

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
(ECONOMIC WELL-BEING)**

3RD JUNE 2010

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT
COUNCIL BUDGET 2010 – 2011
(Report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides the Panel with an opportunity to determine its approach to responding to proposals submitted by the Liberal Democrats for amendments to the Council's budget 2010 – 2011.

2. THE PROPOSALS

- 2.1 At the full Council meeting on 17th February 2010, the Liberal Democrats submitted proposals for amendments to the budget 2010 – 2011. It was decided that the proposals should be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) for consideration.
- 2.2 The Economic Well-Being Panel gave the proposals provisional consideration on 11th March 2010, when various items of additional information were requested.
- 2.3 A summary of the proposals together with the additional information is attached as an Appendix hereto.
- 2.4 The Panel is invited to consider the proposals with a view to making a formal response on them.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Report submitted to the Council on 17th February 2010.

Contact Officer: Tony Roberts – Scrutiny and Review Manager
☎ 01480 388015

Members' Allowances (page 47) Reduce expenditure on Members

HDC employees are facing a difficult time. Pay improvements will be limited or non-existent. Over the next 3 or 4 years job losses cannot be ruled out. Members should be prepared to share in these difficulties. We propose that the review of Member Allowances should take place in-house, thus avoiding the £5,000 fee to the Independent External panel. Three options for reductions are offered:

Cut basic allowance by 5% and SRAs by 10% - saves £31,490

Freeze basic allowance and cut SRAs by 10% - saves £18,560

Freeze all allowances – saves £3,890

Our preferred option is a. and, together with the £5,000 saving referred to above saves £36,000.

Comments by the Head of Democratic and Central Services

The Members Allowances Regulations require the Council to have regard to the recommendations of an Independent Remuneration Panel when setting the Members Allowances Scheme. The review therefore cannot be undertaken in house as suggested by the Liberal Democrat Group.

The Huntingdonshire panel comprises local business people and is chaired by a leading academic in the field of allowances. The scheme can be index linked for a period of 4 years in accordance with the regulations. After that time, the independent remuneration panel must be reconvened to carry out a further review.

The last review by the independent remuneration panel of the Council's scheme index linked the allowances for four years so there must be a review during the course of this year. The revised scheme will come into effect in May 2011.

In terms of the cost of the review, the sum of £5,000 referred to in the Liberal Democrats' proposals is the fee charged by the chairman. As one of the leading persons on allowances nationally, he provides information on what comparable authorities are doing and is able to offer constructive advice and guidance to the local panel members. The Council is fortunate that none of the other members of the panel charge for their time.

While it would be possible to undertake a review of the allowances without the chairman's assistance, this would be more difficult and would involve the Council's own staff in gathering the necessary evidence on the position in comparable authorities and nationally. The chairman also offers the added advantage of impartiality in comparison to the evidence being provided by the Council's own staff. Moreover the additional time required on the part of the latter would mean that any saving would be minimal if the chairman's services were dispensed with.

Irrespective of any decision that the Council may take on Members Allowances, these must be reviewed by the Independent Remuneration Panel later in the year. All Members have an opportunity to submit their comments to the panel as part of its deliberations and to appear before the panel to argue in support of any proposals. It

would be logical for the Liberal Democrats to present their current ideas on allowances to the panel when it meets in a few months' time and for any decision to await the panel's final report.

Corporate Services (page 47) Reduce expenditure on 'District Wide' by £21,000

The six editions of District Wide currently cost £42,000. If this were reduced to three editions (Spring, Summer, Autumn) there could be a saving of £21,000. Greater use could be made of the new and improved web-site to disseminate information.

Comments by the Head of People, Performance and Partnerships

Magazines and newspapers like District Wide are a highly effective way of communicating with as many people as possible. Research locally and nationally continues to show that a majority of people prefer getting information from the Council in written format.

District Wide is delivered to all 65,000 households and 5,000 businesses in the District and is our opportunity to raise awareness of and gain understanding of the Council's aims, objectives and the services we provide. No single local newspaper covers the whole of Huntingdonshire. Many of the items carried in District Wide are not considered 'newsworthy' by the local papers and to have them covered by the local press we would have to buy advertising space. In order to cover the whole district we would need to advertise in at least three local papers (Hunts Post, News and Crier, and Peterborough Evening Telegraph.)

