking such consultation must:

- a) Take reasonable steps to consult such persons that it believes appropriate on the proposed change;
- b) Have regard to the outcome of the consultation before making its decision;
- c) Convene a special meeting of the Council to make a resolution;
- d) Pass a resolution to change by a two-thirds majority of those voting;
- e) As soon as practicable after passing such a resolution to produce and make available to the public (at its own cost) an explanatory document setting out details of the new scheme;
- f) Give notice to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

The result of any consultation conducted under the act is advisory in nature and does not commit the Council to a particular course of action.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The consultation was hosted online between 24 July and 22 September. The survey remained open online for a further 4 days so that any hard copies received could be manually entered by council staff. A simple survey was designed to capture the view of residents and stakeholders on the decision to keep or change the Council's Electoral Cycle. The question used was single response question:

### **Which option would you prefer for Plymouth residents to elect their councillors?**

- Change to 'Whole Council Elections' (One election every four years, where all councillors are elected at the same time)
- Keep the current system (One councillor in each ward is elected every year for a four-year term. Elections occur every year, for three years, with no election in the fourth year)
- I have no preference

This question was followed with the opportunity for respondents to provide a reason for their answer. The survey asked for the respondents' partial postcode so that responses could be monitored from across the city - this would enable targeted promotion in low responding areas and also to identify any differences in views across different parts of the city. The survey also captured respondent information / representation e.g. business, community group, student etc.), age and health problem or disability.

In addition to the survey, in-person/online meetings were held to provide information and encourage responses to the consultation:

- Two sessions were arranged with the Youth Parliament on the 04 September and 11 September 2024. This received a positive response with the young people commenting on the importance of this issue in the session and generated over 100 hard copy survey responses.
- Three online sessions were arranged with Councillors on the 18, 19 and 20 September.
- Representatives from the Council's Elections Team attended Plymouth Area Disability Action Network (PADAN) on the 13 September to raise awareness of the consultation and encourage responses to the consultation.

### 3. PROMOTING THE CONSULTATION

The Council's Audit and Governance Committee approved the Communication and Engagement Strategy for the consultation including the communications materials on the 23 July 2024. Over the two-month consultation, the below communications and promotional activities were delivered:

- Two press releases were issued on the 24 July and the 09 September
- A web page was launched with all the information, FAQs and a link to the survey
- Advertising in four editions of the Plymouth Chronicle newspaper
- Two emails were sent to all Plymouth residents on the electoral register; the first was sent on the 24 July and the second was sent on 09 September
- An Email was sent to Learning Disability providers across the city and the voluntary and community sector (inc. Community Builders)
- There was promotion in Plymouth libraries – along with hard copies of the survey
- Promotion of the consultation was included in four editions of the Council's residents e-newsletter to 26,400 people
- There was promotion on the Council's new What's App channel
- Posters were displayed in key Council premises e.g. libraries / Council House etc.
- Stakeholder toolkits sent to key local organisations e.g. universities / housing associations / NHS / business and voluntary sector groups etc. with a request to assist with promotion (including information sent to all Councillors)
- Personal letters sent to key stakeholders inviting them for feedback
- Development of an animation explaining the different electoral cycle models – promoted on social media and to key groups and organisations
- A paid-for social media advertising campaign ran for the last month of the consultation – reaching 110,761 people in the city, resulting in 6,958 clicks to the consultation web page
- Targeted advertising in areas in the city that demonstrated a lower response than other areas
- General social media across all available channels, resulting in 14 posts. Across Facebook, the organic reach was 26,307, resulting in an engagement figure of 1,699. Across X (formerly Twitter), the organic impressions were 6,553. We also posted across LinkedIn.

### 4. THE RESPONSE

A total of **7,055** responses were received to this consultation. This response significantly exceeded the original target of 5,000.

