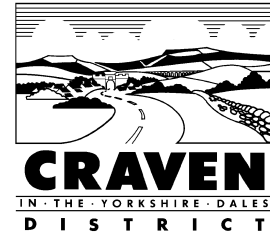


## Policy Committee : 5 October 2016

### Whole Council Elections



Report of the Chief Executive

Lead Member – Councillor R. Foster

Ward(s) affected: All

1. **Purpose of Report** –To authorise consultation with interested parties on a proposal to change the Council’s electoral cycle from elections by thirds to whole-council elections with effect from 2018.
2. **Recommendations** –Council is recommended to:
  - 2.1 Agree that the Council is minded to consider a resolution for introducing whole-council elections in the Craven District with effect from 2018.
  - 2.2 Authorise the Chief Executive to consult interested parties on the proposed change referred to in 2.1 above:
    - Parish Councils and Parish Meetings;
    - Other Council partners and stakeholders;
    - Local political parties;
    - All Members of this Council and County Councillors;
    - Members of Parliament and the European Parliament; and
    - Any other parties expressing an interest
  - 2.3 Following the consultation to hold an extraordinary meeting of the Council to consider passing a resolution for the introduction of whole-council elections in the Craven District with effect from 2018.
3. **Introduction**
  - 3.1 Craven District Council has operated under a system of elections-by-thirds since it was formed in 1973/74. Each Member serves a term of four years, producing a four-yearly cycle of elections. The last cycle of District Council elections were held in 2014, 2015 and 2016 and the next cycle will be 2018, 2019 and 2020. North Yorkshire County Council elections are being held in 2017. When elections are held by thirds around 25,000 of the District’s 45,000 electors are entitled to vote each time.

# AGENDA ITEM 5

3.2 A move to whole council elections would mean that District Council elections would be held once every four years, rather than in three out of every four years. These are the same arrangements as exist in all the other North Yorkshire District Councils, except Harrogate, which has elections-by-thirds.

3.3 The next County Council elections will be held in 2017, 2021 and so on. The next Police and Crime Commissioner elections will be held in 2016, 2020 and so on. The Tables below show the current cycle of elections over the next ten years.

## Current Thirds Cycle

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Parliamentary	PCC	County			Parliamentary/PCC	County			
District	District		District	District	District		District	District	District
Parish	Parish		Parish	Parish	Parish		Parish	Parish	Parish

## Four Year Cycle

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Parliamentary	PCC	County			Parliamentary/PCC	County			
District	District		District				District		
Parish	Parish		Parish				Parish		

3.4 If all out elections are introduced in 2018 a clash of District and Parliamentary elections would not occur until 2030, assuming the continuation of fixed term partnerships.

3.5 This Council has 30 Members representing 19 Wards, of which 11 are two-Member Wards and 8 are one-Member. Each year that elections are held for Craven District Councillors, there are elections for some of the parish councils. The cycle of District and Parish elections for the next electoral cycle will be:

Election Year	No. District Wards	No. Parish Councils
2018 (7 two-Member / 2 single-Member))	9	22
2019 (8 two-Member / 2 single -Member))	10	5
2020 (7 two-Member / 4 single -Member))	11	10

3.6 The Electoral Commission's view, in its report "*The cycle of local government elections in England*", is that all local authorities should hold whole-council elections once every four years.

3.7 Before 2008, the process of changing the electoral cycle involved seeking approval through the Secretary of State. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (2007 Act) gave Councils the opportunity to decide this issue

# AGENDA ITEM 5

themselves, subject to certain restrictions as to the years the whole-council could be held in.

- 3.8 The Localism Act 2011 amended the provisions of the 2007 Act so that Members have the opportunity to decide which year those whole-council elections will first be held. The cycle could start in 2018, 2019 or 2020. It is no longer restricted to the year that the other District Councils in North Yorkshire have their whole-council elections.

## 4. **Reasons for and against changing the electoral cycle**

### **For**

- 4.1 A clear mandate from the electorate once every four years could assist the Council in adopting a more strategic, long-term approach to policy and decision making - and focus less on yearly election campaigning.
- 4.2 The results from whole council elections are simpler and more easily understood by the electorate. This may increase turnout at local elections.
- 4.3 There would be a clearer opportunity for the electorate to change the political composition of the council once every four years.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 Reduces the number of combined elections.

### **Against**

- 4.6 Elections in three years out of every four provide more frequent opportunities for electors to vote and to influence the political make-up of the Council.
- 4.7 Electing by thirds means that there is greater continuity of councillor experience.
- 4.8 An election by thirds provides a regular influx of newly elected councillors who can bring new ideas and fresh approaches to the Council.
- 4.9 More frequent elections help to keep voters engaged.

## 5. **Practical Effects of Change to Whole Council Elections**

- 5.1 If the Council decides to move towards whole-council elections consequential changes will need to be made to Parish electoral arrangements, as well as those of the District Council, to bring them in line with the new elections' period.
- 5.2 It is recommended that the first such elections are held in 2018. This would seem to cause less disruption as it is the year that most Parish Councils (22 out of 37)

# AGENDA ITEM 5

have their ordinary elections. So the effect is that we would have to change the electoral arrangements of just 15 of our Parish Councils.

