

# Agenda

## Extraordinary Meeting of Council

**Tuesday, 8 November 2022 at 6.00 pm**  
**At Council Chamber - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**This agenda gives notice of items to be considered in private as required by Regulations 5 (4) and (5) of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.**

**1 Apologies for Absence**

To receive any apologies for absence.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

Members to declare any interests in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

**3 Council Election Cycle - Consultation to explore a change to the current schedule of elections in Sandwell**

5 - 78

To consider the outcome of the consultation to explore a change to the schedule of elections.



**Kim Bromley-Derry CBE DL**  
**Managing Director Commissioner**  
Sandwell Council House  
Freeth Street  
Oldbury  
West Midlands

**Distribution**

Councillor R Jones (Chair)

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## Report to Extraordinary Council

8 November 2022

<b>Subject:</b>	Review of the Council's Elections Cycle
<b>Director:</b>	Director of Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer Surjit Tour
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Electoral Services Manager, Tracey Hurst Tracey _Hurst @Sandwell.gov.uk

### 1 Recommendations







- 1.1 That Council considers this report and notes the findings and outcome of the public consultation detailed in **Appendix A**.
- 1.2 That Council resolves whether: -
  - a) To continue with the current cycle of elections by thirds; or
  - b) To move to whole council elections every 4 years to take effect from a date specified by council in the resolution;
- 1.3 That should council resolve to change the electoral cycle to whole council elections once every four years, council authorises the MD Commissioner to issue the necessary public information as required by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and undertake any further action necessary to give effect to the Council's decision.



## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 At its meeting on 26 July 2022, Council approved arrangements for public consultation in connection with the possible change of the election cycle from the current system of 'election by thirds' to 'whole council elections' occurring once every four years. This followed directions by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities that the council reviews its current elections cycle.
- 2.2 This report details the outcome of the public consultation and other relevant information to enable council to determine the council's electoral cycle.

## 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people
	People live well and age well
	Strong resilient communities The corporate plan commits the council to engaging with and listening to residents, businesses and communities. The recommendations of this report seek to deliver these commitments in respect of a key element of the council's democratic arrangements and in line with the commitment to the successful delivery of Sandwell's Improvement Plan.
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods
	A strong and inclusive economy
	A connected and accessible Sandwell



## 4 Context and Key Issues

### 4.1 Background

- 4.2 On 18 January 2022, Kemi Badenoch, Minister of State at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) confirmed in a [written ministerial statement](#) that after due consideration, the Secretary of State was minded to use his powers under the Local Government Act 1999 to intervene at the council.
- 4.3 The statement set out the Secretary of State's decision and invited representations from the council. The minister added *"We are also seeking their views on moving to a four yearly election cycle at the earliest opportunity and how best to achieve this."*
- 4.4 On the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2022, in its formal response to the Secretary of State, the council advised *"We are in the process of preparing a clear plan of action to progress this matter, that includes details of our consultation and engagement activity, so that an informed decision can be made at full council as soon as it is practicable to do so."*
- 4.5 On 22 March 2022, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announced an intervention package and a set of Directions to ensure the council was able to comply with its best value duty under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999. These Directions were in-part influenced by the Grant Thornton report following their Value for Money Governance Review of December 2021.
- 4.6 On the 26 July 2022, council considered a [Consultation Report](#) including a consultation strategy and resolved to commence a public consultation to explore changing the council's electoral cycle (**Minute No. 104/22**).

### 5.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 5.1 The council undertook public consultation, which ran for six weeks from the 1 August to 16 September 2022.
- 5.2 The consultation question was:

**"How often would you prefer to elect councillors to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council?"**



The possible answers were -

Option 1 – by thirds

Option 2 – whole council elections.

- 5.3 The approach adopted was to use an online public survey published on a dedicated webpage on the Electoral Services page of the council's website. The survey was also published on the council's consultation webpage.
- 5.4 Residents were also able to respond to the consultation via paper copies of the survey. Copies of the survey as well as posters and leaflets were located in every library and Sandwell local offices. Paper copies were also posted to home addresses upon request.
- 5.5 A dedicated email address was also set up, which allowed residents to ask questions, provide further comments.
- 5.6 In total, 487 people responded to the consultation. 470 responded online and 17 responded via the paper survey. The table below shows the number of responses by channel used.
- 5.7 Of the total number of consultation responses received, 69% of consultees voted to retain the current electoral cycle of electing "by thirds".
- 5.8 Table of results.

Total of responses to the Consultation by response type				
Response	Online	Paper	Total	% of Total
Option 1 – By Thirds	325	13	338	69.4%
Option 2 – Whole Council	145	4	149	30.6%
Total	470	17	487	100%

- 5.9 Some of the repeated reasons given by consultees for preferring elections by thirds was that it provided for a regular refresh of political debate and political ideas, and newly elected members can work alongside more experienced councillors.



- 5.10 Some of the reasons given by consultees for preferring whole council elections related to that cycle providing a better use of public resources and providing more stability over a longer political period.
- 5.11 A full analysis of the consultation results outlining the methodology and additional comments received by consultees is detailed in **Appendix A** to this report.
- 5.12 For information **Appendix D** provides a table of consultation activity and information from other local authorities who have also undertaken this exercise to assist with considering and determining their local election cycle.

## 6.0 Cycles of Local Government Elections in England

- 6.1 Sandwell Metropolitan Council has 72 councillors and currently elects by thirds in three years out of four; in the fourth year, known as a fallow year, there are no scheduled elections.
- 6.2 All out elections are where all councillors are elected to office once every four years. This means that all 72 seats, three seats for each ward, are elected at the same time. Historically, the last whole council elections conducted in Sandwell was in May 2004 following a Local Government Boundary Commission Review.
- 6.3 Most recent data confirms that there are currently 226 councils across the country that operate on a 'whole elections' cycle. These councils are predominately district, county and London Borough councils. 101 councils elect by thirds and 6 councils elect by halves. Out of the 36 Metropolitan Councils (86%) 31 elect by thirds. This includes all West Midlands' Metropolitan Councils with the exception of Birmingham.<sup>1</sup> 29% (17) of unitary councils elect by thirds.
- 6.4 The table below shows the breakdown of election cycles across England (two authorities in the 'Sui generis councils' category are City of London Corporation which is a corporation in Isles of Scilly which is a classed as a Unitary authority have been calculated in London boroughs and Unitary for this table)

<sup>1</sup> <http://opencouncildata.co.uk/councils.php?model=&y=0> <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/resources/electoral-data>



Authority Type	All outs	Thirds	Halves	Total
London borough councils	33	0	0	33
County councils	24	0	0	24
District councils	122	53	6	181
Metropolitan district councils	5	31	0	36
Unitary authorities	42	17	0	59
	<b>226</b>	<b>101</b>		<b>333</b>

6.5 By way of information, in 2023 Wolverhampton Council will deliver whole council elections to implement the changes as part of their local government boundary review. However, they will revert to elections by thirds for local elections thereafter.

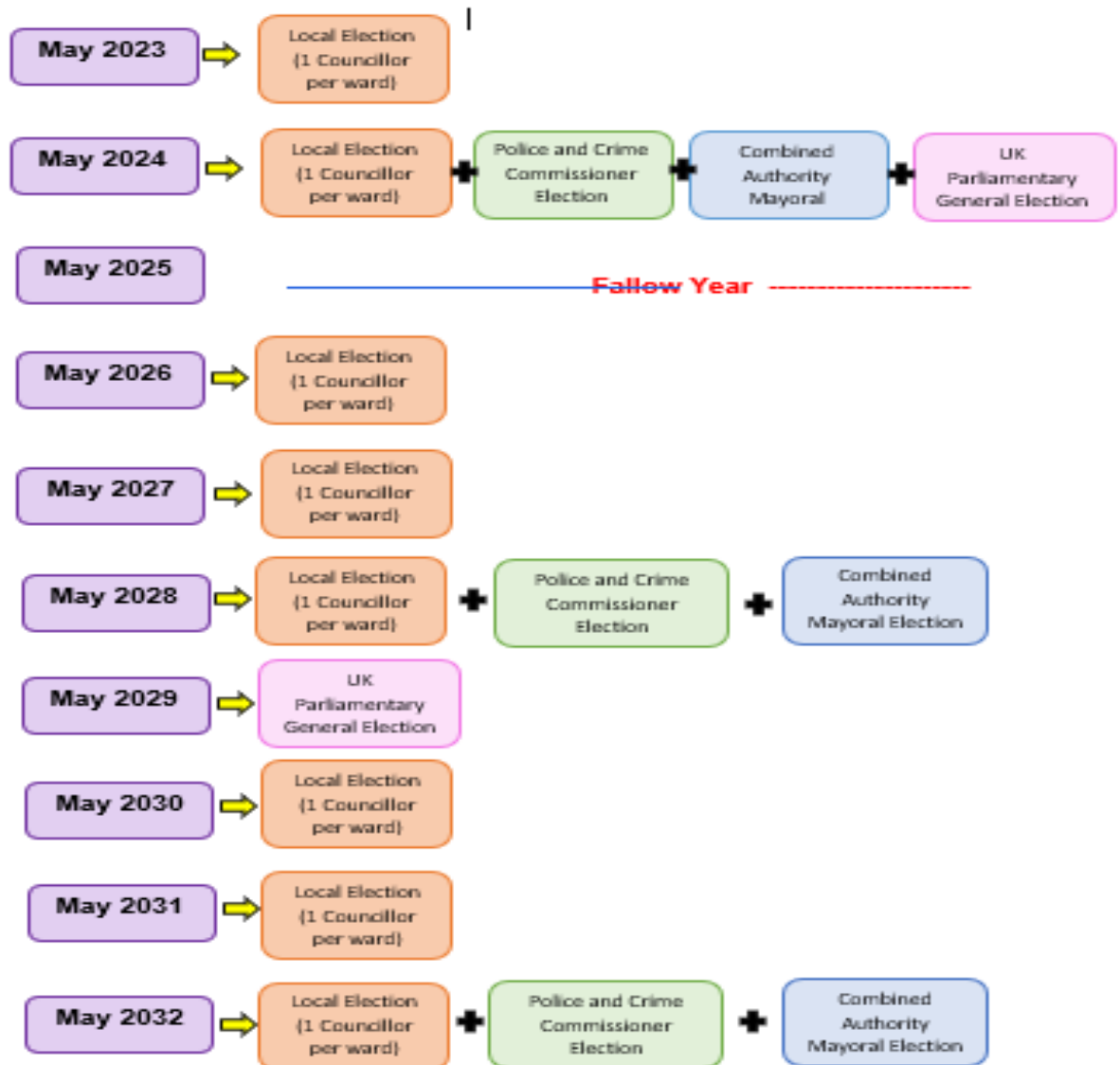
## 7.0 Current Position and Timetable of Scheduled Elections in Sandwell

7.1 Local elections in Sandwell have continued to elect councillors by thirds since 2004. Each year a councillor is elected to one seat in all 24 wards. Currently, and subject to no change to the current cycle, the next local elections will take place on the 4 May 2023.

7.2 Table A below lists the current scheduled elections under the current electoral arrangements due to be held up until 2032.