**Table 1**

Completed online including hard copies received and entered	7,051
Stakeholder letters received from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts University Plymouth</li> <li>• Police and Crime Commissioner</li> </ul>	

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plymouth Community Homes</li> <li>• Plymouth Marjon University</li> </ul> |  |
|--|--|

## 5. WHO RESPONDED?

### 5.1 Respondent information/representation

Respondents were asked to select one or more of the following answers which enabled the results to be analysed from multiple perspectives. The majority of respondents indicated that they lived in Plymouth (88%, 6,632), 5.5 per cent (415) of the respondents also indicated that they worked for a public sector organisation. Three per cent (238) respondents indicated that they were a student or in education in the city.

**Table 2**

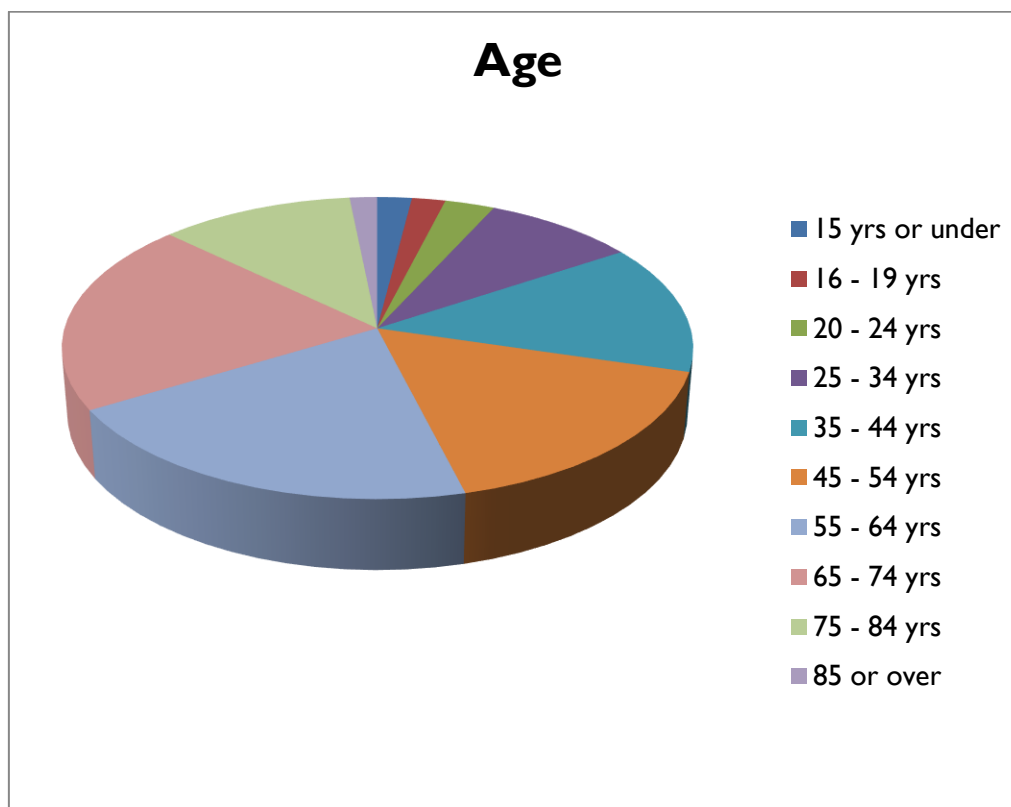
<b>Are you? (Tick all that apply)</b>	<b>% Answer</b>	<b>No.</b>
Living in Plymouth	88%	6,632
A serving MP or Councillor	0.5%	28
A student or in education in Plymouth	3%	238
Representing a voluntary / community organisation	1%	96
A representative of a local business	1%	84
Living outside of Plymouth	1%	80*
Working for a public sector organisation	5.5%	415
No Response		(255)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7,828</b>

\*See notes on analysis of data section

### 5.2 Age

Respondents were asked to select the age group that was relevant to them. The highest responding age categories were respondents aged between 55yrs and 74yrs – this accounted for 40 per cent of the total response. Those aged between 35yrs and 54yrs accounted for nearly 30 per cent.

The purpose of collecting this information was to monitor and enable targeted promotion in low responding age groups. The information was also captured to identify the views from younger age groups who would potentially be affected by the decision in the future. Four per cent of respondents (268) were aged 19 years or under. Seven per cent of respondents (464) were aged 24 years or under.

