

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



26/11/2021

Our Ref Council/7 December 2021
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To: The Chair and Members of North Hertfordshire District Council

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

to be held in the

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES,
LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY**

on

TUESDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2021

at

7.30 PM

Yours sincerely,

Jeanette Thompson
Service Director – Legal and Community

****MEMBERS PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU DOWNLOAD ALL AGENDAS AND REPORTS VIA THE MOD.GOV APPLICATION ON YOUR TABLET BEFORE ATTENDING THE MEETING****

Agenda

Part I

Item		Page
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
2.	CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS <u>Climate Emergency</u> The Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to achieving a target of zero carbon emissions by 2030 and helping local people and businesses to reduce their own carbon emissions. A Cabinet Panel on the Environment has been established to engage with local people on matters relating to the climate emergency and advise the council on how to achieve these climate change objectives. A Climate Change Implementation group of councillors and council officers meets regularly to produce plans and monitor progress. Actions taken or currently underway include switching to green energy, incentives for low emission taxis, expanding tree planting and working to cut food waste. In addition the council is a member of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership, working with other councils across Hertfordshire to reduce the county's carbon emissions and climate impact. The Council's dedicated webpage on Climate Change includes details of the council's climate change strategy, the work of the Cabinet Panel on the Environment and a monthly briefing on progress. <u>Declarations of Interest</u> Members are reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Declarable Interest and are required to notify the Chair of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest must withdraw from the meeting for the duration of the item. Members declaring a Declarable Interest, wishing to exercise a 'Councillor Speaking Right', must declare this at the same time as the interest, move to the public area before speaking to the item and then must leave the room before the debate and vote.	
3.	ELECTORAL CYCLE To note the outcome and responses from the public consultation and to decide whether to retain the current electoral cycle of elections by thirds or to move to whole council/all-out elections.	3 - 36

**EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL
7 DECEMBER 2021**

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: ELECTORAL CYCLE

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: LEADER OF COUNCIL/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COUNCIL PRIORITY: BE A MORE WELCOMING, INCLUSIVE AND EFFICIENT COUNCIL /
BUILD THRIVING AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

2022-2027 PEOPLE FIRST; SUSTAINABILITY AND A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 A timetable for the Electoral Review of North Hertfordshire Council by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has been agreed. The first stage of the review is for the Council to produce a submission to the LGBCE on Council Size.
- 1.2 Prior to the submission there needs to be a decision on whether to retain the current electoral cycle of elections by thirds or to move to whole council/all-out elections, as this will impact on the number of councillors the authority recommends within the submission to the LGBCE.
- 1.3 A resolution for whole-council elections must not be passed unless there have been reasonable steps by the council to consult “such persons as it thinks appropriate on the proposed change” and the resolution to move to whole council elections must be:
 - (a) at a meeting which is specially convened for that purpose; and
 - (b) by a majority of at least two thirds of the members voting on it.
- 1.4 If a resolution for whole council elections is not passed by a two third majority the current electoral cycle of elections by thirds will remain.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That Council:
 - i. note the outcome and responses from the public consultation, alongside the points raised in this report, and
 - ii. resolve to:

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. change the electoral cycle to all-out elections; or2. endorse the retention of the current electoral cycle of elections by thirds. |
|--|

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) undertakes periodic reviews of local boundaries. This has not been undertaken for this District since 2006 and following a number of requests to undertake this review, a timetable for doing so has been agreed with the Council, attached at Appendix A. As part of this process the LGBCE require information on Council size (number of Councillors) and this in turn will be affected by whether the Council elects its Members by thirds or as a whole. A public consultation on electoral cycles therefore took place. This report sets out the outcome of that consultation, alongside details of the implications of changing (or not changing) the electoral cycle.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Members are invited to discuss the two options that have been the subject of the community engagement exercise – changing the electoral cycle to whole council elections or retaining elections by thirds. There are no other alternative options.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. Preliminary meetings with various Officers and Members have been held with the LGBCE, concluding with the presentation to Members by the LGBCE on 14 July 2021.
- 5.2. A Consultant from the Association of Electoral Administrators has been instructed to be the day-to-day lead for organising and co-ordinating the response back to the LGBCE. The Consultant is able to provide specialist, experienced knowledge to assist in the delivery of the review at a time when the Democratic Services team is bedding in a number of new staff. The Leader and Deputy Leader of Council and Executive Members have been consulted on the use of the consultancy service via the Political Liaison Board.
- 5.3. A Boundary Review Project Board has been established where the Consultant and relevant officers meet on a monthly basis with the Group Leaders, most recently meeting on 15 November.
- 5.4. A public consultation opened for 5 weeks on 4 October 2021 and closed on 8 November 2021 and asked one specific question:

Do you think we should:

- *elect one third of our district councillors every year ('by thirds')*
- *elect all of our district councillors every four years ('whole council'/'all out')*

It also asked responders to explain why they chose a particular option – to assist when a Council made its decision on whether to retain electing councillors by thirds or to move to electing councillors once every four years.

- 5.5. The survey was conducted via Survey Monkey or a paper copy was available on request or able to be downloaded via the Council's website and returned by post to the Council Offices or to the dedicated email address.
- 5.6. The consultation was promoted through a press release, the Members Information Service, emails were sent directly from the dedicated email address to all District Councillors, Parish Clerks, Local County Councillors, local MPs, the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner. An email was also sent to the Citizens Panel. There was a banner on the front page of the Council's website advertising the consultation, linking through to the press release with the Survey Monkey link and where the consultation document was able to be downloaded. The consultation was promoted via the Council's social media channels as well as the Community Engagement Facebook page. The Chairs of the various Area Committees also announced that the consultation was live at their respective meetings.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The LGBCE is responsible for conducting reviews of local authority electoral arrangements. This is through an 'electoral review'. The LGBCE completed its last review of North Hertfordshire in May 2006.
- 7.2. The Commission has intervention criteria – one of the criteria being if 30% of all wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 10% of the average ratio of electors to Councillors for the Authority. Another being where one or more wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 30% of the average ratio for the Authority. In North Herts, 33% of wards now have a variance outside the 10% threshold and the electoral district is therefore overdue a review.
- 7.3. A timetable has been agreed with the LGBCE for the Review – when key pieces of work must be submitted. The first key piece of work is to develop a 'council size' proposal which will need to include whether the Council will be changing its electoral cycle from elections by thirds to whole council elections, and also to decide the appropriate number of councillors for the authority. This must be submitted by 21 January 2022. Ward boundaries will not be considered until this phase of the process is complete.
- 7.4. The Council has implemented a budget challenge process to identify potential savings that could help meet a projected funding gap. As part of this process, the move to four-yearly elections was proposed and is estimated to generate savings equivalent of around £40k per year, as detailed in paragraph 10.
- 7.5. The Commission has produced a number of documents to guide authorities through the electoral review process, one being 'How to propose a pattern of wards' and whilst the subject of the report is not to consider warding agreements the following emphasises the requirements in regard to the number of councillors in each ward:

'Number of Councillors in each ward or division - There is no limit to the number of councillors that can be elected to represent a ward or division. However, we would not normally accept a proposal for more than three councillors to represent a ward.'

The Commission has to abide by certain rules when deciding how many councillors should represent a ward and, in particular, we have a responsibility to ensure that patterns of wards reflect the electoral cycle of the local authority. The law¹ states that where a council hold elections in three years out of every four where a third of councillors are elected at each election ('by thirds'), we should seek to deliver a pattern of three-member wards across a district. This means that every voter will have an equal opportunity to influence the make up of the council at each election. Similarly, if a district council elects half its councillors every other year ('by halves'), we should seek to deliver a pattern of two-member wards across the district.

If you live in a district which elects by thirds, you should bear in mind that the Commission will seek to propose three-member wards in your area. We will only move away from such a pattern where a three-member ward would significantly undermine our other obligations under the law, namely: to deliver electoral equality, reflect community interests and identities and promote effective and convenient local government.'