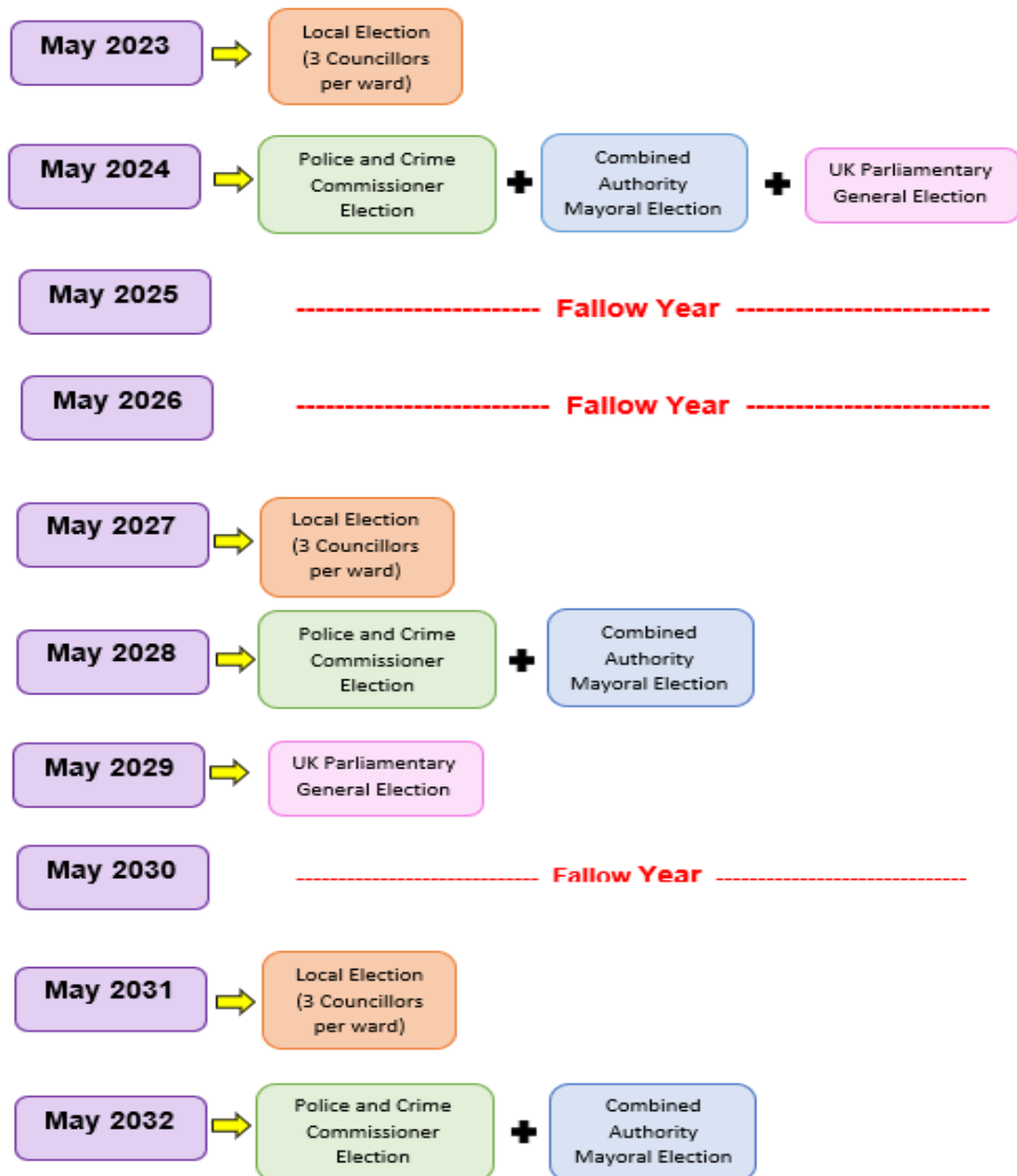
### Scheduled elections if electing by thirds



7.3 In comparison, Table B below lists the current scheduled elections with an electoral cycle of whole council elections.



**Table B Scheduled elections if holding whole council elections**



7.4 What is evident from Table B, and is important for members to note, is that whilst a change to all out elections will reduce the frequency of local elections, the continued challenges and demands of both scheduled and unscheduled national elections will remain.



- 7.5 On the 24 March 2022, the Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022 came into force. This repealed the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011. This means that between June 2022 and January 2025, a UK Parliamentary General Election must be called. The delivery of this election would be under the provision of the statutory timetable of 25 working days. A “snap” general election impacts significantly when combined with existing scheduled elections irrespective, of the “cycle” of elections in place.

## 8.0 Policy context and comparisons of election cycles

- 8.1 The Electoral Commission (the independent body which oversees elections) recommended in its publication [The cycles of local government elections in England](#) that “each local authority in England should hold whole council elections, with all councillors elected simultaneously once every four years”.<sup>2</sup> The Electoral Commission recommended a move back to whole council elections in order to provide a “stronger local democracy”, “greater clarity” for the electorate and to encourage a “greater understanding” of elections.
- 8.2 The table below sets out some of the key considerations of each election cycle. This includes learning from the Electoral Commission, the Association of Electoral Administrators and other local authorities who have undertaken a review of their election cycle.

Election by thirds	Whole council elections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A regular process that is known and understood</li><li>• More frequent opportunities for voters to engage</li><li>• Councillors and political parties held to account by their constituents</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Political Stability - Voters will be able to see a four-year manifesto and longer-term commitments</li><li>• Continuity of elected members</li><li>• Clearer opportunity for the electorate to change the political composition of the council</li></ul>

<sup>2</sup>

[https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/electoral\\_commission\\_pdf\\_file/cycleoflocalelectfinal\\_11595-9056\\_\\_E\\_\\_N\\_\\_S\\_\\_W\\_\\_.pdf](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/electoral_commission_pdf_file/cycleoflocalelectfinal_11595-9056__E__N__S__W__.pdf)



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduces the risk of local issues being confused with national issues</li> <li>• Allows for gradual change at the council and reduces the risk of significant changes every four years.</li> <li>• Can ensure that the political composition of authorities more accurately reflects the local political context</li> <li>• Provide a more current reflection of the views of local people</li> <li>• Continuity of Councillors</li> <li>• Regular intake of newly elected members promotes the opportunity for change and new ideas</li> <li>• Enables development and builds experience of Returning Officer staff, offers the ability to implement new processes and practices regularly – regular redesign and transformation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant cost savings</li> <li>• Income generation opportunities for core specialists' staff to "consult" for other LAs in fallow years.</li> <li>• Increase understanding of the election cycle</li> <li>• Comparable electoral cycle to Police and Crime commissioner elections and Combined Authority Mayoral elections that take place four yearly.</li> <li>• Reduced voter apathy and election fatigue for voters resulting in an increase in turnout</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less stability – regular changes of political control can affect local businesses and council services</li> <li>• Confusing for the electorate as to which candidate is to be elected and what the process is.</li> <li>• Difficult to see though major policy decisions or large infrastructure or regeneration projects in a single year.</li> <li>• Difficult or unpopular decisions can be put off for future years rather than decided when needed, which does not support the council in its continuous improvement plan</li> <li>• Constant year on year campaigning by Councillors and political parties may lead to voter apathy and lack of interest, resulting in reduced turnout</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk that some electors will disengage</li> <li>• Risk that change would be perceived as less democratic</li> <li>• A large turnover of Councillors may lead to disruption of the council if changed significantly</li> <li>• Political complacency</li> <li>• Increase in by-elections impacts the financial position</li> <li>• Loss of experienced elected members</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>

### 8.3 Consideration of the current system of elections by thirds

8.4 The benefits of this system have previously been stated as providing greater political stability for the council in terms of its membership. Electing by thirds reduces the risk of wholesale change and allows for succession planning because there is a mixture of new and experienced councillors.



- 8.5 It should be noted that five local authorities - Rotherham, Doncaster, Birmingham, Slough and most recently Liverpool<sup>3</sup> have moved to a cycle of whole council elections following differing levels of government intervention, to assist with creating political stability.
- 8.6 It could be argued that some smaller political parties would find it difficult to field the required number of candidates to contest all seats at a whole council election. However, electing by thirds does not necessarily create a greater availability of candidates, more so that those candidates who are willing to stand, have more frequent opportunities to do so.
- 8.7 **Consideration of whole council elections**
- 8.8 There is a limited amount of research on the subject of election cycles and their benefits. The Electoral Commission report referenced in section 8.0 of this report is the most recent official document. In this report, the Commission concluded that whole council elections would provide a clearer and more equitable system of voting for electors in the area.
- 8.9 The Commission report discusses issues around clarity and understanding for electors, which it claims is reduced by a system that elects by thirds. This confusion can particularly affect younger voters or those from BME groups. Therefore, this does highlight equality issues that need consideration before moving towards a change in the electoral system. This is further highlighted in the implications section of the report.
- 8.10 There are differing conclusions referenced in the Electoral Commission's report analysing the impact of changing election cycles. Data suggested that in some areas, a change of electoral cycle to whole council elections increased levels of turnout.<sup>4</sup> The report also suggests that turnout is marginally better amongst councils who conduct all out elections. However, there are also other factors which can affect voter turnout such as combining a local election with a UKPGE, voter engagement/apathy and the local/national political climate.

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<sup>3</sup> Local government boundary commission for England

<sup>4</sup> Local Government Chronical Elections Centre, University of Plymouth



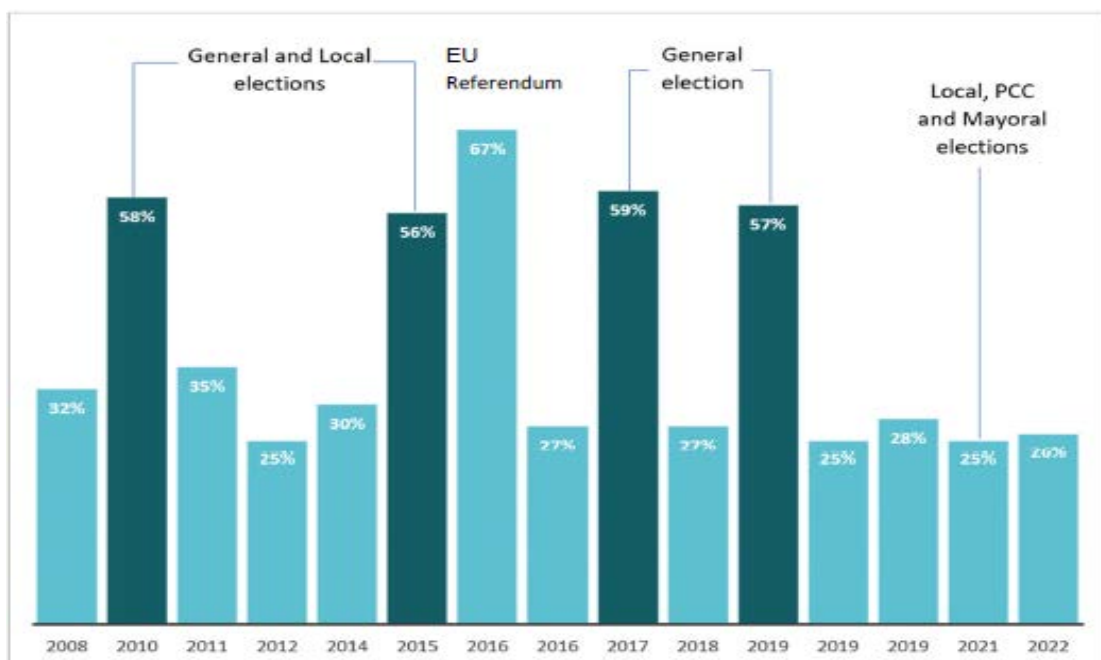
8.11 The table below shows the election turnout figures for three metropolitan councils who moved from elections by thirds to whole council elections

	Last election elected by thirds		First election whole council elections		Subsequent whole council elections
<b>Birmingham</b>	2016	32%	2018	32%	Scheduled for 2022
<b>Doncaster</b>	2014	33%	2017	29%	2021 28%
	2015	56% (combined UKPGE)			
<b>Rotherham</b>	2014	35%	2016	33%	2021 29%
	2015	59% (combined UKPGE)			

8.12 The research shows no significant impact on voter turnout levels in changing electoral cycles. It is clear however that turnout increases when local elections are combined with general elections. This trend is seen on a national scale.

8.13 At a local level, the table below sets out turnout for local and national elections in Sandwell from 2008 to 2022.





- 8.14 The turnout figures for standalone local elections are similar year upon year. Significant increases in turnout are where elections are combined with general elections. Members will need to consider the impact of combined elections in the final decision-making process of changing electoral cycles.
- 8.15 Since 2003, there has been a notable shift by councils from electing by thirds to whole council elections. The most cited reasons are the financial benefits and the argument that whole council elections support better long-term decision making and political/broader stability.
- 8.16 In April 2021, a Best Value Report on Liverpool City Council by the Government Appointed Lead Inspector, Max Caller CBE, recommended that the City Council move from electing by thirds to a whole council electoral system, noting that *“LCC being in election mode every year provides less opportunity to scrutinise the Mayor’s actions.....and that a whole council electoral system would provide LCC a better ability to have a longer term focus”*<sup>5</sup>
- 8.17 It is also notable that Slough Borough Council commenced a public consultation in December 2021 (for a period of six weeks) with a view to

<sup>5</sup> <https://liverpool.gov.uk/council/vision-aims-and-values/best-value-inspection-report/>



moving to whole council elections as part of its response to addressing its governance and financial difficulties.<sup>6</sup>

8.18 Similarly, in 2021, as part of the Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Challenge for Wokingham Borough Council, it was recommended that the council should formally consider the benefits of moving to whole council elections.

8.19 The Elections Act 2022 seeks to improve the security, accessibility and transparency of elections and campaigning. A significant part of the Act is the introduction of Voter ID in polling stations.

8.20 It is intended that Voter ID will be implemented for any elections in England from May 2023. Members will need to consider the significant impact of the introduction of Voter ID alongside the change in electoral cycle and potential combination of elections when it makes its final decision on whether to change the election cycle.

## 9.0 Financial Implications for changing electoral cycles

9.1 It is the case that whole council elections cost less to run in the long term than electing by thirds, particularly when those whole council elections are combined with national elections.

9.2 The estimated revenue cost of running a standalone whole council election once every 4 years is £420,000. This equates to an approximate an increase of £40k as shown below in table C.