**Figure 1**

### 5.3 Health problem or disability

Respondents were asked about whether their day-to-day activities were limited because of a health problem or disability, which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months. The purpose of collecting this information was to ensure representations were being made by people who are limited in their day-to-day activities by a health condition or disability and to identify any potential issues around the accessibility of elections. 23 per cent (1,471) of respondents indicated that they had a health condition or disability that limited them a lot or a little.

**Table 3**

Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability?	% Answer	No.
Yes, limited a little	15%	967
Yes, limited a lot	8%	504
No	70%	4,494
Prefer not to say	7%	438
No Response	-	(648)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7,051</b>

### 5.4 Postcode district

Respondents were asked to provide the first part of their postcode to enable targeted advertising in areas of the city that demonstrated a lower response than other areas and also to identify whether respondents from different parts of the city had different views about the electoral cycle. 6,267 (89%) respondents provided valid postcode information for analysis.



Of the 6,267 respondents, the highest number of responses were received from respondents living in the PL6 postcode district (932, 14.9%), the second highest number were received from respondents living in PL3 (898, 14.3%).

The lowest number received within the Plymouth boundary were from the PL1 and PL2 postcode districts (10.4% and 9.7% respectively)

42 respondents (0.7%) provided postcode information that clearly indicated that they lived in a postcode district outside the Plymouth boundary.

The data provided below is derived from only the postcode data provided and does not take into consideration whether the respondents indicated that they lived in or outside the city.

The data is only able to provide district level information, however Table 4 provides an indication of the area coverage and the attributable wards.

**Table 4**

District	Coverage	Attributable Ward(s)	No.	%
PL1	Plymouth City Centre, Barbican, Devonport, The Hoe, Millbridge, Stoke, Stonehouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devonport</li> <li>• St Peter and the Waterfront</li> <li>• Stoke</li> </ul>	652	10.4
PL2	Beacon Park, Ford, Keyham, North Prospect, Pennycross, Home Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devonport</li> <li>• Ham</li> <li>• Peverell</li> <li>• Stoke</li> </ul>	608	9.7
PL3	Efford, Hartley, Laira, Mannamead, Milehouse, Peverell, Higher Compton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compton</li> <li>• Efford and Lipson</li> <li>• Peverell</li> <li>• Stoke</li> </ul>	898	14.3
PL4	Lipson, Mount Gould, Mutley, Greenbank, Prince Rock, St. Judes, Barbican (north)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compton</li> <li>• Drake</li> <li>• Efford and Lipson</li> <li>• St Peter and the Waterfront</li> <li>• Sutton and Mount Gould</li> </ul>	758	12.1
PL5	Crownhill, Ernesettle, Honicknowle, Whitleigh, St. Budeaux, Tamerton Foliot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budshead</li> <li>• Eggbuckland</li> <li>• Ham</li> <li>• Honicknowle</li> <li>• St Budeaux</li> <li>• Southway</li> </ul>	786	12.5
PL6	Derriford, Eggbuckland, Estover, Leigham, Roborough, Southway Lopwell, Woolwell, Bickleigh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budshead</li> <li>• Eggbuckland</li> <li>• Moor View</li> <li>• Southway</li> </ul>	932	14.9
PL7	Plympton, Sparkwell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plympton Erle</li> <li>• Plympton Chaddlewood</li> <li>• Plympton St Mary</li> </ul>	773	12.3

PL9	Plymstock, Heybrook Bay, Mount Batten, Wembury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plymstock Dunstone</li> <li>• Plymstock Radford</li> </ul>	818	13.1
Outside boundary			42	0.7
<b>Total</b>			<b>6,267</b>	<b>100</b>

## 6. NOTES ON ANALYSIS OF DATA

### 6.1 Rounding and conversions

The percentage figures included in this report have been rounded to the nearest whole number and therefore may not add up to 100 per cent in all cases.

In some cases, the number of respondents included in the analysis is very low and therefore the percentage conversion result is only an indication of proportion and should be treated with caution.

### 6.2 Postcode district

A review of the data identified 367 entries where the postcode needed to be manually cleaned to provide the most accurate picture in terms of geographical response (e.g. PL 1 to PL1).