We moved to six issues a year because of pressure on space from both services and local organisations and to meet the preferences of local residents for shorter but more frequent communication of this type. All services across the Council use District Wide to promote their messages as it has proved to be an effective medium for them. The current cycle is also attractive to advertisers, particularly the pre-Christmas issue which produces the most revenue, (including a four-page annual report of the police authority) and presents the opportunity to publicise Christmas/New Year openings at our offices and leisure centres plus holiday refuse and recycling arrangements.

Typically each edition of District Wide costs £2,500 for design, £8,000 for printing (the majority of this is covered by advertising revenue) and £5,000 for distribution/postage, less £8,400 from advertising revenue.

We have recently been working with Cambridgeshire County Council and the other district councils on a shared procurement exercise which may result in additional savings. We are also talking with the current supplier about possible savings including a reduction in design costs and using a cheaper lighter weight paper without compromising on quality.

District Wide now incorporates the Arts Diary, which has resulted in a financial saving.

The current frequency and format of District Wide makes it easier for residents to be kept informed of changes to services and the work of the council. It is a cost effective way of providing information to the public and is significantly cheaper than producing separate leaflets or buying advertising space in the local press. Reducing the number of issues also might have a disproportionate effect on advertising income: many advertisers like to block book 4 or 6 issues to run campaigns.

Both District Wide and our website were highlighted as part of the CAA organisational assessment as being complementary and effective tools for consultation with residents.

Reduction in 'Customer Service' (page 49) – Saving of £30,000

'Customer First' covers a wide range of services to the public including face-to-face contact, Call centre and web-site. There have been extensive and welcome improvements. Now that we have a refreshed web-site, it ought to be possible to reduce overall expenditure in this area. Officers should be asked to reprioritise to avoid the proposed increase.

Comments by the Head of Customer Services

Looking at the bigger picture for customer services as a whole, we have been extremely efficient in delivering an ever expanding customer service centre /call centre service. The on line payments module has reduced the number of calls to the call centre for payments. However, despite the success of this channel migration we have not been able to realise any financial savings as yet - we have paid for the Capita project out of existing resources but further savings aren't do-able yet.

We have taken the Housing phone calls - and this will realise a cash saving of 1/2 FTE in Housing (not Call Centre where the work has been taken on within existing resources). I would point out that the Customer Services Team in general are losing 'quick' queries and calls and gaining more enquiries that take far longer to deal with.

It is assumed that this proposal refers to the final capital spend on the wireless working project (£31k). This is the facility to offer on-line customer services in people's homes, with direct access to Northgate SX3 and Anite. In effect - Housing Benefits assessment officers in people's homes. This is not something that members of the public can do for themselves - it's a technical job and not just internet based information. This amount is just the final spend to get laptops etc for the mobile Housing Benefit officers. We have already invested £150k on the infrastructure. There is not much point in having the infrastructure with no laptops to enable us to use it. The entire project was externally funded.

The restrictions placed on the authority by the Government Connect requirements has meant that this wireless working project has been suspended for now and we are not using it at all. If it turns out we can't get back on track, we'd not spend the money on the equipment anyway.

Democratic representation (page 47) Reduce expenditure on elections by £50,000 over four years

The present pattern of elections every year except one in four is more expensive than having an all-up election once every four years (which is the pattern in most other authorities). We propose that this issue be reconsidered by the Corporate Governance Panel.

Comments by the Head of Democratic and Central Services

This was the subject of detailed discussion in the Elections Panel which submitted a recommendation to Council as recently as April 2009 to retain the status quo in terms of a 4 yearly election cycle. The Liberal Democrat Group moved an amendment to the Panel's report at Council to change to a single election every 4 years but this was rejected. The Panel's report followed consultation with Members as to the electoral cycle that they preferred. A report summarising the position that was considered by the Panel can be found on the following link -

[http://moderngov.huntsdc.gov.uk:8070/Published/C00000323/M00003606/AI00026965/\\$ReportElectoralCycleinHuntingdonshire250309.docA.ps.pdf](http://moderngov.huntsdc.gov.uk:8070/Published/C00000323/M00003606/AI00026965/$ReportElectoralCycleinHuntingdonshire250309.docA.ps.pdf)

Under recent legislative change, the Council can only take a decision to move to whole Council elections in a permitted resolution period. That currently applies until the end of December 2010 for an election in 2011. After that, the permitted resolution period only applies every 4 years between the date of the annual meeting and the end of December, i.e. 2014, 2018 etc. for elections in the following year.