9.3 The table below lists the anticipated **additional costs** for delivery of whole council elections:

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/intervention-at-slough-borough-council#:~:text=Slough%20Borough%20Council%20was%20one,of%20an%20external%20assurance%20review.>



Additional Expenditure	Cost £	Detail
Staffing	12,500	increased hours for all counting staff, PV and ballot paper checking and box filling. Postal vote proofing and nomination process.
Staff Training	7,300	Face to face training for all count assistants
Equipment and Supplies	8,850	Counting boards for multimember counting. Additional printing for booklets for count and count tickets for 3 x number of candidates. New TDVs for polling stations for longer ballot papers.
Premises Hire	6,800	Additional hire with staff and security
Printing and Production of election material including postage	3,750	Longer ballot papers/changes to Postal Pack accommodate number of candidates
<b>Total</b>	<b>39,200</b>	

- 9.4 Table C below provides estimated costs under whole council and elections by thirds over a **ten-year period**. It should be noted that actual costs and savings may vary depending on the number of by-elections, and combination of elections (i.e. local elections and UKPGE, Police and Crime Commissioner and/or Combined Authority Mayoral Elections).

**Table C. Cost of elections by third compared to whole council elections over a ten year period**

Year	Election(s)	All out elections every four years	Elections by thirds
2023	Local	£420,000	£380,000
2024	Local, Police and Crime Commissioner, Combined Authority Mayoral, UKPGE?	£0	£225,000
2025	Fallow year	£0	£0
2026	Local	£0	£380,000
2027	Local	£420,000	£380,000
2028	Local, Police and Crime Commissioner, Combined Authority Mayoral.	£0	£260,000
2029	UKPGE?	£0	£0
2030	Local	£0	£380,000
2031	Local	£420,000	£380,000
2032	Local, Police and Crime Commissioner, Combined Authority Mayoral	£0	£260,000
2033	Fallow year	£0	£0
	<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>£1,260,000</b>	<b>£2,645,000</b>

- 9.5 Table C shows the savings that could be achieved over a ten-year period are £1.38m. Any unscheduled combination elections would result in the revenue savings being more significant as the costs can be apportioned



between all the elections being held and government funding is provided for non-local elections.

- 9.6 Over a four-year period, subject to no unscheduled “snap” elections, the savings would be in the region of £565,000.

## 10.0 Legal Process of changing election cycles

- 10.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enables the Council to change its electoral cycle by way of a resolution at Full Council
- 10.2 If council resolves to move from the current electoral cycle of electing by thirds to whole council elections once every 4 years it must in accordance with S32 - 36 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, as amended by Schedule 2 of the Localism Act 2011 do the following:
- Consult such persons as it thinks is appropriate on the proposed change
  - Convene an extraordinary meeting of the council
  - Pass a council resolution to change the electoral cycle by a majority of at least two thirds of the elected members voting.
  - Publish an explanatory document on the decision and make this available for public inspection; and
  - Give notice to the Local Government Boundary Commission and the Electoral Commission
- 10.3 The resolution to move to whole council elections must specify the year for the first ordinary elections of the council at which all 72 councillors are to be elected.

## 11.0 Timing of implementation of whole council elections

- 11.1 Should council resolve to change the current electoral cycle and move to whole council elections, the earliest opportunity to implement any change approved by council to the cycle of elections is May 2023. Members may resolve to implement all out elections in subsequent years, however, the implications and impact of this must be considered as part of the decision-making process.



- 11.2 **Appendix B** to this report details the operational implications and risks linked to the implementation of whole council elections, which vary depending on the year any change is introduced. Members should note that these implications detailed should be considered alongside the other information contained within this report.
- 11.3 Noting that whilst it is for members to decide, officers consider that the most practicable year for the implementation of whole council elections would be 2023.
- 12.0 **Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE): Sandwell Electoral Review.**
- 12.1 The council was informed in September 2021 the LGBCE intends to undertake an electoral review in Sandwell. The last review of this kind in Sandwell was in 2004.
- 12.2 Following a response from officers to the LGBCE in December 2021, the council was advised that the review would commence following the local elections in 2023 and the implementation of the review would take effect in 2026 with whole council elections and all seats contested.
- 12.3 In view of the council's commitment to explore the change of elections cycle to move to whole council elections. The LGBCE has confirmed their support that should council resolve to implement whole council elections in 2023 or 2024, the review would be delayed which would then enable a uniform pattern for whole council elections of every four years. Therefore, if whole council elections were to take place in 2023, all elected councillors would serve a four-year term as opposed to a reduced term of three years.
- 12.4 The LGBCE have more recently confirmed an indicative timeline to conduct the local boundary review should the council resolve to remain under the current election cycle of elections by thirds. The implementation of any boundary review will result in "whole council" elections regardless of the council's electoral cycle.
- 12.5 More information together with a draft timetable of the review is detailed in **Appendix C** for information.



## 13.0 Alternative Options

- 13.1 There are no alternative options to consider. The council's Improvement Plan approved by council confirmed a commitment to adhere to the directions issued by the Secretary of State. This included the need to explore and consider the change to whole council elections as soon as practicable.
- 13.2 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ("the 2007 Act") enables councils to set their own election cycle. It allows Councils to consider passing a resolution to change to whole Council elections, or where they previously elected by thirds but have moved to all out elections to revert again to thirds. It does not allow Councils to move from elections by thirds to election by halves or from elections by halves to elections by thirds."

## 14 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	<p>A change to the Council's current electoral cycle from election by thirds to whole council elections would save an estimated £565,000 over the four-year period.</p> <p>The current budget resource for Electoral Services covers both Elections and Registrations for which there is an ongoing budget pressure. The 2021/22 outturn position was breakeven with a pressure of £0.189m being funded through Covid 19 Emergency Grant funding to offset the additional cost of Elections due to Covid19.</p> <p>The financial implications are outlined in the main body of the report.</p>
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	<p>The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enables the Council to change its electoral cycle by way of a resolution at Full Council</p> <p>If council resolves to move from the current electoral cycle of electing by thirds to whole council elections</p>



	<p>once every 4 years it must in accordance with Sections 32 – 36 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, as amended by Schedule 2 of the Localism Act 2011 do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult such persons as it thinks is appropriate on the proposed change</li> <li>• Convene an Extraordinary meeting of the council</li> <li>• Pass a Council resolution to change the electoral cycle by a majority of at least two thirds of the elected members voting.</li> <li>• Publish an explanatory document on the decision and make this available for public inspection; and</li> <li>• Give notice to the Local Government Boundary Commission and the Electoral Commission</li> </ul> <p>The resolution must specify the year for the first ordinary elections of the Council at which all councillors are to be elected</p>
<b>Risk:</b>	<p>In March 2022, Sandwell Council received Statutory Directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. (DLUHC) The Directions set out the requirement of the council to develop, agree and deliver an Improvement Plan.</p> <p>In response to the directions on the 1 June 2022, the council published its Improvement Plan. The plan outlines a number of objectives, workstreams and aims. Page 24 of the plan, Theme 4 - Decision Making states the council will “explore options around a four-year electoral cycle”</p> <p>Should the Council not agree to take positive steps to explore the move to a system of whole council elections, the Secretary of State holds the power to require a change by order laid in Parliament, under</p>



	<p>the provision of Section 86 (A10) of the Local Government Act 2000 as amended.</p> <p>This power has been exercised on three councils in recent years. These are Stoke, Birmingham and Doncaster who have all been required to move to whole council elections.</p> <p>The draft Liverpool order was laid in Parliament in January 2022 with a requirement to cancel the scheduled elections for May 2022 and introduce whole council elections in 2023.</p> <p>The recommendations within this report support the council's commitment to the effective and successful delivery of the council's Improvement Plan.</p>
<b>Equality:</b>	<p>In its report, the Electoral Commission references research which suggests that both younger age groups and those with an ethnicity other than white, were less likely to be aware of when local elections were taking place and that moving to a pattern of whole council elections would improve enfranchisement for these groups compared to those who do not share their characteristics. The Council is under duty to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (in this particular case age and ethnicity). A move to whole council elections may provide an opportunity for the council to positively impact on the opportunities of these groups to participate and vote in elections.</p> <p>An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) is attached in Appendix E to this report.</p>
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	<p>There are no health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.</p>
<b>Social Value</b>	<p>There are no social value implications arising from this report.</p>



## 15 Appendices

- Appendix A - Electoral Cycles Public Consultation Report – Results
- Appendix B - Timing of the Implementation of Whole Council Elections – Impact and Considerations
- Appendix C - Local Government Boundary Commission – Indicative Timetable for Boundary Review
- Appendix D - LA Case Study Changing Electoral Cycles
- Appendix E - Equality Impact Assessment

## 16 Background Papers

- The Electoral Commission *The cycle of local government elections in England*, January 2004
- Local Government Boundary Commission for England <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/policy-and-publications/policy-and-researchList>
- External Assurance Review DLUCH2 November 2021.
- Local Government Chronical Elections Centre, University of Plymouth
- Sandwell Council's Improvement Plan
- Election timetables in England.gov.uk <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/election-timetable-in-england>
- Local Government Association <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/leadership-workforce-and-communications/comms-hub-communications-support/resident>
- Turnout at Elections <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8060/>



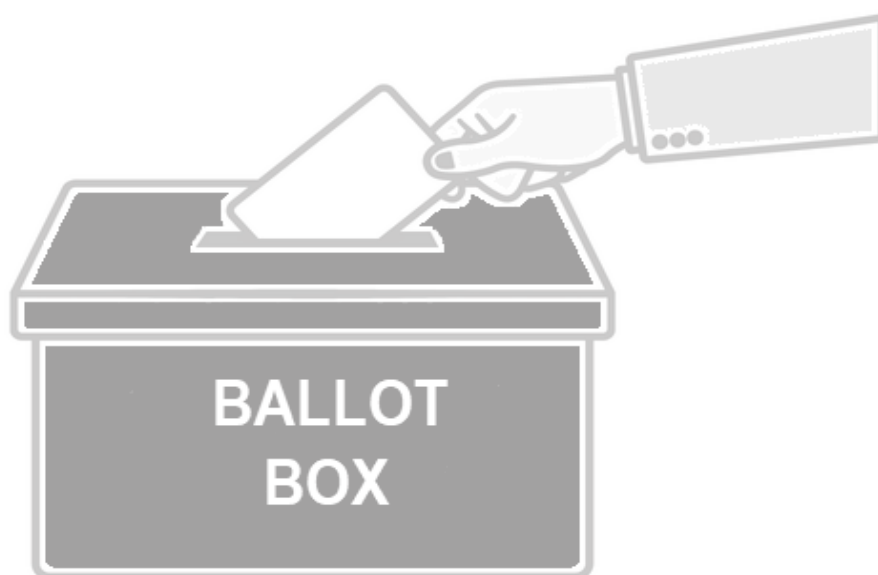
- [Briefing Note - LEADERSHIP TEAM - Electoral Cycle Review \(June 2022\).docx](#)



## Appendix A

# Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.

## Public Consultation Report Electoral Cycles



Consultation: 1 August 2022- 16 September 2022

Report: 30 September 2022

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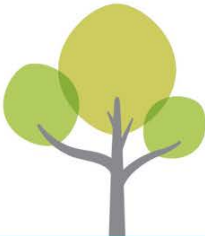
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## 1.0 Executive Summary

Sandwell Council consulted the public on whether it should change to 'whole council' elections or continue with the current system of 'elections by thirds'.

The council currently uses a 'by thirds' electoral system. This means that over four years, elections are held in years one, two and three for one of the three councillors in each ward. In the fourth year there are no elections. The change to 'whole council' elections would mean the whole council would be elected at the same time once every four years.

The consultation was commenced as part of the council's commitment to actively explore the move to whole council elections from the current arrangements as outlined in the council's Improvement Plan.

This consultation relates only to Sandwell Council local elections. No other elections will be affected by any future change in Sandwell Council's electoral cycle. Parliamentary, Police and Crime Commissioner and Combined Authority Mayoral elections will continue their normal electoral cycle.

Under the Local Government and Public Involvement Health Act 2007, amended by the Localism Act 2011, the council has the power to change its electoral arrangements to whole council elections.

Through this consultation, the residents of Sandwell were asked to provide their view on if the Council should move to an all-out election system, where the whole council would be elected at the same time once every four years or stay with the current cycle of electing by thirds.





Figure 1 Illustration of Council electoral cycles

The findings of the consultation were as follows:

**How often would you prefer to elect councillors to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council?**

- 69.4% said Option 1 – By Thirds
- 30.6% said Option 2 – Whole council elections

## 2.0 Methodology

Through the electoral cycle consultation, the residents of Sandwell were asked to tell us their view on a possible move to an all-out electoral system. A set of background information was provided to assist residents to be able to make an informed decision when responding to the consultation.

The consultation question was “How often would you prefer to elect councillors to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council?” The possible answers were Option 1 – by thirds or Option 2 – whole council elections.

The consultation was carried out between 1 August 2022 to 16 September 2022. The approach used was an online public survey published on a dedicated webpage in the Elections part of the council’s website. The survey was also published on the council’s consultation webpage.