42 respondents provided postcode information that clearly indicated that they lived in a postcode district outside the Plymouth boundary. This is different to the 80 respondents who indicated that they lived outside the city boundary when asked this specifically.

This data has been analysed at district level only and the following should be taken into consideration:

- There were discrepancies in the respondent answers
- Some respondents answered that they lived both within and outside the city
- Some postcode data did not match the respondents view of whether they lived in or outside the city
- The postcode districts of PL6, PL7 and PL9 stretch beyond the city boundary.

Closer analysis of the data provided indicated that these discrepancies are few in number and therefore no adjustment has been made to the results presented.

### 6.3 Comment analysis

Of the 7,051 online responses, 4,306 respondents added comments to provide a reason for the answer they gave about the electoral cycle. Due to the significant number of comments received in response to only one question, it is likely that the information will reach a point of saturation, that is, the review and analysis of the comments will no longer provide any new information past a certain number of coded responses.

The qualitative content analysis was supported by two Researchers-in-Residence working with the Council on the Plymouth Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC), who provided a training sessions and joint coding exercise of this data with the team. It was agreed that the independently conducted double coding of the first 100 comments would help produce a consolidated coding frame, and that this would be used to provide a standardised method for coding the comments by different team members.

It was further agreed that due to the large number of comments and the relatively clear coding categories, 20 per cent of them would be randomly selected for analysis. This would give a robust overview of the themes coming through from respondents as to why they selected the option they did. 861 comments were randomly selected from the 4,306 responses. More than one code can be

attributed to each comment, therefore the number of codes in the table below may total more than 4,306.

