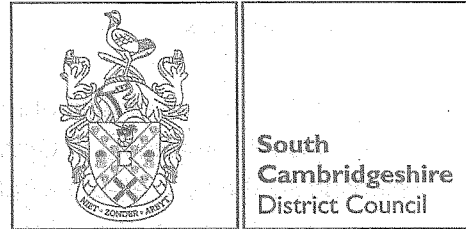


# Consultation on proposed changes to the Local Elections system from thirds to all-out elections



1. We would welcome your views by Friday 18 September 2015 on proposed changes to how we run District Council elections in South Cambridgeshire. Should we:
  - i. Keep our present system of electing 'by thirds' - where elections are held for a third of all council seats each year for three successive years out of four
  - ii. Change to 'all-out' elections - with every District Council seat up for election once every four years.

## Why are changes being proposed?

2. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is due to carry out a district 'Boundary Review' because councillors in some wards – the geographical area that councillors cover - represent many more electors than councillors in others. The review will look to iron out these inequalities, whilst preserving community identity.
3. One of the first steps LGBCE will take is to consider how many councillors are needed to represent our district effectively. If we continue to elect councillors by thirds, the Commission will look to introduce three-councillor wards across the district. If we move to all-out elections, we are likely to have more single-councillor wards.
4. Currently, 57 councillors represent 34 wards across South Cambridgeshire. A councillor's normal term of office is four years, unless they are elected in an unscheduled by-election. Depending on their size, some wards have one councillor while others have two or three.

## The current system – electing 'by thirds'

5. Each May, elections for one third of the Council's seats are held for three successive years out of four. This means that:
  - i. all seats are elected once during that period
  - ii. residents living in wards with a single district councillor have one election every four years
  - iii. residents living in wards with two or three district councillors get to vote in elections two or three times during the four-year cycle

## Moving to 'all-out' elections

6. Comments and the results of this consultation will be considered by councillors at a special Council meeting in October 2015, where they will vote on whether to move from electing by thirds to all-out elections:
  - i. two thirds of councillors will need to vote in favour of moving to all-out elections for a change to be made
  - ii. if Council votes to make a change, it is likely that the first all-out election would take place in 2018, to:
    - avoid clashing with all-out elections to Cambridgeshire County Council in 2017
    - provide time for LGBCE to complete its boundary review of our district
7. If all-out elections began in 2018, any councillors elected in 2016 under the current by thirds system would serve two-year terms of office instead of the usual four.

## Effect on parish council elections

8. A District Council move to all-out elections could potentially lead to all Parish Council elections also being held once every four years. At present, Parish Council elections are held at the same time as District Council elections. Changing the election arrangements for Parish Councils to keep their elections in line with the District Council would avoid the potential costs of holding standalone elections.

## Pros and cons

9. Our Civic Affairs Committee agreed to carry out this public consultation on 9 July 2015 (see the meeting notes [on our website](#)). In reaching this decision, the Committee discussed the merits of each option. These were the key points.

<b>The case for the present system 'electing by thirds'</b>	<b>The case for the proposed change 'all-out' elections</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• following the boundary review, if every ward has three councillors, all residents will have consistent voting rights, being able to vote in three years out of four.</li><li>• more regular opportunities to hold elected councillors to account for key policy decisions</li><li>• can help voters to focus on local issues, which may otherwise be drowned out by national issues and political party campaigning</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• avoids an absolute requirement for three-councillor wards, which may not be an appropriate model to impose upon a large rural district</li><li>• voters can make more informed judgements on four-year manifestos and individual candidate commitments, providing a clearer mandate to help the Council adopt a more strategic, long-term approach to policy and decision-making.</li><li>• clearer opportunity for voters to change</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allows the Council to gradually change, rather than the possibility of big political change every four years. New councillors can learn from more experienced ones.</li> <li>• “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the political composition of the Council once every four years.</li> <li>• holding whole-Council elections once every four years, rather than smaller elections every three years out of four, would cost less and be less disruptive for public buildings used as polling stations, especially schools.</li> <li>• the results from all-out elections are simpler and more easily understood, which may increase voter turnout and avoid the confusion and ‘election fatigue’ which can arise from the current system of thirds.</li> </ul>
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### Have your say

Please let us know your views about the proposals **by Friday 18 September 2015** by completing our [online survey](#). For a paper copy of the survey, please email [Richard.may@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.may@scambs.gov.uk) or call 01954 713366.