

Minutes of Extraordinary Meeting of Council

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

Present: His Worshipful The Mayor, Councillor R Jones;
Deputy Mayor, Councillor Taylor;

Councillors Abrahams, Ahmed, Akhtar, Akpoteni, Allcock, Allen, Anandou, Ashman, Bostan, Carmichael, Chambers, Chapman, Chidley, Choudhry, Crompton, Dhallu, Dhariwal, Dunn, Fenton, Fisher, Gavan, E M Giles, E A Giles, J Giles, L Giles, M Gill, S Gill, W Gill, Hackett, Hinchliff, Hughes, A Hussain, Z Hussain, Jalil, S Jones, Kaur, Kausar, Khatun MBE, Lewis, McVittie, Melia, Millar, Moore, Owen, Padda, Piper, Preece, Rahman, Randhawa, Rollins, Shaeen, Simms, Smith, Trumpeter, Uddin, Webb, Wilkes, Williams.

Also present: Kim Bromley-Derry – Managing Director Commissioner, Surjit Tour – Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer; Elaine Newsome – Services Manager – Democracy; Suky Suthi-Nagra – Democratic Services Manager; Stephnie Hancock – Senior Democratic Services Officer; Trisha Newton – Senior Democratic Services Office; Connor Robinson – Democratic Services Officer; Kennedy Brown – Sergeant at Arms.

114/22 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bhullar, Costigan, G Gill, Hartwell, O Jones, Kalari, Mayo, Millard, N Singh and Shackleton.



115/22 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

116/22 **Council Election Cycle - Consultation to explore a change to the current schedule of elections in Sandwell**

The Leader of the Council presented the report on the Council's Election Cycle Consultation.

At its meeting on 26 July 2022, the Council had 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 review its current elections cycle.

The Council undertook a public 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, Option or 2 – whole council elections.

Public comments emphasised the benefits of either option. 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.

Meanwhile 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.

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



Of those responses, 338 (69.4%) favoured Option 1 – by thirds, in contrast 149 (30.6%) favoured Option 2 – whole Council.

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

The Council had been informed in September 2021 that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England intended to undertake an electoral review in Sandwell. The last review of this kind in Sandwell was in 2004. The Council had been 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.

In accordance with Standing Order No. 11, Councillor Fisher proposed a motion. The motion was seconded by W Gill and was put to the vote. The motion was approved and it was:

Resolved:-

- (1) that Council considers this report and notes the findings and outcome of the public consultation detailed in Appendix A;
- (2) that Council notes the limited response to the public consultation which has garnered the views of less than 0.25% of residents on this matter and therefore resolves to retain the Council's current election cycle in thirds and agrees that a further review of the council's electoral cycle be undertaken, which is to be run alongside the scheduled Local Government Boundary Review to enable Sandwell residents a further opportunity to outline their views on the matter;
- (3) that a report on the future elections cycle in Sandwell be brought back to Full Council for consideration as soon as possible after the election cycle review referred to in (2) above has been completed.



Meeting ended at 6.33pm

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