As the decision not to alter the current cycle was made only 12 months ago in the knowledge of all the facts and the Council's financial position and as no new evidence has been submitted by the Liberal Democrat Group, there is little point in this being considered further.

In addition the Economic Well-Being Panel asked for a copy of the original report to the Elections Panel on this subject ([Agenda for Elections Panel on Aug 27 2008 6:00PM](#)). This report is reproduced at Appendix B.

Document Centre (page 51) Reduce expenditure by £10,000

HDC currently spends over £30,000 on paper. Most printed documents have wide margins, blank pages and are not laid out economically. Trials have demonstrated that, by using a different layout (narrower margins, smaller font, less elaborate headings, fewer blank pages), most documents could be reduced to $\frac{3}{4}$ or even $\frac{2}{3}$ of their length. If documents were worded more concisely and fewer were sent out by the post savings could be made.

Comments by the Head of Democratic and Central Services

The Council adopted corporate guidelines for all printed materials when the new logo was introduced recently. These had regard to the guidelines issued by the Royal National Institute for the Blind and the Disability Rights Commission which includes the size of print and layout of documents. This was done to ensure that information is provided in a way that all our customers can read. Some people, including those with sight problems, have difficulty understanding information because of poor education, learning disabilities, dyslexia, brain injury, dementia or short attention span and/or memory. The Liberal Democrat proposals would impact on the Council's ability to reach some of those customers.

The Document Centre has already been charged with saving £60,000 per annum by the autumn of 2011 against the Council's spend on printing and postage and is on track to achieve the required reduction. This will be achieved by a variety of means including greater efficiencies, changes in business systems and procuring reduced tariffs.

Capital budget – saving of £800,000 from Bus station project (page 46)

The Bus Station improvement, though perhaps desirable, is not essential. An upgrade of the toilet facilities and minor enhancements to the existing fabric could be achieved for £90,000 leaving a saving of £800k for capital reserves (with a knock-on effect on need to borrow and interest income).

Comments by the Head of Planning Services

This capital project has been put on hold whilst;

1. a review is carried out of what works may be necessary,
2. consideration is given to what development opportunities may exist.

Public Conveniences (page 41) - £7,000 for pilot scheme for alternative provision

The reduction in the provision of toilets is very unpopular. This gives HDC the opportunity to pilot a scheme which is widely used in Austria (and possibly other European countries) whereby the public is allowed access to toilets in hotels, cafes and restaurants without having to be a paying customer. It is suggested that a payment would be made to any establishment willing to pilot this approach in Huntingdonshire to cover extra costs. This would maintain public access to toilets and be very much less expensive than the previous arrangements and still provide a service people value, especially tourists, families and older people.

Comments by the Head of Environmental Management

Officers are already in the process of drafting a report on this subject, which will be submitted to the Cabinet in due course. The relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be able to request sight of the report if they wish.

Environmental Strategy (page 41) – capital expenditure of £7,000 to stimulate public interest in reducing domestic electricity consumption

The pilot scheme in Warboys where Smart meters have been available for residents is now being moved on to Somersham. There is evidence to indicate that people change their domestic energy habits quite rapidly once they have experienced the Smart meter. This proposal is for the purchase of 200 Smart meters, rechargeable batteries and charger units to be located in public libraries for free loan to residents.

Huntingdon 50, St Neots 50, St. Ives 30, Ramsey 30, Warboys 10, Buckden 10, Sawtry 10 and Somersham 10.

Final confirmation from Cambridgeshire Libraries that they can handle this is anticipated.

Comments by the Head of Environmental Management

The Council has already made provision in the budget to do this and schemes will be brought forward at the appropriate time.

