

Audit and Governance Committee



Date of meeting:	05 September 2022
Title of Report:	Public consultation regarding the Council's electoral cycle
Lead Cabinet Member:	Councillor Richard Bingley (Leader of the Council)
Lead Strategic Director:	Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive)
Author:	Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive)
Contact Email:	Giles.perritt@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Electoral Cycle 2022
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To seek the Committee's endorsement of a public consultation using powers available under Section 116 of the Local Government Act 2003, between June and August 2022. This consultation will engage with stakeholders across the city on the issue of moving from the current electoral cycle of elections 'by thirds' to whole council elections.

The use of powers under Section 116 of the Local Government Act 2003, does not in any way bind the authority to seeking a resolution to amend the election cycle. 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.

Recommendations and Reasons

The Audit and Governance Committee recommends to council that –

1. a public engagement consultation is undertaken using powers under Section 116 of the Local Government Act 2003 between June and August 2023 on the issue of moving from the current electoral cycle of elections to 'whole council' elections once every four years.
2. the Audit and Governance Committee oversees and agrees the design and implementation of the consultation, in particular who will be consulted/engaged with and how.
3. The council confirms that the Boundary Commission Review commences in December 2023 and is conducted across 2024/25 with resulting arrangements implemented in 2026.

Reason:

- To ensure that the Council's position on its intended elections cycle can be confirmed to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England prior to the commencement of the City Council's electoral review, subject to its commencement in December 2023.
- To better understand public and stakeholder views on either retaining the current arrangements of elections 'by thirds' taking place in three years out of four, or on moving to a cycle of 'all out' elections once every four years.

- Recommendation three ensures that City Councils election team will undertake its work in relation to the review in 2025 (a fallow year) and will not impact on the Local City and Police & Crime Commissioner Elections to be held in 2024.

Alternative options considered and rejected

To not undertake a public consultation. This would mean that the Council would not have the benefit of a formal record of public and stakeholder views about the Council’s electoral arrangements to inform future consideration of the matter.

To undertake a public consultation commencing prior to the dates recommended. Decisions have not yet been made as to the scope and design of a public consultation, and the Council is not due to consider the matter until its September 2022 meeting, leaving a somewhat tight timescale for a full consultation, analysis and consideration of the results prior to local elections in May 2023.

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:

The costs associated with a public consultation and analysis of the results, likely to be in the region of £26k will be met from within existing revenue resources. The financial implications of any change to the Council’s electoral cycle are referenced within the accompanying briefing report, but do not arise as a result of the recommendation of this report, as the results of the consultation exercise would not be binding on the Council, and any decision about changing the electoral cycle would be a matter for future consideration by the Council.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

Subject to the decision of Council in June 2022, the consultation will take place largely on-line, reducing reliance on printed media, although paper copies will be available where necessary.

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.*

An equalities impact assessment will be undertaken to ensure that the consultation will be carried out with due regard to facilitating participation by those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Subject to the recommendations of this report being agreed, this would be considered by the Council in June 2022.

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							

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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)						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	ba.21. 22.30 0	Leg	EJ/38 851/1 5.7.22	Mon Off		HR		Asset s		Strat Proc	
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive)											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 18/03/2022											