

## Full Council

### Swindon Borough Council Election Cycles Consultation:

#### 1. Background:

*How many councillors does the council have?*

We currently has 57 councillors, representing 20 wards across Swindon borough. Almost all wards have three councillors representing them. The exceptions are Chiseldon and Lawn (two councillors) and Ridgeway (one councillor), which are smaller and therefore don't need as many councillors.

The basic principle is that each councillor currently represents roughly 2,800 people and is elected for a four-year term. Councillors are elected by residents of the borough in elections run independently by a Returning Officer. To be eligible to vote, a resident must be a registered voter.

*What is the council's current election cycle?*

The elections are currently undertaken 'by thirds'. This means that all councillors are elected for a term of four years, with one third being elected for three consecutive years followed by a fourth year when there are no elections.

*What alternative election cycle is being considered?*

Under the 'whole council elections' model, all seats on the council would be elected at the same time, once every four years. This model is used by 70% of unitary local authorities. There would be no borough elections in between these four-yearly elections apart from by-elections. A by-election would be triggered when an elected councillor does not complete their four-year term.

*Benefits of election by thirds*

- Provides regular opportunities for the public to vote and decide on how the council should be run
- One councillor is elected for each ward at a time, allowing the electorate to focus on the aptitude of particular candidates
- Keeping the current system would retain a large proportion of existing councillors with their knowledge and experience

*Benefits of whole council elections*

- Would deliver a clear mandate from the electorate once every four years
- Would give a controlling political party group time to set a clear four year vision, enabling longer term strategic decision making and accountability
- Holding whole council elections once every four years would result in around £300,000 savings per four-year election cycle

*How does the decision get made to change the election cycle?*

Councillors will consider all the consultation feedback received during the public consultation at an Extraordinary Council Meeting on Thursday, 21 November 2019. Two thirds of the councillors present would have to vote in favour of a change to make it happen.

*What would happen if the council decides to change the election cycle?*

If the decision is made to move to whole council elections, it would be likely to come into effect for the 2022 SBC elections. There may be an impact on parish council election cycles, so we would work closely with our parish councils to make sure the new system works for everybody by the time it is implemented.

More detail is available at [swindon.gov.uk/electioncycles](http://swindon.gov.uk/electioncycles)

## **2. How can parish councils take part in the consultation?**

Information available on our website gives some further background on both the existing and alternative election model. There is also an online survey for parish councils and other stakeholders to complete. Borough councillors will consider all the consultation feedback received at an Extraordinary Council Meeting on 21 November 2019.

**We would ask that each organisation supplies one response through the online survey that gives the view of that council and not its individual members.** Swindon borough residents will have an opportunity to give their views via a consultation form posted to all households from 16 September.