## 7. RESULTS

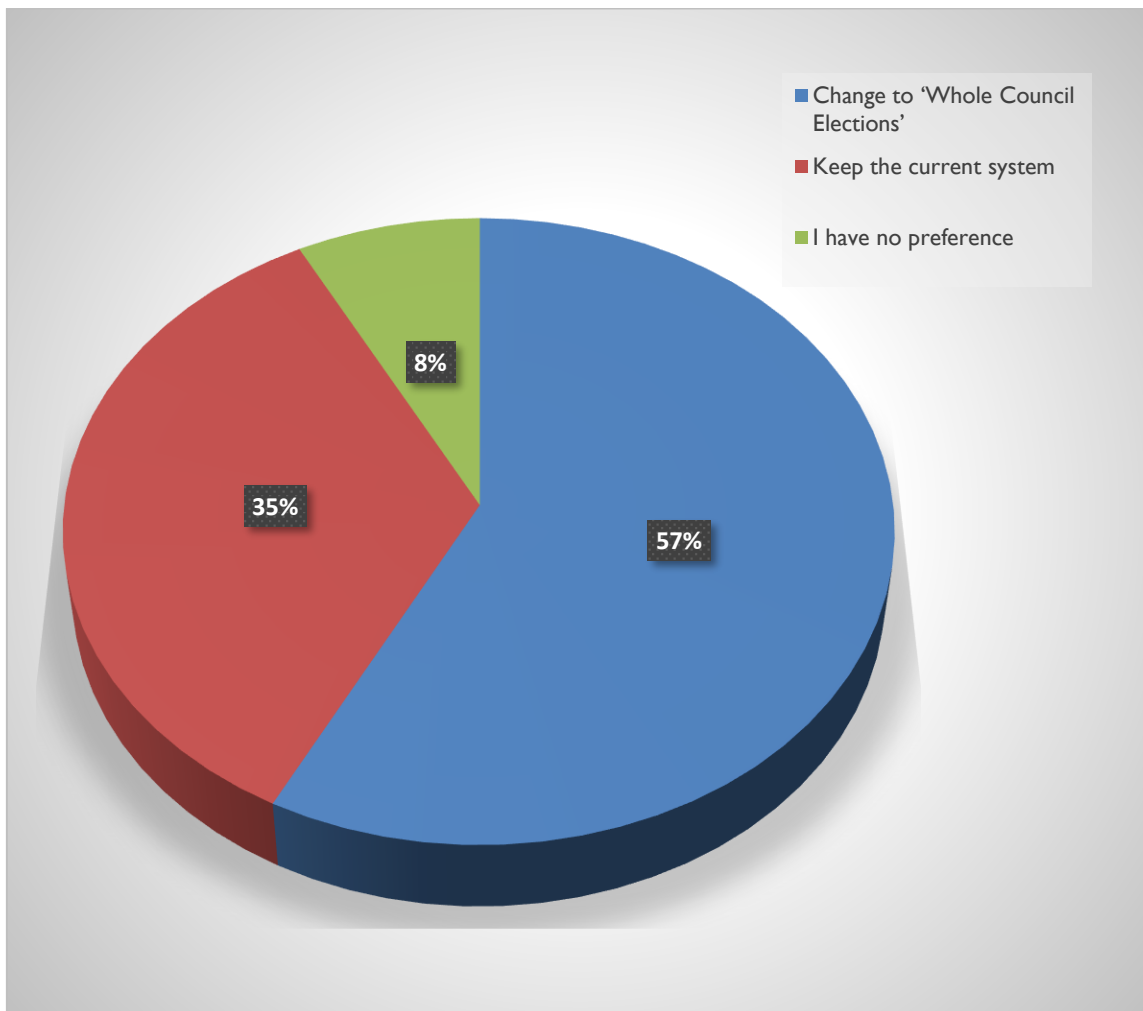
### 7.1 Overall Result

Respondents were asked to indicate, by selecting one option only, which option they would prefer for Plymouth residents to elect their councillors?

A total of **7,051** responses were received to the online survey:

- Change to 'Whole Council Elections' – **4,063** (57%)
- Keep the current system – **2,443** (35%)
- No preference – **545** (8%)

Figure 2



When the 545 responses indicating 'no preference' are removed the re-calculated result is as follows:

- Change to 'Whole Council Elections' - **62%**
- Keep the current system - **37%**

## 8. COMMENT ANALYSIS

Respondents were asked to provide reasons why they selected as they did from the options provided. Table 5 below sets an analysis of a randomly selected sample of respondents (861 or 20%):

**Table 5**

<b>Change to Whole Council Elections</b>	<b>No.</b>
Resources: Save money	207
Democracy: Process simpler/aligns with general election	101
Stability - Effective Governance	92
Stability - Consistency of Council	89
Stability - Implementation time to deliver/benefit	77
Democracy: Turnout/Voter fatigue	60
Stability - [Catchall/non-elaborated]	51
Democracy: Accountability	50
Stability - Reduce flipflopping/procrastination/excuses	22
Resources: Reduce burden on buildings / staff	23
Democracy: Less pre-election period	11
<b>Keep the current system</b>	<b>No.</b>
Democracy: Accountability	98
Stability: Continuity/Gradual change/Fresh	80
Democracy: Democracy Catchall/non-elaborated	50
Stability: Process/Status Quo	48
Democracy: Cllr Engagement/Visibility	27
Democracy: Less party politics/concentrated power/complacency	27
<b>Other comments</b>	<b>No.</b>
OTHER/Change	39
OTHER/Keep	29
OTHER/No Preference	10

### 8.1 Change to Whole Council Elections

Of those who opted to change to 'Whole Council Elections', the most common reason related to resources and the potential for the council to saving money (207). This code captured all comments relating to the benefits in terms of cost savings that might arise from less frequent elections. In the information accompanying the consultation, it was outlined that 'holding a local election every year costs around £380k every year. If we move to conducting elections every four years, it is estimated that we will save £1.4m.' It was not further clarified that the £1.4m saving related to a 10-year period

rather than a four-year period. Therefore, any comments relating to savings need to be viewed in that context.

The second most common reason provided for changing the system was that it could be considered to be better for democracy due to the system being simpler (101). This code captured all comments for changing the cycle saying it is better for democracy overall, and some specifically stated that it was simpler / clearer / less confusing for citizens to follow or mentioned alignment with the general election cycle to make sense.