Residents were also able to respond to the consultation via paper copies of the survey. Copies of the survey as well as posters and leaflets were located in every Library and



Sandwell Local offices. Paper copies were also posted to home addresses upon request. A dedicated email address was also set up which allowed residents to ask questions, provide further comments etc.

The consultation was publicised in the following ways:

- Press release
- Internal staff updates
- Member update via e-newsletter
- Targeted email to all elected members
- Social Media posts
- Residents e-newsletter via GovDelivery
- School engagement
- Website – dedicated consultation webpage with promotion via elections homepage banner and carousel
- Voluntary and community sector e-newsletter
- Digital screens in council buildings
- Faith sector groups e-newsletter
- Posters and leaflets in all libraries and Sandwell Local offices

## 2.1 The Poll

Following closure of the consultation, the online, and paper copy responses were collated and reported as one result.

## 2.2 Analysis of Respondents

Respondents to the online and paper version of the consultation were asked to provide demographic information about themselves. It must be noted that this was optional and that not all respondents included this information. This data allows the demographic results to be included in this report to enable analysis of the scope of responses and representation from different demographic groups.

## 2.3 Interpretation of Results

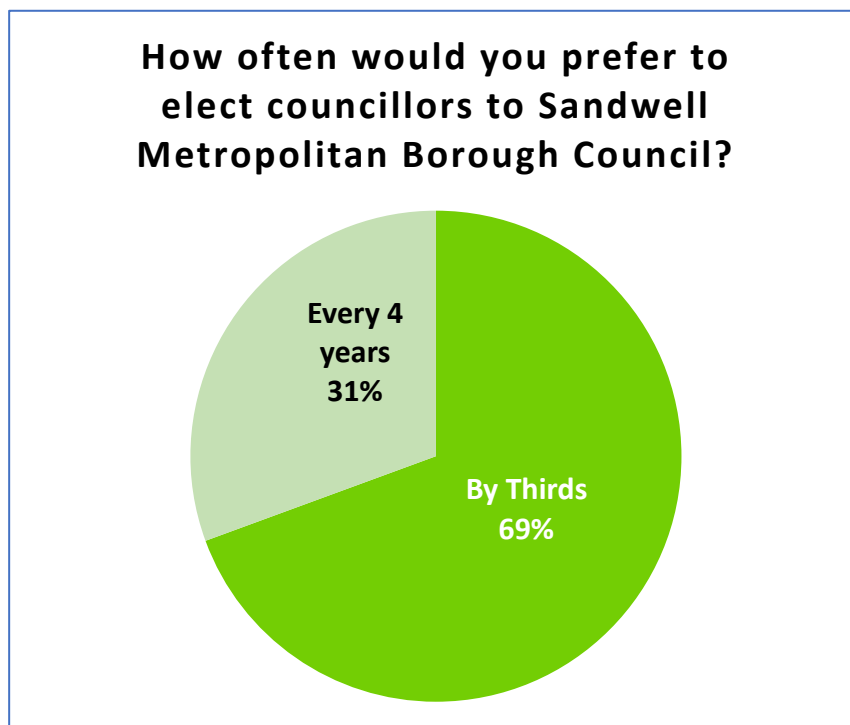
In terms of the results, it is important to note that the public consultation is not representative of the overall population but provides information on the opinion of those residents who engaged.



### 3.0 Results

In total, 487 people responded to the consultation. 470 responded online and 17 responded via the paper survey

The majority of respondents would prefer that the Council retains its current electoral cycle of electing by thirds. This was consistent across both the online and paper versions of the survey.



*Figure 2 How often would you prefer to elect councillors to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council*



Total of responses to the Consultation by response type				
Response	Online	Paper	Total	% of Total
Option 1 – By Thirds	325	13	338	69.4%
Option 2 – Whole Council	145	4	149	30.6%
Total	470	17	487	100%

*Table 1 Responses to the consultation by response type*

## 4.0 Demographics

Both the online and paper version of the consultation asked the respondent to provide certain demographical information about themselves to ensure that the results were representative of the residents of Sandwell.

The survey asked the respondent to provide their gender identity, age bracket, ethnicity and which of Sandwell's towns they were resident in. These questions were not compulsory and as a result, some respondents did not answer them or chose to select the 'prefer not to say' option.

The demographics results are summarised below:

99.6% of respondents said that they were residents of Sandwell. The remaining 0.4% (2 respondents) either did not answer or selected 'prefer not to say'.



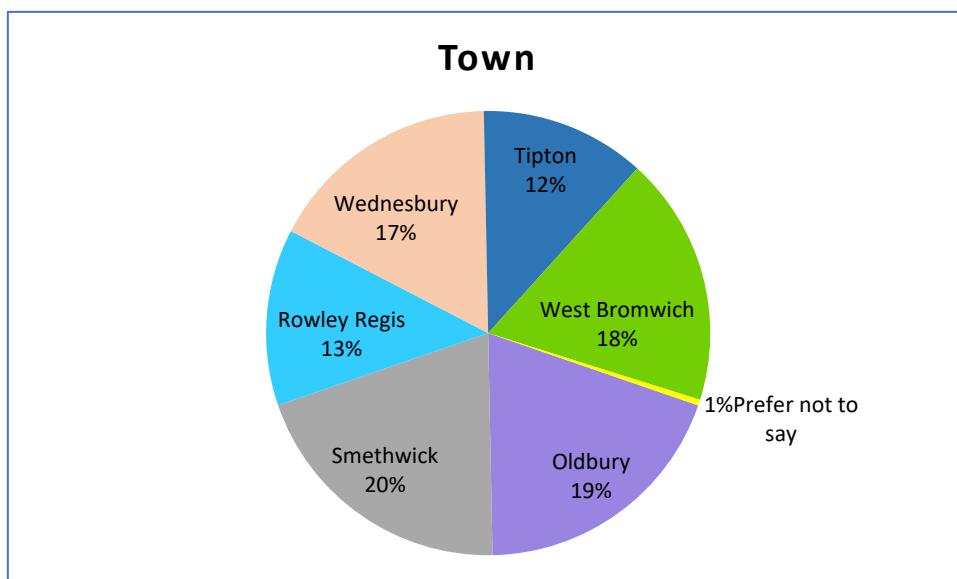


Figure 3 Which Sandwell town do you live in?

	Total	Town						Prefer not to say
		Oldbury	Smethwick	Rowley Regis	Wednesbury	Tipton	West Bromwich	
	474	92	95	61	81	57	86	2
		19.4%	20.0%	12.9%	17.1%	12.0%	18.1%	0.4%
How often would you prefer to elect councillors to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council?								
Option 1: I would prefer to elect councillors by thirds (a third of councillors are elected every year for 3 out of 4 years)	329	63	73	39	53	37	62	2
	69.40%	68.48%	76.84%	63.93%	65.43%	64.91%	72.09%	100.00%
Option 2: I would prefer to elect all councillors once every four years	145	29	22	22	28	20	24	0
	30.59%	31.52%	23.16%	36.06%	34.57%	35.09%	27.91%	0.00%

Table 2 Responses to the consultation by town

In terms of gender identity, 243 respondents stated they were male, 220 were female, 2 gender neutral, 3 transgender, 1 nonbinary, 1 other and 17 preferred not to say.



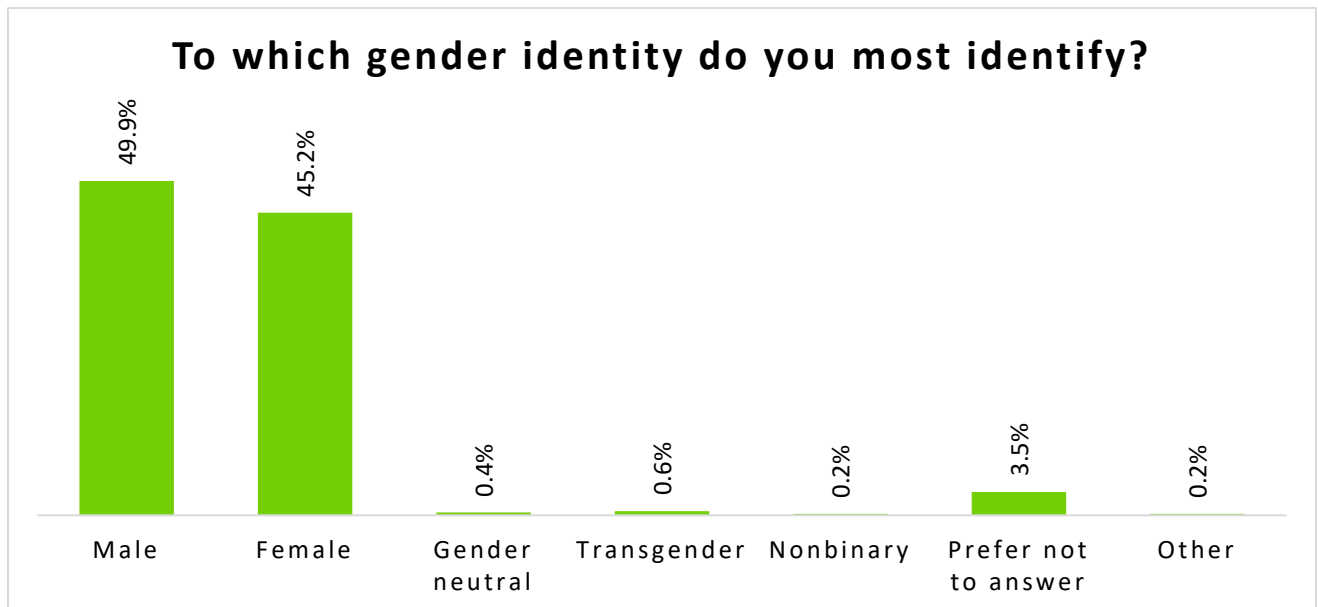


Figure 4 Gender identity of respondents

The results also show that the respondents represent a wide range of ages, with responses from every age group. There were 18 respondents who chose not to answer the question.

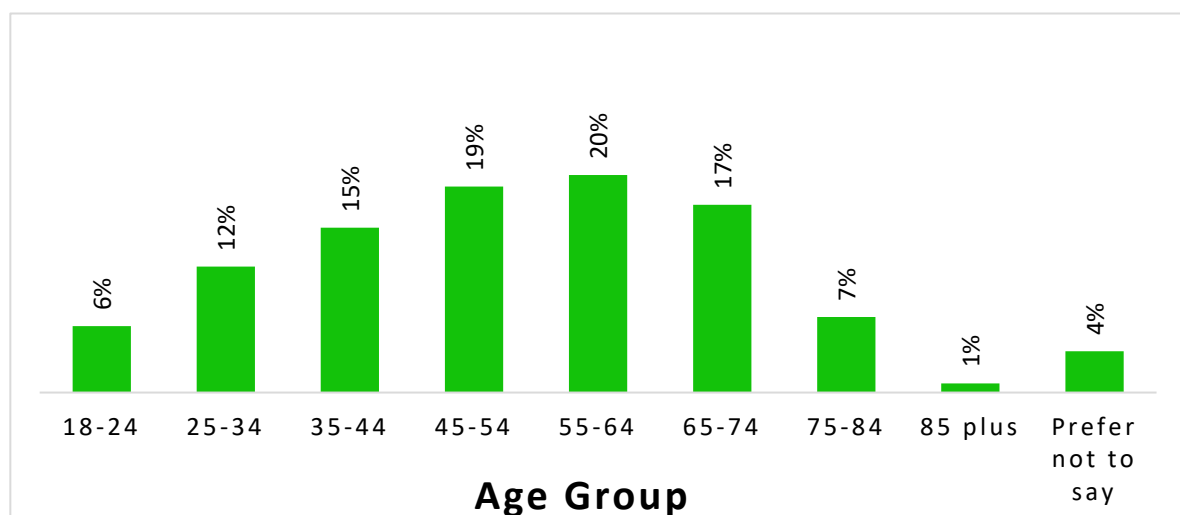


Figure 5 Which age bracket do you fall into?



		Total	Which age bracket do you fall into?								Prefer not to say
			18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85 plus	
Base		478	29	55	72	90	95	82	33	4	18
		%	6%	12%	15%	19%	20%	17%	7%	1%	4%
How often would you prefer to elect councillors to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council?											
Option 1: I would prefer to elect councillors by thirds (a third of councillors are elected every		332	23	40	47	59	56	65	26	4	12
Option 2: I would prefer to elect all councillors once every four years		69.46%	79.31%	72.70%	65.27%	65.55%	58.95%	79.27%	78.79%	100.00%	66.67%
		146	6	15	25	31	39	17	7	0	6
		30.54%	20.69%	27.30%	34.73%	34.45%	41.05%	20.73%	21.21%	0.00%	34.33%

Table 3 Responses to the consultation by age

In terms of ethnicity, the majority of responses were from respondents who stated their ethnicity as white (341 respondents). 83 respondents stated their ethnicity as Asian, 16 stated their ethnicity as mixed, 12 as black, 1 as other and 27 as prefer not to answer.