Partial protection of the Arts Development service (page 44)

The proposal that by 2012 there should be no Arts Development Service at all is unacceptable. We propose that some of the above savings be used to maintain a reduced Arts Service. We propose that £70k be added to the budget for 2012-13 and beyond to preserve a basic service.

Comments by the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services

Until such time that Members agree on savings elsewhere in the budget, officers are in no position to recommend further expenditure on the Arts Service. Given the size of the current budget deficit (£4.7m) even if savings were identified it is unlikely that officers could recommend reinstating the Arts budget.

ELECTIONS PANEL

27TH AUGUST 2008

ELECTORAL CYCLE IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

(Report by Head of Administration)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council has undertaken elections by thirds since its inception in 1974. It has been possible since for the Council to pass a resolution to ask the Secretary of State to make an order to change the system to whole council elections and vice versa, subject to an interval of not less than 10 years between requests. Legislative change introduced by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enables the Council to resolve to change its electoral cycle at certain fixed periods of time and to implement certain consequential changes.

2. CHOICE

- 2.1 Non-metropolitan district councils have the choice of elections by whole council or by halves or thirds of their membership. Huntingdonshire historically has elected by thirds with one fallow year when no district election is held which is the year of the county council election.
- 2.2 The summary position in England is –

Authority type	Thirds	Halves	Whole	Total
County Council	-	-	34	34
District/bor. council	82	7	149	238
Unitary council	19	-	27	46
London borough	-	-	33	33
Metropolitan borough	36	-	-	36
Parish/town councils	-	-	8,700	8,700

3. NEW PROCEDURE

- 3.1 Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, districts that historically elected by thirds can move to whole council elections and can revert back to thirds. Other authorities that have whole council elections now cannot move to thirds. The same situation pertains to authorities that historically elected by halves. However authorities cannot move from thirds to halves and vice versa.
- 3.2 If an authority wishes to move from thirds to whole council elections, it must
- ◆ consult such persons as it thinks appropriate on the proposed change,
 - ◆ 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.

3.3 The authority may also request the Commission to give the Boundary Committee a direction to undertake a review of the authority's area with a view to establishing single member wards, where it considers this to be appropriate.

3.4 An authority that elected by thirds and has moved to whole council elections may return to elections by thirds. To do so, it must carry out the same procedure as set out in paragraph 3.2, except that the Commission must make an order to that effect and, before doing so, must consider whether to direct the Boundary Committee to carry out a review of the district in question. That review would look at the division of the district into wards with a view to the desirability of establishing three member wards.

4. TIMESCALES

4.1 There is a 'permitted resolution period' for authorities that wish to change their electoral cycle. In the case of Huntingdonshire, a resolution must be passed no later than 31st December 2010. The whole council election would then be held in May 2011. The next opportunity to change will be between the annual meeting in May 2014 and 31st December of that year and then during the same interval every fourth year thereafter. If a resolution were to be passed at any time in those permitted resolution periods, the first whole council elections would take place in 2015 and each fourth year thereafter.

4.2 If the authority moved to whole council elections and then wished to move back to thirds, the permitted resolution period is between the annual meeting in May 2012 and 31st December 2012 and every fourth year thereafter. The first election by thirds would happen in the year after the Electoral Commission made the order, except that 2013 and every fourth year thereafter would be a fallow year when no district election would take place. The likelihood is that the cycle of elections would be 2015, 2016, 2018, etc.

5. PARISH COUNCILS

5.1 Currently, town and parish council elections in Huntingdonshire coincide with the district election for the ward in which they are located. Roughly one third of the towns and parishes therefore have elections in any year except in the year of county council elections. A schedule showing the dates of elections to the various town and parish councils in the District is shown in Annex 1. The cost of a contested election is shared between the Council and the relevant town or parish, where possible.

5.2 If the Council resolve to move to whole council elections in 2011 and every fourth year thereafter, those towns and parishes with elections that fall in the two years in the cycle when there will no longer be district council elections would have to meet the whole of the cost of their individual elections. Similarly, the District Council itself would have to meet the whole of the cost of its own election in those wards where no town or parish council is held.