Alongside Resource, and Democracy, Stability was one of the key themes that emerged from analysis of the comments. 92 comments related to stability in terms of the change allowing more effective governance. These arguments for change related to the benefits or outcomes of having a more consistent membership of the Council in terms of long-term decision-making and strategic planning. Examples of the comments cited here typically included: 'effective delivery', 'getting things done', or 'better planning / decision-making'. 89 comments related to stability in terms of the consistency of the actual formation or constitution of the council membership. 77 comments related to stability in terms of the longer period of time between elections which would allow for long-term delivery and realising the benefits or seeing through plans / delivery. A further 51 comments referenced improved stability but did not elaborate further.

There were 60 comments relating to how a system of less frequent elections would enhance the democratic process by improving voter turnout or reducing voter fatigue.

## **8.2 Keep the current system**

There was less variation overall in terms of the reasons being presented by those who selected 'keep the current system'. The most commonly occurring theme (98) was that the current system provided better democratic accountability. This coding category included all comments relating to enhancing accountability through more frequent elections; including comments such as being able to 'keep Councillors on their toes', 'easier to replace', 'ensuring they are more visible', and 'can judge performance more frequently'.

As with those who wanted to change the system, stability was also a commonly occurring theme for those who wanted to keep the current system. 80 respondents referred to the stability of the current cycle, and the perceived benefit of not replacing all members at once, such as sharing knowledge between incoming / outgoing members and enabling more continuity in decision-making. Comments also related to keeping things 'fresh' or 'dynamic' due to regularly refreshing members.

48 comments were coded as 'stability' as they provided arguments that emphasised maintaining the status quo through an established process or maintaining the status quo in various forms. Examples include 'tried and tested', 'fair or familiar for voters'.

## **9. ANALYSIS OF RESPONDENTS**

Further analysis was carried out to help identify the views of different groups of people who responded.

### **9.1 Result by respondent information/representation**

Table 6 sets out the overall result of the consultation against the respondent's information that was collected. For the most part respondents selected 'Living in Plymouth' (6,632, 88%), however respondents could select more than one option if they were representing a business or attending a school in Plymouth for example. The result for those who indicated that they lived in Plymouth saw a similar split to the overall result (58% change/34% keep) and has therefore not been reported in the table below.

#### **Table 6**

NB: Percentage results should be treated with caution where the responding numbers are low.

Responding group	Change to 'Whole Council Elections'		Keep current system		No preference		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Serving MP or Councillor	11	39%	16	57%	1	4%	28	100%
A student or in education in Plymouth	120	50%	55	23%	63	27%	238	100%
Representing a voluntary/community organisation	53	55%	32	33%	11	12%	96	100%
Representative of a local business	48	57%	30	36%	6	7%	84	100%
Working for a Public Sector organisation	270	65%	115	28%	30	7%	415	100%

In all but one of the groups set out in Table 6, change to 'Whole Council Elections' was selected by the most respondents. Out of the 28 respondents who indicated they were a serving MP or Councillor, 16 selected 'keep the current system', with 11 selecting 'change to whole council elections'.

## 9.2 Result by age group

Table 7 below presents the result of the consultation question by age group. In every age category most respondents (50% or more) selected 'change to whole council elections.' The age category of 65 – 74 years had the highest percentage of respondents selecting 'keep the current system' (40%), and 15 years or under had the highest percentage of those selecting 'no preference' (35%).

When analysing the data from the younger age groups (24 and under) there were 464 total responses. 242 respondents selected 'change to whole council elections' (52%). 135 selected 'keep the current system' (29%) and 87 selected 'no preference' (19%).

**Table 7**

Age (years)	Change to 'Whole Council Elections'		Keep current system		No preference		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
15 or under	67	50%	21	15%	48	35%	136	100%
16 – 19	72	55%	39	19%	21	16%	132	100%
20 – 24	103	53%	75	38%	18	9%	196	100%
25 – 34	331	55%	201	34%	68	11%	600	100%
35 – 44	575	61%	263	28%	98	11%	936	100%

45 – 54	680	61%	344	31%	89	8%	1113	100%
55 – 64	845	61%	459	34%	72	5%	1376	100%
65 – 74	770	55%	564	40%	65	5%	1399	100%
75 – 84	406	53%	322	42%	38	5%	766	100%
85 or over	71	66%	29	27%	8	7%	108	100%

### 9.3 Result by health problem or disability

Table 8 shows the result of the consultation question against those indicating that they had a health problem or disability, limiting them a little or a lot. The results show that regardless of respondent group, most respondents selected 'change to whole council elections.' A total of 1,471 respondents indicated that they had a health problem or disability, limiting them a little or a lot. Of these 807 (55%) selected 'change to whole council elections', 552 (37%) selected 'keep the current system' and 112 (8%) selected 'no preference'.