'Where a council holds whole-council elections every four years (this includes all county councils and London boroughs), the Commission is able to propose any pattern of wards or divisions that it believes best meets its statutory criteria. This is usually a mixture of single-, two- and three-member wards or divisions'.²

- 7.6 The relevant legal provision referred to in the LGBCE guidance is set out below under section 9, which in summary provides that if the Council retains elections by thirds that the number of Councillors must be divisible by 3, as per Para 2,(3)(d),(5)(b)(c)(ii).

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. This section of the report sets out the different implications of retaining the current electoral cycle or changing the electoral cycle. Sub-headings are included for convenience.

- 8.2. Members are invited to note that the discussion at this meeting should focus on whether to change the electoral cycle to all-out elections or retain elections by thirds. Other matters noted are for information and, in some cases, future consideration and are not directly relevant to this immediate discussion.

8.3. Council Size

- 8.3.1 The first stage of the LGBCE review is to determine the Council Size (how many Councillors are needed to effectively and efficiently undertake the business of the Authority).
- 8.3.2 There is no limit to the number of Councillors that can be elected to represent a ward or division. However, the Commission would not usually accept a proposal for more than three councillors to represent a ward, as included within their 'Council Size Policy' document:

¹ Section 2, Schedule 2 Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009

² [Microsoft Word - Proposing new wards guidance _pic_.doc](#)

‘There is also a presumption that, for authorities that elect by either thirds or halves, the Commission should recommend a council size that is divisible by either three or two respectively. Such a consideration does not bind councils that hold all-out elections where a mixed pattern of one-, two- or three-member wards is most likely to emerge’.

8.3.3 The Council will approve its Council Size submission at the Council meeting on 20 January 2022 following which it **must** make the submission to the LGBCE on 21 January 2022.

8.3.4 The Commission reserves the right to propose its own council size, particularly where in its opinion, such a figure would better represent the evidence received and/ or the comparative data available.

8.3.5 The table below sets out the key implications on Council Size for the two options:

Aspect	Retaining elections by thirds	Moving to all-out elections
Council Size	Total number of Councillors must be a multiple of 3 .	Total number of Councillors not restricted.
Maximum size	No maximum, although the submission must justify the number of Councillors the authority says are required.	
Optimum Council size	This will be determined by the LGBCE, following the close of their current consultation. The size of Council may reduce, stay the same, or increase.	

8.4. Warding arrangements

8.4.1 As part of the current Review, all current wards will be reviewed. All existing wards will be abolished, regardless of the electoral cycle. Due to the electoral imbalances in place, and development planned that is likely to exacerbate these differences, no ward can be assumed to be immune from significant changes.

8.4.2 The LGBCE will conduct a consultation later in 2022 regarding warding arrangements, and the Council will develop and submit a proposal at that time.

8.4.3 The table below sets out the key implications on warding arrangements for the two options.

Aspect	Retaining elections by thirds	Moving to all-out elections
Councillors per ward	All wards will have 3 members. The LGBCE have advised that they “would look to propose a uniform pattern of three-member wards” and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 states that the LGBCE must have regard to each ward having 3 members.	Wards may be a mixture of 1, 2 and 3 Member wards.

Current wards	All wards will cease to exist and be replaced with new wards.
New wards	The LGBCE will determine the new warding arrangements, and that process includes a consultation by the LGBCE which the Council will respond.

8.5. District Council election dates

8.5.1 At present, scheduled elections take place in three out of every four years, electing one-third of District Councillors each time elected for a term of four years.

8.5.2 The first election following the LGBCE review will take place in May 2024. This will be an all-out election regardless of the decision of this Council, for reasons explained in paragraph 8.4.1.

