

SUMMARY OF MERITS AND DISADVANTAGES OF WHOLE COUNCIL ELECTIONS AND ELECTIONS BY THIRDS

Merits of elections by thirds

- ◆ Encourages people into the habit of voting in May every year
- ◆ A Council is judged on its performance annually, rather than every 4 years
- ◆ The electorate can react more quickly to local circumstances and Council decisions
- ◆ The Council better reflects public opinion locally
- ◆ Political parties have fewer candidates to find at any one time
- ◆ There are more frequent opportunities for potential candidates to stand
- ◆ Easier to assimilate newly elected Members as numbers are less
- ◆ Disruption to ongoing policies etc. is less significant
- ◆ Elections staff maintain their expertise because of frequency of elections
- ◆ Counts are easier to organise for a single councillor per ward
- ◆ Less likely for local situation to be influenced by national situation politically (i.e. whole council election can be heavily influenced by low point in party fortunes nationally)
- ◆ More difficult to change political balance of authority (although can change more frequently if evenly balanced politically)
- ◆ Creates greater continuity/stability
- ◆ Less likely that controversial decisions will be delayed because of election
- ◆ Easier to organise parish elections if contested
- ◆ With the trend towards parliamentary election on same day as local election, result less likely to be influenced by voting on national issues
- ◆ Rising 18 year olds do not have to wait so long before they can vote
- ◆ In moving to whole council elections, some councillors will only serve one year before having to stand again for election
- ◆ If town and parish elections continue to be combined with district elections, the same situation will apply to parishes where, depending upon the existing cycle, the whole council would have to stand again for re-election
- ◆ More difficult to manage whole council and all town/parish councils elections on same day
- ◆ With propensity for parliamentary election to be held on same day as district election, very difficult to manage parliamentary, whole district and town/parish councils on same day
- ◆ Less likelihood for intermittent by-elections as these tend to be held, where possible, on the date when the election by thirds is being held
- ◆ More difficult to revert to election by thirds if Members dislike whole council elections
- ◆ More difficult for towns and parishes to change periodic cycle if Council reverts back to thirds

- ◆ While towns and parishes could remain on existing cycle, costs would increase as these are shared currently on combined elections.

Merits of elections by whole council

- ◆ A council has a clear mandate from the electorate for 4 years
- ◆ An elector can vote for the whole council as well as a councillor
- ◆ Creates greater stability over the 4 year period with no chance (subject to by-elections) of a change in political control
- ◆ Greater propensity for change in political control
- ◆ Avoids situation where political control of council can change in election by thirds but some electors in single member wards have no opportunity to vote
- ◆ Whole electorate votes together, compared to some who only vote once or twice in the three yearly cycle in one or two member wards respectively
- ◆ Greater publicity for whole council election may generate higher turnout
- ◆ Evidence suggests (according to Electoral Commission) that slightly higher turn out in whole council elections
- ◆ Evidence suggests (according to Electoral Commission) that electorate associates more clearly with whole council election rather than dates when thirds
- ◆ Reduced expenditure for Council
- ◆ Reduced expenditure by political parties because less elections
- ◆ Less disruptive for staff
- ◆ Induction training required less frequently
- ◆ Less campaigning needed by parties (two fallow years in four)
- ◆ Problem with publicity purdah only occurs once every four years.

Clearly some arguments can be used both for and against whole council elections or elections by thirds.