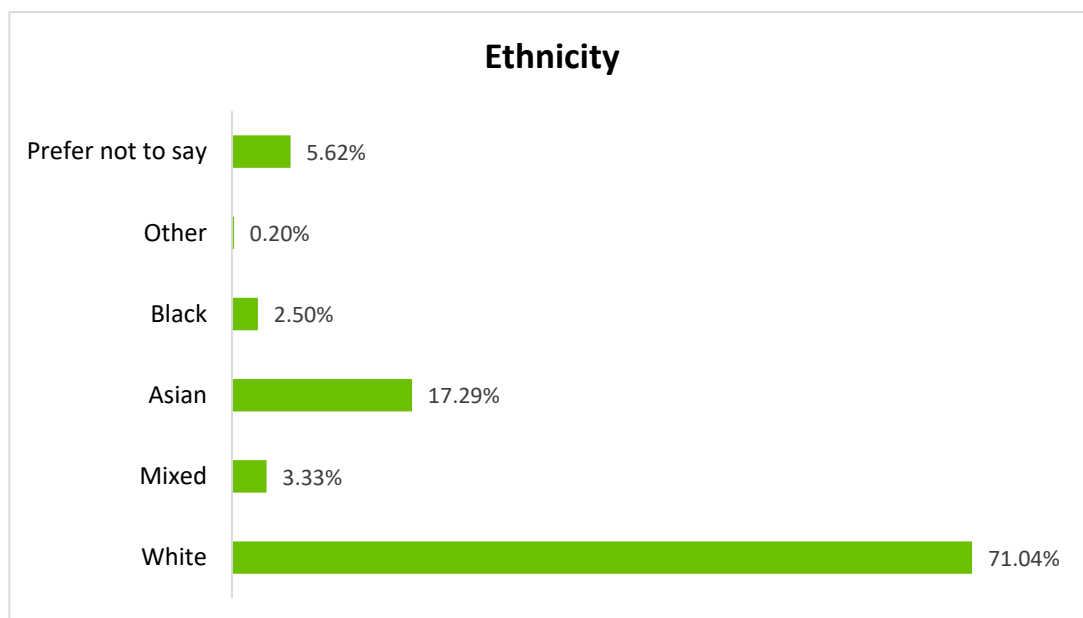


Figure 6 Choose one option that best describes your ethnic group or background



## 5.0 Additional Comments

Response ID	Comments in support of having elections “by thirds”
6	FEEL ELECTION BY THIRDS IS MORE DEMOCRATIC AND ALLOWS FOR BETTER CONTINUITY AND BUSINESS PLANNING FOR COUNCIL FINANCIAL PLANNING.
7	Present system appears to work OK.
14	Voting by thirds allows us, the electorate, to let you know how you're doing each year. Four yearly elections removes that check on the Council's performance.
27	I think this is fairer all round - I might well have changed my mind about who I want to represent me within four years
30	Continuity with 3rds
35	Having elections every year - as that way we see more things done plus we get to see our councillors more. If the elections are done once every four years then we will have problems like Birmingham four years no one there to help.
36	The current system is more cost effective from my point of view as a business owner and also maintains a level of continuity.
40	Election by thirds provides for a regular democratic process, which is diluted by elections every four years. There has be no rationale advanced for why the electoral system in Sandwell should change other than a cost saving. The principal consideration should be governance.
41	I believe it's more democratic to have to fight an election more frequently. I think councillors could become complacent in four years.
46	By having elections on thirds you get consistency of skill etc every four years could end up with a very inexperienced council.
54	By thirds means that the political parties have to work to keep in touch with the electorate.
58	I think its better to have it every year so local councillors are out.
88	Election by thirds ensures that the political composition of the council reflects more accurately local views as they change. With all out elections the political composition of the council can be up to four years 'out of date'
95	It is now running well
96	Running ok
105	The system is running well. Why change something that isn't broken.
115	Despite the additional costs of elections by thirds, the more frequent engagement of the the electorate in the electoral/political cycle is an advantage worth the additional cost.
130	I think this allows for continuity of policies, and means that new councillors can work alongside established ones when they are first elected. Four year terms rather than three would also extend the time an ineffective councillor held the position.
145	I am of the opinion that keeping the system as thirds is the best way forward for the following reasons: Thirds is familiar and understandable to the electorate. To change to fourths would complicate matters and could cause dis-engagement with people. Thirds allow local Councillors to engage annually with residents and get a sense of current views which can be fed back and acted on quickly. With a mix of new and old Councillors thirds offer a gradual change which allows Councillors to be held to account which is a good thing. Fourth in my opinion would not work as



Response ID	Comments in support of having elections “by thirds”
	well. Experienced Councillors could be lost which could cause disruption to the continuity of the Council and its vision. It could also cause dis-engagement with residents.
155	You need to have the opportunity of new councillor faces every three years, otherwise decisions by councillors go through unchallenged.
166	Option 2 (whole Council elections) is an all or nothing approach. And worrying to do an en masse election every four years. Prefer the thirds cycle as it ensures we retain an ongoing process, gradual turnover / changes (if that happens) and allows more opportunities for people to be candidates (more / equal scope for involvement).
174	The current system allows for easier change when there is dissatisfaction.
179	Every year is good as it will give councillors and residents to engage frequently. some residents do not engage with councillors other than election time. This will also provide continuity with experienced councillors vs new councillors or a sudden shock response i.e. if election is held at times of a national crisis or economic down-turn then people likely to respond by voting on impulse and not necessarily thought-through decision.
183	Keep it as it is - I like to vote every year to keep things fresh.
190	Having worked for a local authority I know the consistency of members on scrutiny committees and in cabinet can make an important difference to the efficiency and effectiveness of the running of council business. To potentially start completely from scratch with all new members every four years will slow progress and mean key initiatives in the community get abandoned.
191	No need to change
199	There is merit to both systems, but I think a system that allows for better continuity is better overall for stability and execution of longer term projects - important at all levels, but particularly local level. Massive swings become inefficient, and better cross party communication and cooperation would be beneficial at all levels of politics.
217	System works as it is
232	Steady elections reduce the violent swing of politics based on the mood immediately prior to the once every four yearly elections.
249	We would like the elections to happen every year that's the only time we get to see the more things done.
258	Elections every year allow for the people of Sandwell to ensure they are being listened to and are able to hold politicians to account every year by the power of democracy and their vote.
261	Nobody in Sandwell has asked for this change, and people understand the system as it currently is, so why change it? It's unlikely to increase voter participation if it's once every four years, as seen with Birmingham City Council Also, the system as it is means people have more opportunities to vote on what's important to them, so the council can act in the best interests of the people.
263	Electing councillors by thirds means SMBC and its councillors are more responsive to the wishes of the electorate. Each year a third of constituencies are voted for so this compels councillors across the authority to be more attuned to constituents' needs & demands, as councillors' delivery across the authority is assessed more frequently at the ballot box. Election by thirds also provides the opportunity for a more frequent introduction of new councillors and fresh ideas.



Response ID	Comments in support of having elections “by thirds”
264	If it's not broken, don't fix it!
265	Election by thirds makes sure the council have to keep an eye on what the public think. If elected once every four years for the first two/three years can ignore public views.
269	Retaining the current system helps with long term decision making
272	I resent Whitehall interference in local politics, the current system works and should be left as is.
281	Current system working well in Sandwell
283	I think that the current system allows for a regular, measured way to consider the performance of individual Councillors. It also provides an opportunity to propose and make changes should it be believed that those individuals are not adequately representing the needs or views of their constituents.
284	This change is being ideologically imposed by Whitehall, it is not being done in accordance with the wishes of Sandwell residents. Being able to see and hold our representatives democratically accountable on an almost yearly basis is something which the general public of Sandwell, of which I am one, is in favour of. The current system allows for a more responsive council, and we have seen the effect that changing has had in Birmingham next door, where the general public has lost out.
287	Why try to fix what is not broken? Please leave the elections as they are, all this is a waste of time, money and effort. Sandwell council always wasting money this needs to stop
289	I believe this leads to a consistently greater participation. Residents need to be able to make regular choices.
311	I am opposed to voting once every four years as I believe that the electing councillors by thirds makes the elected member more accountable to the electorate. Elections once every four years allows for elected members to do nothing for four years except collect their council payments/expenses and avoid being answerable to their electorate! Yearly regular intake of new councillors promotes opportunity for change and new ideas whilst experienced councillors remain for continuity and experience. election of all councillors every four years has a high risk of destabilising the council. I have read the document you have provided regarding advantages and disadvantages of option 2 (all out/whole council elections) and question the validity of some of the reasoning. I consider that the case being made for option 2 is biased. The local residents understand the current system and I do not believe there is a reasoned case for change. I think that moving to elections only once every four years will only serve to increase voter apathy! I do not understand why you are trying to change something which is not broke!!!
312	A yearly election allows voters to have more regular say on governance based on local competence, rather than national.
315	With option 1 (elections by thirds) you're more often in touch with the voters which is very important
317	By allowing election of a third of the council each year I can express more clearly my political choice.
326	Although it may be more cost-efficient for the taxpayer, having elections in thirds provides the residents of Sandwell to have more say over which individual candidates they want to select to represent that ward. The issue with all-out elections is the election cycle will become more based on the political party, rather



Response ID	Comments in support of having elections “by thirds”
	than the individual candidate and their skill set if it was to be every four years. I personally believe that this will in turn provide a disconnect between local councillors and their communities over the long run and will potentially lead to a scenario where the residents of sandwell have to wait for four years before voting out the local government. The more frequent say not only allows residents to speak loudly about their approval of said local government but it also is healthy for local democracy and accountability. Some extra points. The public in sandwell are already used to the current system and switching to a new one would be confusing and unhelpful for local residents. More frequent elections engages more active participation in politics on a local level and allows new people into local government on a frequent basis to give fresh ideas. It also holds the local government to a greater and more frequent account. It may also be noted that a Conservative national government are imposing this on a local Labour council against its wishes. It could potentially help the local Conservative federation in establishing a political foundation to build upon in West Bromwich and Sandwell. This sort of collusion is unacceptable in modern democracy. The residents of Sandwell should decide if they want a conservative local government by voting for them frequently every year, not voting for multiple councillors at a time to get more tory councillors in the chamber to disrupt the local governments business or indeed take over from them despite potentially not having a majority vote share in the all out elections.
334	Present system allows for better reaction to council performance. Greater use of postal voting helps regular voting.
337	Councillors can prove they are making a difference in the community by consistency
338	For stability and to lesson shock of popular upswings, such as UKIP. the current system suits fine.
341	I think that elections should be held frequently otherwise voters will disengage, but there needs to be more information made available to the public. I have worked in elections and many voters state that they don't know very much about the councillors who are up for election or what they promise to achieve.
365	I believe continuity and organisational memory are best preserved by the election by thirds process.
370	Election by thirds offers more consistency and stability, it means that national politics will be less likely to substantially alter the councils make up.
375	Council is more accountable on large decisions in the borough if peoples' opinions can be felt by the council every third. This give the council a true feeling of the rate payers.
382	Very comprehensive summary of pro and con issues. Pro and con for both - no perfect answer. I prefer the 'thirds' as it ensures new councillors to be brought up to speed.
388	I feel the present system offers the most democratic local option. It also makes Councillors more accountable and aware that their re-election is dependent on performance and accountability.
390	I highly suggest the councillors are elected in thirds as it keeps them knocking my door. If it's a four year term they will become lazy like the Birmingham councillors
391	Definitely thirds, keep them moving
399	The current system has both continuity and renewal allowing for longer term work to proceed smoothly but not inhibiting an influx of new ideas



Response ID	Comments in support of having elections "by thirds"
404	The current system is the best and fairest way, every four years is not
411	A 'thirds' approach gives me a say in how the Borough is run three times more often than once every four years. Option 2 ("Whole council" elections) is undemocratic
413	The system as it is works well so there is no need to change.
415	I believe if councillors are elected by thirds it gives public a fair chance on how the councillors are performing rather than having no choice for four years
418	I find my councillors are more accountable when they can be voted in or out more regularly.
433	Why change when everyone is used to the current system. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.
439	This allows for the council to function without having too many inexperienced councillors at one time. This means continuity of performance and less training needed to bring people up to speed.
453	Whilst the proposed change may bring financial savings for the local authority. I believe the status quo should remain until such time the number of councillors should be reduced to two per ward
455	To ensure continuity and experience electing a third of the council achieves that in the interest of residents.
463	Holding councillors to account is important, elections by thirds means that the councillors have to be mindful of public opinion on a more frequent basis than four-yearly elections will allow.
P2	I understand the current system and cannot see any reason to change it. A yearly election of councillors allows for new councillors whilst maintaining continuity.
P3	I agree with all of the advantages (for thirds). It gives me a voice.

