

ELECTION REVIEW UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2024



I. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Council is currently in the process of consulting on its electoral cycle by asking the public whether they have a preference for the current elections by thirds system or a change to whole Council elections. The Council committed to undergoing this consultation process in November 2022. The details of the consultation were approved by Audit and Governance Committee on 23 July 2024.
- 1.2. The consultation commenced on 24 July 2024 and will conclude on 22 September 2024. 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. Full Council is due to consider the result of the consultation at its meeting on 25 November 2024.
- 1.3. In addition to the electoral cycle consultation, the Boundary Commission is in the process of reviewing the number of elected members the Council requires, as well as ward boundaries and sizes. The Council has submitted its Council size submission following agreement by full Council on 24 June 2024. However, the Boundary Commission has now confirmed that it will not conduct its own consultation processes until such time as the Council has concluded its own consultation and decision-making process on the electoral cycle issue.
- 1.4. Consequently, the Boundary Commission has updated their review timetable and confirmed that the implementation of any changes will not take effect until 2027. This means that all out elections cannot take place in 2026, but instead will be held in 2027. The elections in 2026 will therefore be by thirds. In light of the change in cycle arising from both reviews, clarity is required as to the timetables for 2026 and 2027 which will be dependent on the result of the electoral cycle review. The Boundary Commission's amended timetable for its review is included at Appendix B. It should be noted that the timetable has been amended due to the Council's electoral cycle review being decided upon in November and the Commission's view being that it can no longer complete its review by 2026.

2. SCENARIO PLANNING

- 2.1. The result of the electoral cycle review and the Boundary Commission's new timetable give rise to two potential timelines for the Council's elections over the forthcoming three year, as per the table below.

Topic	Council decides to remain with current electoral cycle	Council decides to change to a 'whole council election' cycle
Dates of future elections	2026: election by thirds 2027: whole council election resulting from Boundary Commission 2028: election by thirds 2029: election by thirds 2030: fallow year	2026: election by thirds 2027: whole council election resulting from Boundary Commission 2028: no elections 2029: no elections 2030: no elections

	2031: election by thirds	2031: whole council election
Councillor retirement schedules	<p>Councillors who were elected in 2022 and therefore due to be re-elected in 2026 will have a one-year term.</p> <p>Councillors who were elected in 2023 and 2024 who were expecting to be up for election in 2026 will have an extended term to 2027. A schedule of member retirements based on year of election is included at Appendix C.</p> <p>The future councillor retirement schedule will be set out in the new Order resulting from the Boundary Commission review.</p>	<p>2026: councillors elected will have a one-year term (As per the schedule at Appendix C)</p>

3. REVIEW OF THE LEGISLATION

- 3.1. The relevant legislation states that the Boundary Commission must only make a Parliamentary Order for a new electoral scheme where a council is changing from whole elections to halves or thirds, and this will also automatically trigger the requirement for the Boundary Commission to consider whether an electoral review is required. When changing to whole council elections, there is no requirement for a Parliamentary Order to be made to change the scheme. The Council resolution to change to whole elections takes precedence.
- 3.2. If the Council decides to make a change to its scheme of elections, it must:
- Publicise the change, including producing an explanatory document which sets out the details of the new scheme including when the first elections will take place under the scheme
 - As soon as practicable after the resolution has been passed notify the Boundary Commission of the change.
 - Hold ordinary elections in accordance with the previous scheme until the year of change decided by the resolution of Council. This means that if the change is to take place in 2027, elections by thirds are a legislative requirement in 2026.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1. The Council must formally notify the Boundary Commission of its decision on 25 November in respect of the election cycle.
- 4.2. As soon as formal notice is received, the Boundary Commission will start their full electoral review. The formal notice of 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.
- 4.3. Any new arrangements arising from the Boundary Commission's review will be laid before Parliament in the autumn of 2026 and will take effect in May 2027.
- 4.4. 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.