

Notice of Motion – Changes in Electoral Arrangements

That in the light of the financial constraints faced by the Council and the need to make substantial savings in future years as a consequence of Government budget cuts, this Council should now consider changes to its electoral arrangements.

Whole-Council Elections

At present the Council is elected by thirds, with one third of the Councillors elected at a time. The Council should now move towards holding elections every four years which would produce an annual saving of around £50,000.

Information received from the Electoral Commission indicates that 38 of the 56 English Unitary Authorities currently have whole-Council elections. All of the London Boroughs and County Councils have whole-Council elections and 128 (out of 201) of the second tier district authorities have this form of elections.

The Council would be required to undertake a public consultation exercise on the proposed change. Following the conclusion of the exercise, if it is decided to move to all-out elections, an Extraordinary Council meeting will be needed to pass a resolution to move to whole-Council elections. There is a requirement that the resolution must be passed “by a majority of at least two thirds of the Members voting on it”.

Reduction in the Number of Councillors

The Council has downsized in recent years and there has been a significant reduction in the number of staff without a corresponding percentage reduction in the number of councillors. The Council should now consider reducing the number of councillors from 51 to 34 (2 per ward) which would produce an annual saving of around £155,000 in members’ allowances, ICT equipment and printing.

A case would need to be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) which would consider whether to carry out a review and, if so, would proceed to carry out a public consultation exercise. Draft recommendations would be produced upon which a second round of consultation would take place. The LGBCE would publicize its final recommendations and then an Order would be made giving effect to the changes.

It is proposed:

- (i) That a change in the cycle for electing councillors to Southend-on-Sea Borough Council from elections by thirds to whole-Council elections with effect from May 2018 be supported in principle and that a public consultation exercise be undertaken in accordance with the statutory requirements.

- (ii) That a reduction in the number of councillors from 51 to 34 (2 per ward) from May 2018 be supported in principle and that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Group Leaders, be authorised to put the case for such a proposal to the LGBCE for their consideration.

Councillor Woodley

Councillor Moyies