Response ID	Comments not in support of elections by thirds
158	Elections every four years will reduce the two major issues with Sandwell Council, extreme voter apathy and council corruption. Barely any residents vote as they think their vote will not change anything nor get the council to listen to them. Labour Sandwell does what it likes regardless even when residents voice their concerns. Voting by thirds ensures the current party always has overall control hence why we've had a one-party council for nearly 50 years. Time for major changes.
172	After one party rule for 48 years under the present system we have to find a more realistic way of deciding who sits on the council. Turn-out is very low and would probably increase with the positive engagement process that would be needed for all-out elections. There may be a need for more by-elections -- just as there is for parliamentary elections.
187	Sandwell Council is not fit for purpose, any change will be an improvement.
P5	I didn't know only "thirds" councillors elected - The current system is more confusing.



Response ID	Comments in support of having "Whole Council Elections"
9	This will keep the public engaged on local issues and we have a minimum guaranteed continuity of council membership in scrutiny boards, and committees and in other policy matters affecting the council
15	This works well right across the country and successful next door in Birmingham who changed in 2018 to all outs.
23	Would save lots and lots of public money. Only having to vote and campaign once every four years would also help teams build and make a difference. With yearly elections there can be too many variations and also I imagine they have more time to focus on communities as campaigning takes lots of time and preparation from everyone .. even the councillors not up for election as they support their fellow representatives.
64	Costs less money and time
65	Think this would be a more cost effective way of running elections
71	This must be more cost effective?
76	It would be cheaper and more efficient to elect everyone at once.
98	Having all out saves the council money and the turnouts are higher.
123	I think this is very positive move to do this and it should to good for people to decide what and who are making the decision for my area. Thank you
129	Surely the cost of the event alone would be so much less. Along with councillors focussing on their role for a longer period, rather than promoting themselves and settling in to new roles each year. You would get more productivity out of a four year role and save money.
136	Yes this would be a fairer way to do it and we also need a recall for any councillors that are not doing the job that they are paid to do. Also it would save us tax payers a lot of money
139	This would provide stability of members to allow the Council objectives to be met more easily
153	Better system - least you got same councillor for four years
163	My opinion is that I would like to see all councillors elected every four years. The reason for this is so that councillors may have more incentive to fight for their position to stay aboard as elected members and not become complacent in their role. I think residents have a right to see how a councillor performs and judge accordingly. Are they Good listeners or do they ride rough shod over the electorate in order to push through their agendas. Positions shouldn't be taken for granted. So I choose every four years.
167	People will come out to vote once every four years instead of every year. Simplifies the process.
182	It would cost less to complete it every 4th year.. more money to be used back into the borough
184	Bring four-yearly elections on. Perfect opportunity to vote any rot out in one swoop.



201	This is a good idea. It aligns local elections timetables with a general election format and allows the local residents to judge performance over a longer period
221	Four yearly elections bring more stability and should be encouraged.
236	Every four years this will give the councillors time to sort issues in there constitutional areas. By the time they get going elections are back again
245	Allows a stronger and more stable group of Councillors
253	More cost effective.
288	Would create a more stable council
306	More accountability to constituents. No reason why retiring councillor couldn't stand again.
325	Surely this will be a way to save money (see budget consultation). I feel there are too many elections and turnout is low.
335	Reduce cost of elections and hopefully reduce number of councillors
347	If the elections are held every four years this would lead to less disruption to school children as usually the schools are used for polling stations and have to close to pupils.
348	I believe that the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages, particularly in terms of political stability.
353	When we are trying to save money, it is a really important opportunity by changing the election system to once every four years. Also, develop a robust process whereby people can vote online - thus reducing the cost further.
373	There should be more stability over a four year period, with the option to vote an occasional odd seat that becomes available through illness etc
377	Every four years gives an opportunity to encourage more to come out to vote and a chance to break the apathy that has caused so many poor turnouts. By-elections are not restricted to option 2 (all out elections), there ought to be more anyway. Do not agree that it could lead to loss of experienced members, if they do the job correctly there should be no issue in getting re-elected. There is a clear opportunity to train more to become better Councillors. There may well be more candidates as there are more opportunities at one election to be elected. Procedure for staff to conduct elections ought to be clear and officers trained to sort and conduct. The Commissioners have the ability to implement this change. It is very clear that Labour do not like this option and are/will be asking all of their members and supporters to choose option 1 (elections by thirds).
379	It's cheaper for the local authority to have one election every four years. Other local authorities do this and it works perfectly well.
380	Some councillors do NOT represent the constituents. Option 2 (whole council elections) is the best option to sort these councillors out
406	If it is more cost effective and saves money that can be used elsewhere then it should be given a chance
407	I prefer continuity
412	This option will save money increase turnout.
414	Moving to an "all-out" election cycle will not only allow the incoming administration to plan effectively over a longer period but will reduce the costs of yearly elections and avoid the current voter fatigue as shown in turnout at the current annual local elections



421	I think the Council should move to all out elections to enable more long term strategies of governance as well as a more cost effective approach.
441	Hopefully to get more people voting
P7	I would prefer councillors to be voted in every four years. As in my opinion it would give them more time to make important decisions on our behalf as a community.

Response ID	Comments not in support of "Whole Council Elections"
3	I think once every four years makes our councillors less accountable to the electorate.
20	Feel councillors and the party need to be accounted for yearly rather than every four years which is too long.
38	I would like to see activity from elected members throughout the years not only once. It will become a terrible state like Birmingham were you have councillors only coming around once every four years. It will be a big loss for the residents to have a four year term system as it will get abused just like what's happening in Birmingham
52	The risk of having a council full of brand new councillors who don't understand processes or ongoing issues is too high
69	I believe for continuation of service it would be better to maintain 2/3 councillors. Inducting a large number of new councillors every four years may be challenging for services with regards to systems training. It may also lead to gaps in service and a lack of long term plans.
70	If democracy means anything, it means politicians listening to voters. Elections every four years are a way of disengaging the electors from their elected representatives.
85	It would be good to have some change so that the areas don't all change together. I.e. if everyone left at the same time everyone would need inducting and it would take time to see any productivity, so disruption over every area.
92	'All out elections' would be horrendous with no continuity or accountability for the residents. The current system works really well and the councillors work closely together... that would all be lost.
100	Undemocratic changing the system. Reduces accountability Councillors will become lazy
128	I don't think people in Sandwell understand the more complicated elections such as PCC, Mayor etc where there are more than one vote. I am concerned that the wrong candidates could be elected or turn out really poor (lower than usual) and more spoilt ballot papers.
173	Makes sense to vote all at once also help the voters when voting.
177	I feel the perceived benefits of elections once every four years to be somewhat over rated. Every year has the chance of a General Election, Regional Mayor or PCC election so local elections three times out of every four years seem complementary to me. I also feel a four year gap in local, democratic activity would dull and reduce political reports back to the electorate. So, thanks, but no thanks for the All out every four years, I don't get or believe the social, political or over-stated cost reduction benefits that have been claimed.
181	I don't want to be stuck with a conservative council for four years. Not that I think they will win. They need to more intune with the common people.



Response ID	Comments not in support of "Whole Council Elections"
185	Knowing the Sandwell area for at least 79 years I know that most are not well educated to say the least. To ask them to make three choices at one election could be beyond their mental capabilities. By leaving the system as it is allowing two councillors to assist a new councillor in their new role.
225	Feel the length of time will increase unwillingness to vote. Keeps Councillors 'on their toes' rather than feeling complacent.
234	Councillors require help with their campaigns they get this from their work colleagues who a lot of are also councillors not up for election Councillors would therefore not be able to spend time helping their fellow councillors with their campaigns because they would be working on their own campaigns If all councillors were up at the same time it would mean months before the election there would be. A lot less case work completed because the campaigns take up the councillors time. Far less case work would be done during this period if all councillors were up for election at the same time. Thanks
247	This is an unnecessary exercise imposed by bureaucrats in Whitehall who are obsessed with this idea, without much evidence basis , and a Government Minister who had never served on a local Council . It is also very much based on the system in London Boroughs . The public in Sandwell understand the current system which they have used for decades and which keeps the Councillors ( and the Council Officers ) in touch with public opinion every year , not once every four years. The argument that a four year cycle will improve voter participation is not borne out by the evidence elsewhere. Furthermore local elections are often affected by temporary swings in national opinion and can be seen as referendum on the Government of the day. In London this has led to massive swings back and forth with a considerable impact on stability and effective governance and a loss of experienced councillors, 1968 was a dramatic example.
248	In my view I see that any future changes regarding the Elections by thirds is a deliberate strategy to undermine accountability ratings from the General Public . What we need right now is FAR MORE ACCOUNTABILITY NOT LESS .Its my opinion that all Councillors should be Legally bound and required to sign LEGALLY BINDING CONTRACTS OF EMPLOYMENT WITH THE ELECTORATE WHEREBY THE ELECTORATE SHOULD NEED TO BE CONSULTED AT VERY REGULAR INTERVALS AND BE GIVEN A LEGALLY JUSTIFIABLE RIGHT TO OVERRULE THE COUNCILLORS OWN OPINIONS AT ALL LEVELS OF ACTIONS AND ENGAGEMENTS. WE HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON AT ALL LEVELS OF FISCAL POLICIES,. WAGES AND SPENDING AS WELL AS WITH HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS AND ESPECIALLY WITH REGARDS TO OPEN GREENSPACE AND THE LACK OF IT BEING A MAJOR IMPACT OF AND ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND OUR OWN GENERALL HEALTH AND WELL BEING!
254	To reduce to a four yearly cycle disenfranchises the voting public further and will lead to even less stability in this sector. RETAIN THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF THIRDS
255	Too disruptive if everyone is up for election at same time



Response ID	Comments not in support of "Whole Council Elections"
268	Sandwell struggles to recruit staff to man polling stations this will be made more difficult if elections are run every four years assuming other less popular election would be piggybacked on top increasing the workload with no additional remuneration.
299	Lots can change in four years, for candidates and voters so I'm not convinced this would benefit the Local Authority in the long term
302	I believe allowing Councillors to sit for four years would be a disadvantage to tax payers. It has been and is still being evidenced in Sandwell that the elected representatives do not have the interests of the public at the forefront of their decisions. Councillors on the whole lack experience and have/ make bad judgements and decisions.
305	Once every four years is too infrequent. Perhaps once every two years would be more appropriate.
330	Probably make no difference as the electorate would elect a pig wearing a labour rosette
344	I am concerned that if all councillors were elected once every four years, it would make it difficult to respond to new events or information. Also, councillors will be elected based on a snapshot point in time which may not reflect a longer term perspective.
354	Councillors will be distanced from their residents. Work done by Councillors will not be completed
386	Four years is too long to wait to hold a council to account
398	It would mean that council election outcomes were even more subject to the popularity or otherwise of the incumbent government than they are now rather than the focus being on relevant local issues
401	Elected councillors do little to engage with their constituents but you can be sure they will start door knocking every May to try and win votes, however if the changes to vote every four years were applied they would just vanish once voted in and have zero engagement until next election is due. By having yearly elections they have to remain proactive at some level to try and win votes, making it four-yearly would be a big mistake.
419	The move would not allow residents to send a political message to the controlling parties if they feel policies are being introduced that they disagree with, yearly elections would allow the residents to express their discontent. Also some party representatives are not seen or heard of until the election time, so we may less contact with Political party representatives during a four year cycle.
435	Birmingham Council has done the four year one and it has not help so therefore we need yearly
462	Turnout at Council elections is very low and I feel it would decline further if elections were only held every four years.
P1	Continuity of service is best served by having a mix of more experienced councillors as well as new ones. Changing everyone simultaneously slows down processes and adds delays
P10	There is enough apathy now. If you go to four years, people will be much less inclined to vote. What percentage vote now? It also feels if you go to four years, there is much less accountability and more opportunity for corruption. Do away with "Cabinet Member for" and bring back decisions by Committees.
P11	Too many disadvantages to whole council elections





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# Timing of the Implementation of Whole Council Elections – Impact and Considerations

## Option 1

### Scheduled Local Election 4 May 2023

The council has scheduled standalone local elections on 4 May 2023. Following the passing of the Elections Act 2022, Voter ID requirements are due to be introduced in polling stations for any scheduled or unscheduled polls across England in 2023. Below are some key considerations in relation to the timing of whole council elections along side the introduction of Voter ID.

#### **Operational factors to consider:**

- In addition to the increased financial resources required for whole council elections, there will also be a significant cost implications for the implementation of Voter ID. The DLUHC has confirmed new burdens funding, but the specifics around what the funding will be is yet to be determined.
- It will be necessary to increase staff resources at polling stations to help administer and manage the Voter ID process, to reduce queues and ensure the voting process is still as efficient and smooth. There will also be the requirement for privacy screens in all polling stations.
- For whole council elections, ballot papers will be larger due to the number of candidates. This will impact on the printing costs and resource costs for staff proofing and checking all ballot papers and postal vote packs.
- Whole council elections will require an alternative method of counting the votes. “Multimember” counting for all 24 wards. This will increase the length of the count and increase the cost of counting assistants and other count staff. Additional costs are detailed in the main body of the report.