**Table 8**

Health problem or disability	Change to 'Whole Council Elections'		Keep current system		No preference		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Limited a lot	286	57%	182	36%	36	7%	504	100%
Limited a little	521	54%	370	38%	76	8%	967	100%
No health problem or disability	2689	60%	1469	33%	336	7%	4494	100%

### 9.4 Postcode District

Most respondents in all postcode districts selected 'change to whole council elections'. PL1 district had the highest percentage of respondents selecting 'change to whole council elections' (65%).

PL7 had the highest percentage of respondents selecting 'keep the current system' (37%). In all other districts, except for PL1, 35 per cent of respondents selected 'keep the current system'. PL4 district had the highest percentage of respondents who selected 'no preference' (11%).

**Table 9**

*NB: Percentage results should be treated with caution where the responding numbers are low.*

District	Change to 'Whole Council Elections'		Keep current system		No preference		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
PL1	423	65%	185	28%	44	7%	652	100%
PL2	347	57%	211	35%	50	8%	608	100%
PL3	523	58%	311	35%	64	7%	898	100%
PL4	413	54%	262	35%	83	11%	758	100%

PL5	439	<b>56%</b>	276	35%	71	9%	786	100%
PL6	537	<b>58%</b>	327	35%	68	7%	932	100%
PL7	442	<b>57%</b>	283	37%	48	6%	773	100%
PL9	490	<b>60%</b>	285	35%	43	5%	818	100%

The highest percentage of respondents who selected 'change to whole council elections' are located around the central, waterfront and Plymstock areas. The highest percentage of respondents who selected 'keep the current electoral system' are located in the north and Plympton area of the city.

## 10. STAKEHOLDER LETTERS

Stakeholder toolkits were developed and sent to key local organisations with a request to assist with promotion, alongside a personal letter from the Council's Chief Executive, inviting feedback on the Council's electoral cycle. Four responses were received, each indicating that they had reached a consensus as an organisation that they would be supportive of a change to 'whole council elections'.

### Arts University Plymouth

"Arts University Plymouth's executive team is in favour of an 'all out' election."

### Police and Crime Commissioner

"I support the change to the election cycle in Plymouth to every four years. Democracy is at the heart of a cohesive society".

The Police and Crime Commissioner provided several reasons including:

- Alignment with the Police and Crime Commissioner elections
- Stability of leadership for a period of four years at a time, enabling better long-term financial and policy decisions
- The cost to the taxpayer for multi-year elections is an important consideration.

### Plymouth Community Homes (PCH)

"Plymouth Community Homes is in favour of the council moving away from the 'elections by thirds' system and would support the authority in adopting an alternative model where local elections are held every four years, with all 57 seats on the council contested at the same time."

- PCH feels the 4-year system provides clearer opportunities for our residents, our staff and our community partners to both understand and engage with the election cycle, and this would help to reduce voter apathy.
- It would enable a longer-term commitment to change, which could impact positively on our services and our operational work where we are working in close partnership with the council.
- A key point in our recommending the 4-year cycle is also linked to how we manage and govern ourselves. Our Board meets six times a year and is made up of 12 people, including two PCH tenants and two nominees from Plymouth City Council who are sitting ward councillors.
- The current 'election by thirds' system can result in frequent change to the sitting ward councillors who are members of the Board of PCH, and this causes some disruption as it impacts on the continuity of our governance arrangements.



**Plymouth Marjon University**

“A consensus was reached [University’s Executive Leadership Team] that the move to a four-year cycle appeared favourable, both in terms of simplicity for the voter and additionally the financial impact.”

This page is intentionally left blank