- 5.3 Although contested town/parish council elections have become increasingly rare in recent years, other than in the towns of Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neots, a contested election is currently a prerequisite for those councils which are quality parishes to retain their status and the transfer of additional powers and responsibilities to towns and parishes recently may encourage more individuals to stand as candidates.
- 5.4 The 2007 Act enables the Council to make an order to alter the years of the ordinary election of towns and parishes so that they coincide with a move by a district council to elections by whole council or a reversion to elections by thirds. The order can make transitional provision for the retirement of town and parish councillors at different times than would otherwise apply during that transitional period.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A move to whole council elections will clearly lead to a financial saving for the Council. As part of the exercise to identify savings in 2006, the Council has already agreed to include whole council elections in the schedule of cuts to services. However the saving will not equate to the whole of the cost of an election in two of the three years of the current cycle.
- 6.2 Currently, the District is divided into 29 wards. Although elections are by thirds, only 4 wards comprise 3 councillors. 15 have two councillors and 10 are single councillor wards. This results from the need to achieve electoral parity of an equal number of electors per councillor with the most recent periodic electoral review only succeeding to create 3 member wards in Eynesbury, Huntingdon East, Ramsey, and Yaxley and Farcet. In very few wards therefore is an election held each year.
- 6.3 Although the electoral split between wards is equal at the moment with 17 wards having elections in two out of three years and 18 wards in the third year, the cost of an election varies with the number of polling stations per ward. This varies from a minimum of 1 station per ward up to a maximum of 11. The current electoral cycle of 63, 73 and 54 stations in each of its three years (as shown in Annex 2) directly affects the cost of the annual election in each of those years.
- 6.4 A move to whole council elections would result in all 106 polling stations being required in each election, representing an increase of 45% compared with the busiest year currently. Similarly all 29 wards would have elections, an increase of 61% on the current position. It is likely therefore that the direct cost of a whole council election would be some 50% higher than in the most expensive of the three current years of the cycle with a saving in the other two years. By-elections also would be more frequent because these could no longer be organised to coincide with annual elections.
- 6.5 Based upon current figures, it is estimated that a saving of approximately £100,000 could be achieved across a four year cycle. However this will vary depending upon the number of contested town and parish council elections that are held. Parliamentary elections have also coincided with district elections in previous years which has enabled costs to be shared, most recently in 1979. A whole council election in 2011 would be out of sequence with general elections and they would be unlikely to coincide for

the foreseeable future. Finally the cost would be influenced by the creation of more single member wards.

7. BOUNDARY REVIEW

- 7.1 If the Council considers moving to whole council elections, it will need to decide whether to ask the Commission to implement a boundary review. Ideally, councils where elections are by thirds have three member wards and those with whole council elections have single member wards. The latter tends to focus on the performance of an individual councillor as the representative/champion of his or her ward as opposed to the situation in a multi-member ward. As mentioned above, the last periodic electoral review of the District resulted in a predominance of two member wards to achieve electoral parity. Because of the geographical composition of Huntingdonshire, it is unlikely that single member wards can be created throughout the District without resulting in some unusual ward configurations. Conversely, this would present an opportunity to redress some of the more contrived ward structures that arose from the last review.
- 7.2 A move to all single member wards clearly would generate 52 wards, unless the size of the council changed, with the probability of additional polling stations being required. This could add up to £50,000 to the cost of an election, halving the saving over the electoral cycle.

8. RELATIVE MERITS

- 8.1 A series of arguments can be advanced for the merits and disadvantages of whole council elections and elections by thirds. The Electoral Commission carried out a consultation exercise at the request of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2003 and recommended that authorities move to whole council elections. Conversely the Government had only a few years earlier advocated annual elections as a way of stimulating public interest in local democracy.
- 8.2 A summary of the various merits and disadvantages of the two systems are contained in the attached Annex 3.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The recent legislative change encourages authorities to move towards whole council elections. Those currently electing by thirds or halves can move to whole council elections but those operating the latter system at the time when the Act was passed now cannot change.
- 9.2 The merits of elections by thirds and by whole council are equally balanced but the financial saving is not as great as may be first envisaged, especially if a review is requested which implements single member wards and an opportunity to share costs with another election is lost. It also would mean that a third of the membership of the Council who were elected in 2010 would have to stand for re-election again in 2011 and those elected in the most recent election in May 2008 only serving three of their four year term of office. A similar situation pertained after the last periodic electoral review which changed ward boundaries.