### Timing of the Implementation of Whole Council Elections – Impact and Considerations

- Additional training will be required for all polling station staff to cover all of the Voter ID requirements and all count staff for whole council elections. Currently all counting assistants are issued with a training video detailing the “first past the post” counting method. It will be necessary to physically train all 260-count staff face to face to ensure that there is a robust understanding of the “multimember” counting process.
- The timing of the Verification and Count will need to be reviewed to consider counting the following day not overnight given the length of time that “multimember” counting may take.

#### Risks

With any introduction of new electoral legislation, there are a number of risks associated with implementing the introduction of Voter ID, that electoral teams could face in 2023. Whilst mitigations will be in place, should council resolve to implement whole council elections in 2023, it is important to highlight those risks and their impact.

- The inability to recruit staff given the changes and new challenges they face in managing polling stations.
- Availability of count staff should the verification and count spread across a number of days.
- Voter apathy and confusion given the changes to the processes potential disenfranchisement with unsuitable ID being presented.
- Insufficient funding to support local authorities to deliver Voter ID effectively

### Timing of the Implementation of Whole Council Elections – Impact and Considerations

- Unscheduled polls are a continued risk, a “snap” UK General Election could be called in 2023. Combined polls increase risk impact on resources.

#### Summary

The bullet points listed above highlight some of the key operational considerations and risks associated with a change to our electoral cycle in 2023. It is important to note that whilst the change to whole council elections combined with Voter ID does present many challenges, adequate planning, and adequate levels of funding and staffing resources will mitigate the challenges and allow for the successful delivery of the elections.

#### Option 2

**Scheduled Combined Local, Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and Combined Authority Mayoral (CAM) Elections 2 May 2024. UK Parliament election not scheduled but proposed for 2024.**

The council has scheduled three-way combination elections in May 2024. This will see Voter ID in polling stations for the second year. Below are operational considerations and risks should council resolve to implement “whole council elections” in 2024.

#### Operational factors to consider:

- In addition to the additional financial resources required for whole council elections there will also be a significant cost implication for the implementation of Voter ID. The DLUHC has confirmed new burdens funding, but the specifics around what the funding will be is yet to be determined.
- The scheduled PCC and CAM elections will require the local authority to cover the cost of the three-way combination elections until the funding is claimed back from the Electoral Claims Unit. This would also be the case in the event of a “snap” UKPGE.

### Timing of the Implementation of Whole Council Elections – Impact and Considerations

- It will be necessary to increase staff resources at polling stations to help administer and manage the Voter ID process, to reduce queues and ensure the voting process is still as efficient and smooth. There will also be the requirement for privacy screens in all polling stations.
- For whole council elections, ballot papers will be larger due to the number of candidates. This will impact on the printing costs and resource costs for staff proofing and checking all ballot papers and postal vote packs.
- Whole council elections will require an alternative method of counting the votes. “Multimember” counting for all 24 wards. This will increase the length of the count and increase the cost of counting assistants and other count staff. Additional costs are detailed in the main body of the report.
- Additional training will be required for all polling station staff to cover all of the Voter ID requirements and all count staff for whole council elections. Currently all counting assistants are issued with a training video detailing the “first past the post” counting method. It will be necessary to physically train all 260-count staff face to face to ensure that there is a robust understanding of the “multimember” counting process.
- The timing of the Verification and Count will need to be reviewed to consider counting the following day not overnight given the length of time that “multimember” counting may take.
- A three- or four-way combination will require counting over a 4-day period. Although the Elections Act has introduced the “first past the post” counting method for the PCC and CAM elections, which will reduce the complication, the length of time required for counting will be significantly impacted.

### Timing of the Implementation of Whole Council Elections – Impact and Considerations

- The law still requires a UKPGE to be counted overnight. In the event that the general election is combined with the elections in May, this will require significantly more staff resources to be able to verify all four polls and start counting the general election within the statutory requirements.

#### Risks

The risks detailed above in Option 1 apply in both scenarios should members resolve to introduce whole council elections

However, the number of scheduled elections in 2024 present a significant difference. All combination elections carry additional risk, the risk increases with the numbers of combinations. 2024 will see a minimum of a three -way combination and this could increase to four with a UKPGE.

- The inability to recruit staff given the changes and new challenges they face in managing polling stations.
- Availability of count staff should the verification and count spread across a number of days
- Voter apathy and confusion given the changes to the processes potential disenfranchisement with unsuitable ID being presented. Voter confusion will increase with the number of ballot papers presented to them and the differences in the method of voting. The ballot papers for Whole council elections will be larger and the voter will be required to “vote for three”.
- Insufficient funding to support local authorities to deliver Voter ID effectively with an increased burden of funding a several combination elections. Funds are claimed back from central government (Electoral Claims Unit) following submission and approval of a full set of accounts for each election.

### Timing of the Implementation of Whole Council Elections – Impact and Considerations

- Combined unscheduled polls are a continues risk, there is the significant possibility that a “snap” UK General Election could be called in 2024 and combined in May. Differences in legislation, impact on resources new will increase risk to the delivery elections given a three- or four-way combination poll alongside Voter ID and whole council local elections.

#### Summary

The above points highlight the additional risk associated with combination elections, Voter ID and the introduction of whole council local elections simultaneously. The impact of a change to the electoral system in 2024 is significantly higher when compared to 2023, the main reason being there are no scheduled combination elections in 2023. The successful delivery of the elections in 2024 will be predicated on robust planning, and adequate staffing and financial resources.

**Local Government Boundary Commission – Indicative Timetable for Boundary Review**

The LGDCE have identified a proposed timeline to undertake a Local Boundary review irrespective of the council's electoral cycle.

The timetable works practically whether or not council resolve to move to all-outs or keep with the existing election cycle to elect by thirds.

**Proposed timetable of events Local Boundary Review**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
Spring/Summer 2023	Formal briefings for Sandwell members and office on the review process
March 2024	Submission of proposals (including from Sandwell Council) on how many councillors there should be
May 2024	Commission agrees how many councillors Sandwell should have
May 2024	First public consultation on ward boundaries starts
October 2024	Commission decides draft recommendations
October – December 2024	Second public consultation on ward boundaries starts
April 2025	Final recommendations published
May 2026 (if current election cycle by thirds)	Implementation of review outcomes with “all-out” elections
May 2026 or May 2027 (if council move to “all outs” to allow 4-year term of office)	Implementation of review outcomes with “all-out” elections

### **Local Government Boundary Commission – Indicative Timetable for Boundary Review**

It is important to note , and members should consider that regardless of the decision taken by council to either remain under the current cycle of elections or move to all out's elections the election at which the outcome of the local review will be implemented must be 'all-out" elections irrespective of the council's current electoral cycle.

## Appendix D – Case Study Changing Electoral Cycles

Local Authority	Date	Activity	Response	Result	Decision
<b>Harrogate Borough Council</b>	6-week consultation Sept/Oct 2015	‘Have Your Say’ online Survey Hard copies upon request  Consulted District Panel (850) Parish Councils notified Press release	51	16 were in favour of elections by thirds 32 were in favour of whole council elections 3 had no preference	At an Extraordinary meeting held on 18 November 2015, the Council resolved to change to whole Council elections from May 2018.
<b>Slough Borough Council</b>	6-week consultation Nov/Jan 2022	Online Survey Hard copies form delivered to every household	631	242 supported retaining election by thirds 389 favoured a move to whole council elections	At an Extraordinary meeting held on 18 January 2022, the Council resolved to change to whole Council elections from May 2023.
<b>Worcester City Council</b>	3-week consultation Jan/Feb 2022	Wrote to statutory organisations Consulted residents’ panel Press releases, social media campaigns, Council’s website.	328	121 – Retain current system of election by thirds 192 – Move to whole council elections 15 – D/K	At an Extraordinary meeting held on 22 February 2022, the Council resolved to adopt, from May 2024, whole Council elections

## Appendix D – Case Study Changing Electoral Cycles

Local Authority	Date	Activity	Response	Result	Decision
<b>Derby City Council</b>	8-week consultation Jan/March 2020	Online Survey Hard copies upon request Council website Social media channels Sent out to networks and partner organisations	511	79 - Retain current system of election by thirds 419 - change to whole council elections 8 – No preference	At an Extraordinary meeting 19 January 2022, the Council resolved to move to four-yearly 'all council' elections, commencing with local elections to be held in 2023.
<b>Tandridge District Council</b>	9 May - Friday 17 June 2022	News items issued to all our media contacts and partners. Dedicated webpage on council's website. Social media posts. Articles in some local, free, monthly magazines. E-mail footer on officers' e-mails. Articles in every Tandridge News and Events e-newsletter in May and June.	214	106 were in favour of retaining elections by thirds. This was 51.21% of respondents who expressed an opinion.  101 were in favour of moving to whole Council elections. This was 48.79% of respondents who expressed an opinion.  7 did not provide an answer.	The relevant committee voted to retain election by thirds.

## Appendix D – Case Study Changing Electoral Cycles

Local Authority	Date	Activity	Response	Result	Decision
<b>Wokingham Borough Council</b>	7 March 2022 – 15 April 2022	Online Survey Hard copies upon request	3,067	54% of respondents were in favour of the move to all out elections and 46% were against	22 June 2022 - Full council rejected the proposed change to the electoral cycle.

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# Equality Impact Assessment Template

Please complete this template using the [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance document](#)

**Version 4: January 2019**







Title of proposal (include forward plan reference if available)	Council Election Cycle
Directorate and Service Area	Electoral Services
Name and title of Lead Officer completing this EIA	Tracey Hurst/Koser Shaheen
Contact Details	Tracey_Hurst@sandwell.gov.uk/Koser_Shaheen@sandwell.gov.uk
Names and titles of other officers involved in completing this EIA	
Partners involved with the EIA where jointly completed	
Date EIA completed	20 October 2022
Date EIA signed off or agreed by Director or Executive Director	
Name of Director or Executive Director signing off EIA	
Date EIA considered by Cabinet Member	

See [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance](#) for key prompts that must be addressed for all questions

# 1. The purpose of the proposal or decision required (Please provide as much information as possible)

The Council approved a consultation to consider changing the election cycle from the current system of election by thirds to whole council elections occurring once every four years. This followed directions by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The decision required will whether to continue with the current cycle of elections by thirds or to move to whole council elections every 4 years to take effect from a date specified by council in the resolution

The table below shows how this change meets the corporate plan,

	Best start in life for children and young people
	People live well and age well
	Strong resilient communities The corporate plan commits the council to engaging with and listening to residents, businesses and communities. The recommendations of this report seek to deliver these commitments in respect of a key element of the council's democratic arrangements and in line with the commitment to the successful delivery of Sandwell's Improvement Plan.
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods
	A strong and inclusive economy
	A connected and accessible Sandwell

Note that table 8.2 of the report sets out some of the key considerations of each election cycle

## 2. Evidence used/considered

There is a limited amount of research on the subject of election cycles and their benefits. The Electoral Commission report (referenced in section 8.0 of the report is the most recent official document). The Commission concluded that whole council elections would provide a clearer and more equitable system of voting for electors in the area. The Commission report discusses issues around clarity and understanding for electors, which it claims is reduced by a system that elects by thirds. This confusion can particularly affect younger voters or those from BME groups. Therefore, this does highlight equality issues that need consideration before moving towards a change in the electoral system. This is further highlighted in the implications section of the report. There are differing conclusions referenced in the Electoral Commission's report analysing the impact of changing election cycles. Data suggested that in some areas, a change of electoral cycle to whole council elections increased levels of turnout. The report also suggests that turnout is marginally better amongst councils who conduct all out elections. However, there are also other factors which can affect voter turnout such as combining a local election with a UKPGE, voter engagement/apathy and the local/national political climate.

