

# Audit and Governance Committee



Date of meeting:	23 July 2024
Title of Report:	<b>Public consultation regarding the Council's electoral cycle</b>
Lead Strategic Director:	Tracey Lee (Chief Executive)
Author:	Liz Bryant (Head of Legal Services)
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Your Reference:	Electoral Cycle 2024
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

## Purpose of Report

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 considered the consultation process and approved the consultation question. At its EGM on Monday 24 June 2024 the City Council delegated authority to Audit and Governance Committee to finalise the details of the consultation process. The Committee is therefore being asked to endorse the recommended approach to carrying out the consultation and engagement activity. This consultation aims to engage 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.

In order to consider a change to electoral cycle, the Council is required to undertake a public consultation process. In doing so however, the authority is not bound to seek a resolution to amend the electoral cycle. Whilst the result of any consultation conducted must be considered as part of the Council's decision-making process, it does not commit the council or any other entity to a particular course of action.

## Recommendations and Reasons

1. The consultation is carried out over eight weeks from 24 July 2024 to 22 September 2024 – this extended time ensures ample time for consideration over the summer period.
2. The approach as outlined in Appendix One is agreed regarding the implementation of the consultation, in particular who will be consulted / engaged with and how – this detailed plan will ensure that the Gunning Principles are adhered to.
3. The feedback from the consultation will be analysed and submitted to Audit and Governance Committee before being presented to the City Council in November 2024 when the decision will be taken. This is to ensure members have time to consider the feedback and subsequent recommendations.

4. The outcome of the decision taken by the Council regarding our future electoral cycle will then be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission before they commence their warding patterns review later in the year.

### Alternative options considered and rejected

The decision to hold consultation was agreed by the City Council on 21 November 2022. The recommendations in this report are around the scope of that consultation – therefore no alternatives have 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:

The costs associated with a public consultation and analysis of the results, likely to be in the region of £5k 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:

The consultation will take place largely online, 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.*

### 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
1	Electoral Cycle Consultation							
2	Draft Press Release							
3	Electoral Cycle Communication and engagement Assets							

**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)						
	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.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Sign off:**

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Liz Bryant											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 12/07/2024											