- 9.3 Any decision on the part of the Council would inevitably require the electoral arrangements of the towns and parishes in Huntingdonshire to change to bring their individual years of election into line with that of the District. Depending upon the transitional arrangements that the Council included in the order, this could mean either a shorter or longer period of office for the councillors affected.
- 9.4 Before a special meeting of the Council could be held to consider a resolution for change, it would be necessary to consult with appropriate bodies which could include existing councillors, the political parties, town and parish councils and others. If the Panel is minded to consider a move to whole council elections, it may wish to review the outcome of that consultation before submitting proposals to a special meeting of the Council.

10. RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 The Panel is asked to consider a move to whole council elections before the current deadline of the end of December 2010 and the consequential implications for the Council, individual councillors and town and parish councils.
- 10.2 In the event of the Panel favouring whole council elections, it is also invited to consider -
- ◆ the implementation of a consultation process with interested parties and the determination of whom to consult;
 - ◆ preliminary consideration as to whether to ask the Electoral Commission to direct the Boundary Committee to carry out a review of the District with a view to the creation of single member wards; and
 - ◆ the consequential implications for town and parish councils, the making of an order to change the year of election for a majority of those councils and any transitional arrangements arising therefrom.

Contact Person: Roy Reeves, Head of Administration
☎ 01480 388003

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Polling arrangements for County, District and Parish Councils in Huntingdonshire.

CYCLE OF TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE
(Including Wards of Towns and Parishes, where appropriate)

2010	2011	2012
Alconbury	Abbotsley	Brampton
Alconbury Weston	Abbots Ripton	Broughton
Alwalton	Barham & Woolley	Conington
Buckden	Bluntisham	Glatton
Bury	Brington & Molesworth	Godmanchester
		Great & Little
Elton	Buckworth	Gidding
Farcet	Bythorn & Keyston	Hemingford Abbots
Folksworth & Washingley	Catworth	Hilton
Great Paxton	Colne	Little Paxton
Hemingford Grey	Earith	Old Hurst
Houghton & Wyton (Airfield Ward)	Easton	Pidley-cum-Fenton
Houghton & Wyton (Houghton & Wyton Ward)		
Offord Cluny	Ellington	Sawtry
	Eynesbury Hardwicke (Town Ward)	St Ives (East Ward)
Offord D'Arcy	Eynesbury Hardwicke (Spinney Ward)	St Ives (South Ward)
Sibson-cum-Stibbington	Fenstanton	St Ives (West Ward)
Southoe & Midloe	Grafham	Warboys
The Stukeleys (Hinchingsbrooke Ward)	Great Gransden	Woodhurst
The Stukeleys (The Stukeleys Ward)	Great Staughton	
Toseland	Hail Weston	
Upton & Coppingford	Holme	
Wistow	Huntingdon (East Ward)	
Yelling	Huntingdon (North Ward)	
	Huntingdon (West Ward)	
	Holywell-cum-Needingworth	
	Kimbolton & Stoneley	
	Kings Ripton	
	Leighton Bromswold	
	Old Weston	
	Perry	
	Ramsey	
	St Neots (Eaton Ford Ward)	
	St Neots (Eaton Socon Ward)	
	St Neots (Eynesbury Ward)	
	St Neots (Priory Park Ward)	
	St Neots Rural	
	Somersham	
	Spaldwick	
	Stilton	
	Stow Longa	
	Tilbrook	
	Upwood & The Raveleys	
	Waresley	
	Woodwalton	
	Yaxley	

