



COUNCIL: 22 JULY 2020

---

**Report of: Chief Operating Officer**

**Contact for further information:** Mr Thomas Lynan (Extn. 5013)  
(E-mail: [tom.lynan@westlancs.gov.uk](mailto:tom.lynan@westlancs.gov.uk))

---

**SUBJECT: WEST LANCASHIRE ELECTORAL REVIEW – ELECTORAL CYCLE**

---

Wards affected: Borough wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To advise on the recommendations of the Electoral Review Working Group in respect of its consideration of potential changes to the electoral cycle from elections by thirds to whole Council elections. This report also sets out the statutory process for making a change and the required consultation arrangements that would be required prior to any formal decision being taken by the Council to change.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That taking into account the recommendation of the Electoral Review Working Group, the Council's electoral cycle should remain as elections by thirds, rather than whole Council elections every four years.

---

## **3.0 ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS**

3.1 The Council has undertaken elections by thirds since 1976. However, legislative change introduced under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enables the Council to resolve to change its electoral cycle and move to whole-council elections, which would take place every four years.

3.2 Arguments in favour of a change to Whole-Council Elections (All Out) include:

- A clear mandate from the electorate once every four years would provide the Council political stability, enabling a more strategic, long-term approach to policy and decision-making and focus less on yearly election campaigning;

- Voting once every 4 years could heighten the importance of voting and this may increase turn-out at local elections;
- Less confusion as electors would be voting for all councillors at the same time.
- There would be a clearer opportunity for the electorate to change the political composition of the council once every four years;
- Holding whole-Council elections once every four years rather than smaller elections every three years out of four would cost less and would be less disruptive for public buildings used as polling stations, for example, schools.

### 3.3 Arguments in favour of keeping elections by thirds include:

- Elections in three years out of every four provide more frequent opportunity for electors to vote and to influence the political make-up of the Council. This may, therefore, provide more immediate political accountability and provide a more up-to-date reflection of the views of local people.
- Electing by thirds ensures that experienced councillors remain on the Council without any chance of them all being replaced in a single election, which contributes to continuity.
- Voting for one councillor at a time under “elections by thirds” is well understood by voters in West Lancashire. Voting for more than one councillor at the same time under “whole council elections” could cause confusion.
- An election by thirds provides a regular influx of newly elected councillors who can bring new ideas and fresh approaches to the Council.
- In multi-member Wards, one councillor is elected at a time, allowing the electorate to focus on the aptitude of particular candidates.

### 3.4 If elections by Thirds was to be maintained the scheduled election calendar following the boundary review would be as such;

2023 – Local (all out on new boundaries), Parish  
 2024 – Parliamentary, PCC, Local, Parish  
 2025 – LCC  
 2026 – Local, Parish  
 2027 – Local, Parish  
 2028 – PCC, Local, Parish  
 2029 – Parliamentary, LCC  
 2030 – Local, Parish  
 2031 – Local, Parish

3.5 If elections were to be all out beginning in 2023 the scheduled election calendar would be as such;

2023 – Local (all out on new boundaries), Parish

2024 – Parliamentary, PCC

2025 – LCC

2026 – *No Scheduled Elections*

2027 – Local, Parish

2028 – PCC

2029 – Parliamentary, LCC

2030 – *No Scheduled Elections*

2031 – Local, Parish

#### **4.0 THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION**

4.1 The Electoral Commission undertook a review of electoral cycles in 2003 in a report entitled *The Cycle of Local Government Elections in England*.

4.2 The Electoral Commission, having taken into account the evidence and arguments presented during the consultation process concluded that a pattern of whole-Council elections for all local authorities in England would provide a clear, equitable and easy to understand electoral process that would best serve the interests of local government electors. The Electoral Commission, therefore, recommended that each local authority should hold whole-Council elections, with all councillors elected simultaneously, once every four years. However, this is currently a matter for local choice.

4.3 Currently only 35% of Authorities elect by Thirds, with 62% electing All Out. This is part of a trend towards all out elections, with 12 authorities moving to all out elections in the last 5 years.

4.4 In Lancashire 7 out of 12 Councils elect by Thirds with the remaining 5 electing all out.

#### **5.0 METHODOLOGY FOR CONSULTATION**

5.1 If an authority were minded to move from thirds to Whole-Council elections, it must consult. Council's undertaking such consultation must:

- Consult such persons as the Council thinks appropriate on the proposed change;
- Have regard to the outcome of the consultation before making its decision;
- Convene a special meeting of the Council;
- Pass a resolution to change by a two thirds majority of those voting;
- Publish an explanatory document on the decision and make this available for public inspection; and
- Give notice to the Electoral Commission on any changes to the electoral arrangements.

#### **6.0 WEST LANCASHIRE ELECTORAL REVIEW**

- 6.1 Maintaining Thirds or moving to Whole-Council elections has a substantial impact on the West Lancashire Electoral Review being undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).
- 6.2 Keep elections by thirds and the LGBCE will expect a Council Size which is divisible by 3. Ward boundaries will also then be considered on the basis of uniform 3 member wards with minimal diversion from that – Currently only 8 of the Council's 25 Wards are 3 Member.
- 6.3 Move to Whole-Council elections and there would be greater flexibility in terms of Council Size and number of mixed member wards.
- 6.4 Regardless of which electoral cycle is taken forward, at the completion of the Electoral Review Whole-Council elections will take place to elect Members on the new ward boundaries. This is expected to be in 2023.