8.5.3 The table below sets out the key implications for the two options.

Aspect	Retaining elections by thirds	Moving to all-out elections
Elections in 2022	Will be the scheduled elections by thirds as the LGBCE review will not be complete.	
Elections in 2023	Will be the scheduled elections by thirds as the LGBCE review will not be complete.	
Elections in 2024	<p>All-out election in 2024.</p> <p>The candidate in each ward with the highest votes is elected for 4 years.</p> <p>The candidate in each ward with the second highest votes is elected for 3 years.</p> <p>The candidate in each ward with the third highest votes is elected for 2 years.</p>	<p>All-out election in 2024.</p> <p>All elected Councillors have a term of office of 4 full years.</p>
Elections in 2025	No District Council elections scheduled – County Council elections.	No District Council elections scheduled – County Council elections.
Elections in 2026	One-third of seats up for election (1 per ward), with those elected in 2024 for 2 years retiring. One Member elected for each ward, and sits for a full 4 year term.	No District Council elections scheduled.
Elections in 2027	One-third of seats up for election (1 per ward), with those elected in 2024 for 3 years retiring. One Member elected for each ward, and sits for a full 4 year term.	No District Council elections scheduled.
Elections in 2028	One-third of seats up for election (1 per ward), with those elected in	All-out election in 2028.

	2024 for 4 years retiring. One Member elected for each ward, and sits for a full 4 year term.	All elected Councillors have a term of office of 4 full years.
By-elections or any other non-scheduled elections	By-elections arising due to a casual vacancy take place as usual (no change in process) as well as any other non-scheduled elections.	By-elections arising due to a casual vacancy take place as usual (no change in process) as well as any other non-scheduled elections.

8.6. Parish electoral changes

8.6.1 At present, scheduled elections take place to parishes within the district on a schedule such that some take place each year. Councillors are elected for a term of four years.

8.6.2 The LGBCE review does not change the parish electoral arrangements.

8.6.3 There may be a desire to align electoral arrangements between the parish councils and the district if the district moves to all-out elections. This is done through a Community Governance Review (CGR), which may only begin after the LGBCE review is completed. A CGR is undertaken by NHDC and takes around one year to complete. There is a legally-defined process to conduct a CGR, and it includes consultation with parish councils, elected representatives and members of the public. Members are invited to note that the decision about NHDC electoral arrangements should not be influenced by any possible future consideration of parish council electoral arrangements.

8.6.4 The table below sets out the key implications for the two options.

Aspect	Retaining elections by thirds	Moving to all-out elections
Parish elections	Remain as now – no changes.	Remain as now – no changes.
Options	NHDC may conduct a Community Governance Review to change parish election dates and related matters, but no requirement to do so.	NHDC may conduct a Community Governance Review, including consulting with parish councils, to decide whether to change parish election dates. This starts <u>after</u> the LGBCE Review is complete. Changing the parish electoral cycle would likely save parish councils money at elections as the costs are shared with the other elections taking place at that time.

8.7. Electoral Commission guidance

8.7.1 The majority of Authorities elect by whole council elections and in the 2004 Electoral Commission produced a report *'The cycle of local government elections in England –*

*Report and Recommendations*³. In the report they advocated that all local authorities should move to all-out elections (rather than electing by thirds or halves), stating “*whole council elections are more likely to provide clarity for electors and a degree of stability for local authorities*”, “*would provide a clear, equitable and easy to understand electoral process that would best serve the interests of local government electors.*” and “*allow community identities to be more easily reflected*”.

8.8. Democratic engagement

8.8.1 The table below sets out the key implications for the two options.

Retaining elections by thirds	Moving to all-out elections
Elections in three years out of every four years provides more frequent opportunity 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 the electorate.	All-out elections take place every four years and provides clarity for the electorate that an election will be held once every four years and therefore the election results are simpler and are easier for voters to understand.
Electing by thirds means there is more continuity of councillors without any chance of them all being replaced in a single election	All-out elections mean that every seat on the Council is elected at the same time, and every vote has the same weight.
	Less disruptive for public buildings used as polling stations, for example schools.
	Enables the Council to adopt a more strategic, long-term approach to policy and decision-making and focus less on yearly election planning. In addition, a more structured member induction and development programme can be delivered.
	Reduces fatigue amongst voters, councillors and election agents due to regular campaigning.

