

Council launches consultation on election cycle

We're interested in your views on whether we should change to whole council elections every four years starting in May 2016, or retain the existing system of 'elections by thirds'.

The change would see the whole council elected at the same time.

Following the meeting of Full Council on January 23rd the Leaders of all political groups in Gloucester showed support for the consultation process.

Below is some background information and the arguments for both electoral cycles to help you give an informed view on the issue.

The consultation will run from 10th February until 7th March.

Our council

Gloucester City Council has 36 Councillors representing 15 wards. Each ward is represented by up to three councillors, and each councillor is elected for a four-year term of office.

Current cycle - elections by thirds

Currently the Council holds 'elections by thirds' which means elections are held for approximately a third of all seats each year, for three successive years out of four. This means those electors who live in a ward supported by three Councillors will vote in elections in all three years. Those with two Councillors will only vote in two of the four years and Podsmead will only vote once as they have only one Councillor.

Whole council elections

Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the

Council has the power to change its electoral arrangements to 'whole council elections' which would mean that all seats on the Council would be elected at the same time, once every four years.

Please note no other elections will be affected by any future change in Gloucester City Council's electoral cycle, however parliamentary elections, European elections and police and crime commissioner elections will continue on their normal electoral cycle.

Timing of any change

If approved, the earliest date to hold whole council elections would be May 2016.

Full council meeting - outcome of the consultation

A meeting of the Full Council on 27th March 2014 will consider the issue further.

Reasons to change to whole council elections

- A clear mandate from the electorate once every four years could enable the Council to adopt a more strategic, long-term approach to policy and decision making - and focus less on yearly election campaigning.
- The results from whole council elections are simpler and more easily understood by the electorate. This may increase turnout at local elections.
- 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 be less disruptive for public buildings used as polling stations (eg. schools).

Reasons to keep elections by thirds

- 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. 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 means there is more continuity of councillors, without any chance of them all being replaced in a single election.
- Voting for one councillor at a time under 'elections by thirds' is well understood by voters. Voting for two or more councillors 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.

Have your say

Change to whole council elections

Keep it as it is, elections by thirds

Please leave your response with the staff, put them in the special box or return to: Gloucester City Council, FREEPOST GL1 301, The Docks, Gloucester, GL1 2EQ

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