## **7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ELECTORAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP**

- 7.1 The minute of the Electoral Review Working Group reads as follows:

"Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Operating Officer which advised that the Council has the choice of moving from elections by thirds to whole Council elections and set out the statutory process for making such a change and the required consultation arrangements that should be undertaken prior to the Council deciding which option should be approved.

A Motion to remain as elections by thirds was moved and seconded, and at the request of a member was recorded as follows:

FOR: Councillors G Dowling, I Moran and A Yates (THREE)

AGAINST: Councillors I Ashcroft, G Johnson and D Westley (THREE)

As there was an equal number of Members voting, the Chairman, Councillor I Moran, used his casting vote 'FOR' the Motion.

The Motion was CARRIED.

AGREED: That the Working Group recommend to Council on 22 July 2020:

That the Council's electoral cycle should remain as elections by thirds, rather than whole Council elections every four years, therefore a consultation exercise is not required."

## **8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder.

## **9.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The financial and resource implications of undertaking a consultation would be met from existing budgets.
- 9.2 In terms of the costs of elections, these are generally met by the body or bodies whose representatives have been elected. For example, the UK Government (through the Consolidated Fund) pays for UK Parliamentary elections and PCC elections. Lancashire County Council pay for the election of their councillors, and West Lancashire Borough Council pays for the cost of local elections to the Borough Council. Where elections are combined, for example, a local election and a General Election, the costs are shared (although not equally) between central Government and the Council.
- 9.3 The current cost of West Lancashire Borough Council elections by thirds is approximately £135,000 per year (three years out of four). A move to whole Council elections would be more expensive as a standalone event (costing approximately £200,000-£220,000), but taking place only once every four years would represent a saving overall across a four year period.
- 9.4 The exact size of any saving would depend on whether any elections were combined with other polls.

## **10.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 10.1 Consultation is a statutory requirement of the process for potentially changing electoral cycle. A decision on electoral cycle must also be made in sufficient time for it to be taken into account within the Council Size Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in January 2021.

## **11.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 There are no health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.

---

---

### **Background Documents**

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal Equality Impact Assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report.

### **Appendices**

A: Equality Impact Assessment

# Equality Impact Assessment Form



<b>Directorate: Transformation &amp; Resources</b>		<b>Service: Legal and Democratic Services</b>	
<b>Completed by: Thomas Lynan</b>		<b>Date: 04/05/2020</b>	
<b>Subject Title: WEST LANCASHIRE ELECTORAL REVIEW – ELECTORAL CYCLE</b>			
<b>1. DESCRIPTION</b>			
Is a policy or strategy being produced or revised:		No	
Is a service being designed, redesigned or cutback:		Yes	
Is a commissioning plan or contract specification being developed:		No	
Is a budget being set or funding allocated:		No	
Is a programme or project being planned:		Yes	
Are recommendations being presented to senior managers and/or Councillors:		Yes	
Does the activity contribute to meeting our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty ( <b>Eliminating unlawful discrimination/harassment, advancing equality of opportunity, fostering good relations</b> ):		Yes	
Details of the matter under consideration:		Electoral Review of West Lancashire – Electoral Cycle	
<p><i>If you answered <b>Yes</b> to any of the above go straight to Section 3</i></p> <p><i>If you answered <b>No</b> to all the above please complete Section 2</i></p>			
<b>2. RELEVANCE</b>			
Does the work being carried out impact on service users, staff or Councillors (stakeholders):			
If <b>Yes</b> , provide details of how this impacts on service users, staff or Councillors (stakeholders): <i>If you answered <b>Yes</b> go to Section 3</i>			
If you answered <b>No</b> to both Sections 1 and 2 provide details of why there is no impact on these three groups:			
<b>3. EVIDENCE COLLECTION</b>			
Who does the work being carried out impact on, i.e. who is/are the stakeholder(s)?		There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and or other stakeholders.	
If the work being carried out relates to a universal service, who needs or uses it most? (Is there any particular group affected more than others)?		All groups are affected.	
Which of the protected characteristics are most relevant to the work being carried out?			

Age	No
Gender	No
Disability	No
Race and Culture	No
Sexual Orientation	No
Religion or Belief	No
Gender Reassignment	No
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No
Pregnancy and Maternity	No
<b>4. DATA ANALYSIS</b>	
In relation to the work being carried out, and the service/function in question, who is actually or currently using the service and why?	Members of the public, employees, elected members and or other stakeholders currently use the service because it is a universal service integral to the function of the Council.
What will the impact of the work being carried out be on usage/the stakeholders?	Changes to electoral arrangements.
What are people's views about the services? Are some customers more satisfied than others, and if so what are the reasons? Can these be affected by the proposals?	All relevant stakeholders will get the opportunity to express their views through consultation.
What sources of data including consultation results have you used to analyse the impact of the work being carried out on users/stakeholders with protected characteristics?	All relevant stakeholders will get the opportunity to express their views through consultation.
If any further data/consultation is needed and is to be gathered, please specify:	All relevant stakeholders will get the opportunity to express their views through consultation.
<b>5. IMPACT OF DECISIONS</b>	
In what way will the changes impact on people with particular protected characteristics (either positively or negatively or in terms of disproportionate impact)?	No changes are proposed at this stage.
<b>6. CONSIDERING THE IMPACT</b>	
If there is a negative impact what action can be taken to mitigate it? (If it is not possible or desirable to take actions to reduce the impact, explain why this is the case (e.g. legislative or financial drivers etc.).	As there are no changes at this stage, there is no impact to consider.
What actions do you plan to take to address any other issues above?	No actions
<b>7. MONITORING AND REVIEWING</b>	
When will this assessment be reviewed and who will review it?	This assessment will be reviewed before any further report on this issue is released.