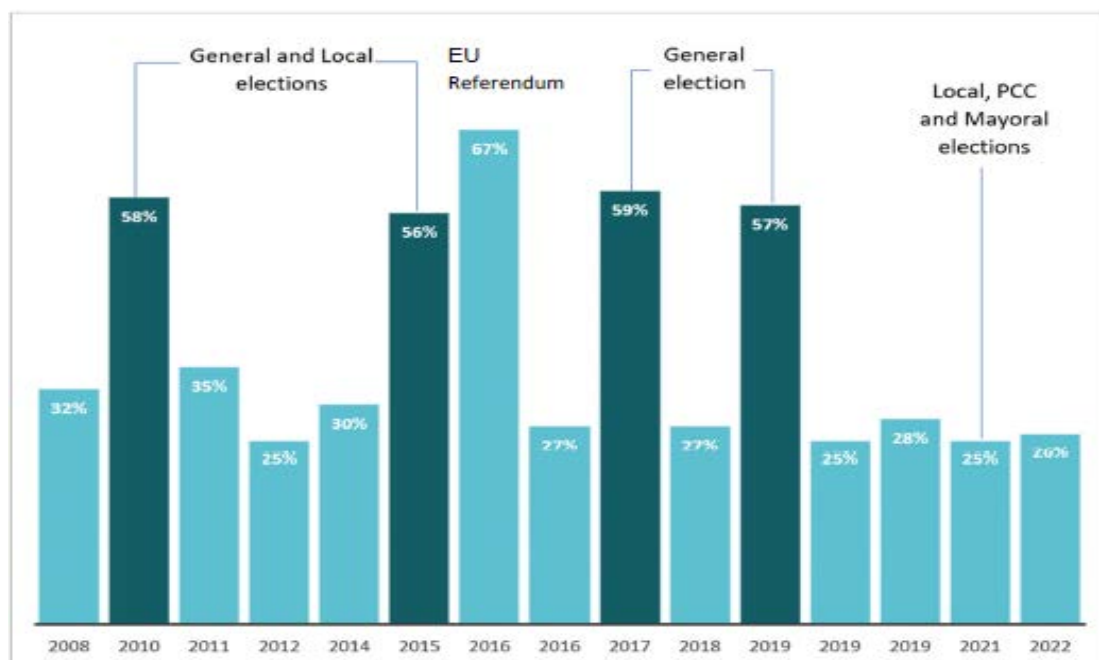
The table below shows the election turnout figures for three metropolitan councils who moved from elections by thirds to whole council elections

	Last election elected by thirds		First election whole council elections		Subsequent whole council elections
<b>Birmingham</b>	2016	32%	2018	32%	Scheduled for 2022
<b>Doncaster</b>	2014	33%	2017	29%	2021 28%
	2015	56% (combined UKPGE)			
<b>Rotherham</b>	2014	35%	2016	33%	2021 29%
	2015	59% (combined UKPGE)			

The research shows no significant impact on voter turnout levels in changing electoral cycles. It is clear however that turnout increases when local elections are combined with general elections. This trend is seen on a

national scale.

On a local level, the table below sets out turnout for local and national elections in Sandwell from 2008 to 2022.



The turnout figures for standalone local elections are similar year upon year. Significant increases in turnout are where elections are combined with general elections. Members will need to consider the impact of combined elections in the final decision-making process of changing electoral cycles. Since 2003, there has been a notable shift by councils from electing by thirds to whole council elections. The most cited reasons are the financial benefits and the argument that whole council elections support better long-term decision making and stability. In April 2021, a Best Value Report on Liverpool City Council by the Government Appointed Lead Inspector, Max Caller CBE, recommended that the City Council move from electing by thirds to a whole council electoral system, noting that “*LCC being in election mode every year provides less opportunity to scrutinise the Mayor’s actions.....and that a whole council electoral system would provide LCC a better ability to have a longer term focus*”. It is also notable that Slough Borough Council commenced a public consultation in December 2021 (for a period of six weeks) with a view to moving to whole council elections as part of its response to addressing its governance and financial difficulties.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, in 2021, as part of the Local Government Association’s Corporate Peer Challenge for Wokingham Borough Council, it was recommended that

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/intervention-at-slough-borough-council#:~:text=Slough%20Borough%20Council%20was%20one,of%20an%20external%20assurance%20review.>

the council should formally consider the benefits of moving to whole council elections. The Elections Act 2022 seeks to improve the security, accessibility and transparency of elections and campaigning. A significant part of the Act is the introduction of Voter ID in polling stations. It is intended that Voter ID will be implemented for any elections in England from May 2023. Members will need to consider the significant impact of the introduction of Voter ID alongside the change in electoral cycle and potential combination of elections when it makes its final decision on whether to change the election cycle.

### 3. Consultation

The council undertook a consultation which ran for six weeks from the 1 August to 16 September 2022. The consultation question was “How often would you prefer to elect councillors to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council?” The possible answers were Option 1 – by thirds or Option 2 – whole council elections. The approach used was an online public survey published on a dedicated webpage in the elections area of the council’s website. The survey was also published on the council’s consultation webpage. Residents were also able to respond to the consultation via paper copies of the survey. Copies of the survey as well as posters and leaflets were located in every library and Sandwell local offices. Paper copies were also posted to home addresses upon request. A dedicated email address was also set up, which allowed residents to ask questions, provide further comments, etc. In total, 487 people responded to the consultation. 470 responded online and 17 responded via the paper survey. The table below shows the number of responses by channel used. 69% of consultees voted to retain the current electoral cycle of electing “by thirds”

Table of results.

Total of responses to the Consultation by response type				
Response	Online	Paper	Total	% of Total
Option 1 – By Thirds	325	13	338	69.4%
Option 2 – Whole Council	145	4	149	30.6%
Total	470	17	487	100%

Reasons given by consultees for preferring elections by thirds included that it provided a regular refresh of political debate and political ideas, and newly elected members can work alongside more experienced councillors

Reasons given by consultees for preferring whole council elections included

that doing so would provide a better use of public resources and provide more stability over a longer political period. A full analysis of the consultation results outlining the methodology and additional comments received by consultees is detailed in Appendix A of the report. For information Appendix D of the report provides a table of consultation activity and information from other local authorities who have also undertaken this exercise to assist with considering and determining their local election cycle.

#### 4. Assess likely impact

Please give an outline of the overall impact if possible.

Overall, engagement and participation form part of the Electoral Commission performance standards and our legal requirements within the RPA 1983 to ensure a complete and accurate register and encourage registration and participation in elections. In particular Section 149, Equality Act 2010 149(1) *“A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to – (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it”*. With that in mind, where it is thought that a change in the election cycles may affect participation we have a legal duty to ensure our engagement plans are robust enough to “reach out” to all demographics and communities to encourage participation.

#### Overview of demographics:

Profile of registration area - Local and national data sources		
Source of Data/Information	Information provided	How this data will be used
Electorate	<a href="#">233,400 Total</a> Electorate for Sandwell as from October 2022	
Census 2011/2021	Data from Xpress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>17052 EU Citizens (Polish 5227, Italian 3052, Romanian 2103, Portuguese 1462)</li> <li>14169 Commonwealth citizens excluding British/Irish (Indian 7874, Pakistani 1806, Jamaican 950, Bangladeshi 814, Nigerian 733, Zimbabwean 448)</li> <li>Over 70s = 20356 (76 or Over: 16579)</li> </ul>	To analyse the demographics of our area.
Local authority education data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attainers on register from September 2022 = 300</li> <li>Nursing Homes = 97</li> <li>Houses of Multiple Occupation = 21</li> </ul>	To establish the number of young people who will need to be reached
Council tax data Local Authority Housing data	Census 2011: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Second homes within Sandwell 1,614</li> <li>Nationalities (passport held): India 6818, Pakistan 1311, Bangladesh 667,</li> <li>Religion: Christian 170075, Sikh 26934, Muslim 25251, Hindu 6810, Buddhist 654, Jewish 73,</li> <li>Main Language: Panjabi 12524, Polish 5601, Urdu 3347, Bengali (with Sylheti and Chatoaya) 3098</li> </ul>	Identify concentrations of student properties and second homes and generate specific names
Local authority information about access to the internet/use of social media/unique visits to local authority website	Census 2021: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occupied households 130,200</li> <li>Age ranges: 15-24 years 42,300, 25-49 years 117,500, 50-64 years 61,300, 65+ years 49,800</li> </ul>	To establish how many people are likely to be reached via digital channels, to identify areas with low internet use where other channels may be more effective
Register of Electors Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Population density (number of usual residents per square kilometre): 3,996</li> <li>Total usual resident population by sex: Females 173,600, Males 168,200</li> </ul>	To gain an in depth understanding of our local areas to enable a more targeted

**Please complete the table below at 4a to identify the likely impact on specific protected characteristics**

#### 4a. Use the table to show:

- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a negative impact on any of the equality strands (protected characteristics), that is it could disadvantage them or if there is no impact, please note the evidence and/or reasons for this.
- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a positive impact on any of the groups or contribute to promoting equality, equal opportunities or improving relationships within equality characteristics.

Protected Characteristic	Positive Impact ✓	Negative Impact ✓	No Impact ✓	Reason and evidence (Provide details of specific groups affected even for no impact and where negative impact has been identified what mitigating actions can we take?)
Age				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Electoral Commission research suggests that younger age groups were less likely to know when local elections were taking place. Moving to whole council elections would improve engagement with younger voters. The Council is under a duty to advance equality of opportunity. Moving to all whole council elections may provide an opportunity for the Council to positively impact on the opportunities of your younger voters to participate and vote in elections.</li> <li>Moving to whole council elections however also means that voters will have to wait longer to vote. This will impact older voters and age-related impairments such as degeneration in sight and hearing may make it more difficult for them to participate. Mitigation can be provided by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging nursing homes in the borough for Electoral Services</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

				<p>to speak to older residents? This is carried out every year as part of the annual canvass but of course contact can be more frequent in terms of raising awareness of the elections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Contact made with Age UK about making information available to older voters?</li> <li>○ When applying for an absent vote, electors can request a “signature waiver “this means that they do not need to provide a signature due to having an illness or disability that prevents them from providing a signature.</li> </ul>
<b>Disability</b>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Moving to whole council elections means that voters will have to wait longer to vote. This may impact disabled voters suffering degenerative disabilities which may make it more difficult for them to participate. Mitigation can be provided by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Polling staff are trained to assist any disabled voters who go to polling stations to vote.</li> <li>○ Polling stations are generally accessible for disabled voters. Where necessary reasonable adjustments are made which would apply regardless of the election cycle.</li> <li>○ There are a number of things available at the polling station to electors cast their vote, including a large print sample ballot paper, and a tactile voting device to help if voters have a visual impairment.</li> <li>○ There are also procedures in place should an elector in a wheelchair struggle to gain access, in a portable unit for example, the Presiding Officer will take the “voting “process to the elector outside.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When applying for an absent vote, electors can request a “signature waiver” this means that they do not need to provide a signature due to having an illness or disability that prevents them from providing a signature.</li> </ul>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This characteristic has no bearing on the consultation being undertaken. In general terms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The training for polling staff will include gender reassignment and the need for awareness and discretion if there appears to be a difference between the gender of the voter or the name which a voter gives and details on the register.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This characteristic has no bearing on the consultation being undertaken. In general terms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The requirement to provide a marriage certificate or other document where an elector has married/changed their name since the register is included in publicity and in polling staff training.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This characteristic has no bearing on the consultation being undertaken.</li> </ul>

<b>Race</b>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Council is under a duty to advance equality of opportunity. Moving to all whole council elections may provide an opportunity for the Council to positively impact on the opportunities of non-white voters to participate and vote in elections.</li> <li>Electoral Commission research suggests that those with an ethnicity other than white were less likely to know when local elections were taking place. The research also indicates that the minority communities may not be participating due to confusion about eligibility, residency requirements and perceived language barriers. Mitigation can be provided by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Electoral Services signpost the Electoral Commission website provides where voters can download registration forms in 25 languages.</li> <li>Electoral Services also use radio comms for key messages to all residents in different languages.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Religion or belief</b>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This characteristic has no bearing on the consultation being undertaken. In general terms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Female Muslims who wear a niqab (a face veil worn by some Muslim women) will need to remove it for the purpose of checking their ID. A separate room or screened off part of the polling station will be available for this. Wherever possible a female will be appointed to each polling station so that ID checks can be carried out by a female if requested. Alternatively, a female from a nearby polling station will go to the polling station to do this.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>Sex</b>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This characteristic has no bearing on the consultation being undertaken.</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual orientation</b>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This characteristic has no bearing on the consultation being undertaken.</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>				

Does this EIA require a full impact assessment? Yes, ☐ No ☒

If there are no adverse impacts or any issues of concern or you can adequately explain or justify them, then you do not need to go any further. You have completed the screening stage. You must, however, complete sections 7 and 9 and publish the EIA as it stands.

If you have answered yes to the above, please complete the questions below referring to the guidance document.

**5. What actions can be taken to mitigate any adverse impacts?**

There are no adverse impacts. Some of the concerns have been mitigated in the above protected characteristics analysis.

**6. As a result of the EIA what decision or actions are being proposed in relation to the original proposals?**

Electoral Services already provide all the support and guidance highlighted in the above protected characteristics analysis.

**7. Monitoring arrangements**

## **8. Action planning**

You may wish to use the action plan template below

[illegible]

## **9. Publish the EIA**

## **Where can I get additional information, advice and guidance?**

In the first instance, please consult the accompanying guide “Equality Impact Assessment Guidance”

### **Practical advice, guidance and support**

Help and advice on undertaking an EIA or receiving training related to equalities legislation and EIAs is available to **all managers** across the council from officers within Service Improvement. The officers within Service Improvement will also provide overview quality assurance checks on completed EIA documents.

#### **Please contact:**

Kashmir Singh - 0121 569 3828