- 5.3 In view of the changes that will be needed to some Parish Councils' electoral arrangements on moving to whole-council elections, Members might want to consider, in due course, options for helping those parish councils that have to have earlier elections with any additional costs.

5.4 Number of Councillors and Electoral Boundaries

Following a change to the electoral cycle it may also be opportune to consider whether any changes to ward boundaries and number of councillors are required. Ideally the electoral arrangements for an authority should:

- Provide the optimum number of councillors to discharge the functions of the authority;
- Ensure that each councillor represents approximately the same number of voters;
- Reflect the interests and identities of our local communities; and
- Promote effective local government.

In order for a review of electoral arrangements to be undertaken the Council must make a request to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to undertake a consultation and review. Such reviews will only be considered once a decision to move to all out elections has been taken and will typically take around 12 months.

Appendix A shows the current number of electors per councillor in each ward.

## 6. Next Steps

- 6.1 If Members decide to move to whole-council elections, detailed work will be required in drawing up an order for the new scheme of electoral arrangements for the District Wards and the Parish Councils. However, the first step is for Members to decide whether they are minded to consider a resolution for a move to whole-council elections and, if so, consult with appropriate persons.
- 6.2 Following the consultation, an Extraordinary Council Meeting will be needed, to pass a resolution to change to whole-council elections. There is a requirement that two-thirds of the Members present at the Council Meeting must vote in favour for the resolution to be approved.
- 6.3 If Members decide, in due course, to move to whole-council elections, the Extraordinary Council Meeting will be asked to authorise the Audit and Governance Committee to take all action necessary to draw up a scheme of electoral arrangements that will enable the introduction of whole-council elections, with effect from the local elections in 2018.

# AGENDA ITEM 5

6.4 Following a decision to move to whole- council elections the Boundary Commission for England may be requested to carry out an Electoral Review.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

7.1 In order to move towards the introduction of whole-council elections, Members are asked to adopt the following recommendations, set out in Section 2 of this report relating to the change from elections-by-thirds to whole-council elections:

7.1.1 Agree that the Council is minded to consider a resolution for introducing whole-council elections in the Craven District with effect from 2018.

7.1.2 Authorise the Chief Executive to consult interested parties on the proposed change referred to in 2.1 above:

- Parish Councils and Parish Meetings;
- Other Council partners and stakeholders;
- Local political parties;
- All Members of this Council and County Councillors;
- Members of Parliament and the European Parliament; and
- Any other parties expressing an interest

7.1.3 Following the consultation to hold an extraordinary meeting of the Council to consider passing a resolution for the introduction of whole-council elections in the Craven District with effect from 2018.

## **8. Implications**

### **8.1 Financial Implications**

8.1.1 Efficiencies will be achieved by changing the electoral cycle from elections-by-thirds to whole-council elections. These efficiencies will result in improvements to the overall workings of the Council, in addition to the cash savings.

8.1.2 Adopting the recommendations in this report would mean a small additional cost for postage and officer time in carrying out the consultations, which will be met from within the current budget.

8.1.3 If the Council decides to proceed with whole-council elections, there would be additional costs initially, but these would be more than offset by savings from the two years when there will be no district council elections. The estimated savings are in the region of £45,000 over the four year cycle.

8.2 **Legal Implications** – Many of the legal implications are referred to in the report. The Council's power to change its electoral cycle is set out in Sections 31 to 36 and 53 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, as amended in Schedule 2 of the Localism Act 2011.

## AGENDA ITEM 5

- 8.3 **Contribution to Corporate Priorities** – Transforming the Council through the introduction of whole-council elections once every four years. We will have a more effective and efficient Council, through strong leadership and improved planning.
- 8.4 **Risk Management** – None.
- 8.5 **Equality Impact Assessment** - The Council's Equality Impact Assessment Procedure has not been carried out.
9. **Consultations with Others** – Corporate Leadership Team.
10. **Access to Information : Background Documents** – None.
11. **Author of Report** –Andrew Mather, Member Services Manager. Telephone 01756 706226 or e-mail: [civeson@cravendc.gov.uk](mailto:civeson@cravendc.gov.uk)

### **Appendices**

Appendix A –Ward electorate

# AGENDA ITEM 5

## Appendix A

### WARD ELECTORATE

Ward	Number of councillors	Electors (per councillor)
Aire Valley with Lothersdale Ward	2	2,955 (1,478)
Barden Fell Ward	1	1,336
Bentham Ward	2	2,953 (1,476)
Cowling Ward	1	1,827
Embsay-with-Eastby Ward	1	1,518
Gargrave and Malhamdale Ward	2	2,609 (1,305)
Glusburn Ward	2	3,055 (1,528)
Grassington Ward	1	1,279
Hellifield and Long Preston Ward	1	1,810
Ingleton and Clapham Ward	2	3,139 (1,570)
Penyghent Ward	1	1,468
Settle and Ribblesbanks Ward	2	3,151 (1,576)
Skipton East Ward	2	2,816 (1,408)
Skipton North Ward	2	2,926 (1,463)
Skipton South Ward	2	2,749 (1,374)
Skipton West Ward	2	3,021 (1,510)
Sutton-In-Craven Ward	2	2,823 (1,412)
Upper Wharfedale Ward	1	1,582
West Craven Ward	1	1,587

**(District average electors per councillor 1,488)**