ELECTORAL CYCLE

Number of Polling Stations per Ward

WARD	Number of seats	COUNTY	DISTRICT				COUNTY	DISTRICT			COUNTY	DISTRICT			Number of Polling Stations
		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020		
Alconbury & The Stukeleys	1		4				4				4			4	
Brampton	2		4		4		4		4		4		4	4	
Buckden	1		3				3				3			3	
Earith	2		3	3			3	3			3	3		3	
Ellington	1			11				11				11		11	
Elton & Folksworth	1			5				5				5		5	
Fennstanton	1			1				1				1		1	
Godmanchester	2		2		2		2		2		2		2	2	
Gransden & The Offords	2		7	7			7	7			7	7		7	
The Hemingfords	2		4		4		4		4		4		4	4	
Huntingdon (East)	3		4	4	4		4	4	4		4	4	4	4	
Huntingdon (North)	2			2	2			2	2			2	2	2	
Huntingdon (West)	2		3	3			3	3			3	3		3	
Kimbolton & Staughton	1			5				5				5		5	
Little Paxton	1				1				1				1	1	
Ramsey	3		6	6	6		6	6	6		6	6	6	6	
Sawtry	2		7		7		7		7		7		7	7	
Somersham	2			6	6			6	6			6	6	6	
Stilton	1			2				2				2		2	
St Ives West	1				1				1				1	1	

SUMMARY OF MERITS AND DISADVANTAGES OF WHOLE COUNCIL ELECTIONS AND ELECTIONS BY THIRDS

Merits of elections by thirds

- ◆ Encourages people into the habit of voting in May every year
- ◆ A Council is judged on its performance annually, rather than every 4 years
- ◆ The electorate can react more quickly to local circumstances and Council decisions
- ◆ The Council better reflects public opinion locally
- ◆ Political parties have fewer candidates to find at any one time
- ◆ There are more frequent opportunities for potential candidates to stand
- ◆ Easier to assimilate newly elected Members as numbers are less
- ◆ Disruption to ongoing policies etc. is less significant
- ◆ Elections staff maintain their expertise because of frequency of elections
- ◆ Counts are easier to organise for a single councillor per ward
- ◆ Less likely for local situation to be influenced by national situation politically (i.e. whole council election can be heavily influenced by low point in party fortunes nationally)
- ◆ More difficult to change political balance of authority (although can change more frequently if evenly balanced politically)
- ◆ Creates greater continuity/stability
- ◆ Less likely that controversial decisions will be delayed because of election
- ◆ Easier to organise parish elections if contested
- ◆ With the trend towards parliamentary election on same day as local election, result less likely to be influenced by voting on national issues
- ◆ Rising 18 year olds do not have to wait so long before they can vote
- ◆ In moving to whole council elections, some councillors will only serve one year before having to stand again for election
- ◆ If town and parish elections continue to be combined with district elections, the same situation will apply to parishes where, depending upon the existing cycle, the whole council would have to stand again for re-election
- ◆ More difficult to manage whole council and all town/parish councils elections on same day
- ◆ With propensity for parliamentary election to be held on same day as district election, very difficult to manage parliamentary, whole district and town/parish councils on same day
- ◆ Less likelihood for intermittent by-elections as these tend to be held, where possible, on the date when the election by thirds is being held
- ◆ More difficult to revert to election by thirds if Members dislike whole council elections
- ◆ More difficult for towns and parishes to change periodic cycle if Council reverts back to thirds

- ◆ While towns and parishes could remain on existing cycle, costs would increase as these are shared currently on combined elections.

Merits of elections by whole council

- ◆ A council has a clear mandate from the electorate for 4 years
- ◆ An elector can vote for the whole council as well as a councillor
- ◆ Creates greater stability over the 4 year period with no chance (subject to by-elections) of a change in political control
- ◆ Greater propensity for change in political control
- ◆ Avoids situation where political control of council can change in election by thirds but some electors in single member wards have no opportunity to vote
- ◆ Whole electorate votes together, compared to some who only vote once or twice in the three yearly cycle in one or two member wards respectively
- ◆ Greater publicity for whole council election may generate higher turnout
- ◆ Evidence suggests (according to Electoral Commission) that slightly higher turn out in whole council elections
- ◆ Evidence suggests (according to Electoral Commission) that electorate associates more clearly with whole council election rather than dates when thirds
- ◆ Reduced expenditure for Council
- ◆ Reduced expenditure by political parties because less elections
- ◆ Less disruptive for staff
- ◆ Induction training required less frequently
- ◆ Less campaigning needed by parties (two fallow years in four)
- ◆ Problem with publicity purdah only occurs once every four years.

Clearly some arguments can be used both for and against whole council elections or elections by thirds.

This page is intentionally left blank