8.9. Elections

8.9.1 All-out elections to multi-member wards (those with 2 or 3 Councillors) require voters to cast up to the number of votes as there are seats – so up to 2 votes in a 2 member ward, or up to 3 votes in a 3 member ward. This is a change from the current district councillor voting system, although no different to how parish/town councillors are elected. In addition, every ballot paper clearly states (by law) the maximum number of votes that can be cast.

³

https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/electoral_commission_pdf_file/cycleoflocalelectfinal_11595-9056_E_N_S_W_.pdf

8.9.2 The table below sets out the key implications on elections for the two options:

Aspect	Retaining elections by thirds	Moving to all-out elections
Voting	In 2024, electors vote for up to 3 candidates in every ward. From 2026 onwards, electors vote for 1 candidate in each ward.	From 2024, electors vote for up to 1, 2 or 3 candidates (based on 1, 2 and 3 member wards) in each ward.

8.10. Other councils

8.10.1 Whilst the practices employed in other authorities is not the absolute marker of what this Council should do, Members may wish to note that of district councils:

- 131 elects by whole council/all-out;
- 54 elects by thirds; and
- 7 elects biennially

8.11. Consultation responses

8.11.1 A total of 306 responses were received during the consultation period. This is a very substantial number of responses for such a consultation. Of those only 3 were received in paper format.

8.11.2 Each respondent was asked which of the two options they supported and invited to give the reasons for their answer. They were also asked to provide their name and home address to ensure submissions were made from households within the district.

8.11.3 Of the 306 responses received, a total of 12 submissions were removed:

- 1 was a direct duplicate of another identical entry
- 4 were from outside of the district
- 2 did not indicate a preferred option
- 5 gave a response, but the reason suggested a misunderstanding of the options.

8.11.4 The remaining 294 submissions are summarised as follows:

	Retaining elections by thirds	Moving to all-out elections
Number	136	158
(%)	(46%)	(54%)

8.11.5 If the submissions excluded (paragraph 8.11.3 above) are returned, the overall proportion remains similar (53% supporting a change to all-out elections, and 47% remaining with elections by thirds).

8.11.6 Overall, the consultation responses indicate a preference for changing to all-out elections.

8.11.7 Appendix B includes the full text responses from all valid submissions (not all respondents gave a reason for their choice, and disclosive comments have been redacted). The key messages from respondents are shown in the table below.

	Retaining elections by thirds	Moving to all-out elections
Reasons given	Accountability (election each year allows for removal of councillors) Continuity Fresh intake annually Keeps focus on local issues Prevents sudden change of policy Prefer status quo Gradual change	Accountability (easier to follow the election promises made by councillors) Efficiency Simplicity Cost Easier for voters to understand Everything fixed for 4 years Stability for 4 years Opportunity for significant improvements without worrying about political fall-out Reduces voter disengagement Greater stability Allows retention of 1, 2 and 3 member wards (by electing every four years, rather than thirds, the LGBCE will be able to produce a pattern of new wards that will better reflect communities) Clear mandate Allows difficult decisions to be made

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. Paragraph 2, Schedule 2 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act ('LDEDCA') 2009 states that where a Council holds elections in three years out of every four (where a third of councillors are elected at each election) that this should be divisible by three as per 2(3d),(5 b)(c)(ii), albeit that the Commission Guidance indicates that they would not normally accept more than three per ward, and should seek to deliver a pattern of three member wards across the district. In detail the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act provides:

2 District councils

(1) This paragraph applies where the Local Government Boundary Commission for England makes recommendations under section 56 in relation to the electoral arrangements for the area of a district council.

(2) The recommendations must secure the following results—

- (a) every ward of a parish having a parish council (whether separate or common) must lie wholly within a single electoral area of the district council, and*
- (b) every parish which is not divided into parish wards must lie wholly within a single electoral area of the district council.*

(3) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), in making the recommendations the Local Government Boundary Commission for England must have regard to—

(a) the need to secure that the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of members of the district council to be elected is, as nearly as possible, the same in every electoral area of the council,

(b) the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities and in particular—

(i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable, and

(ii) the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties,

(c) the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and

(d) in the case of a district council that is subject to a scheme for elections by halves or by thirds, or that has resolved to revert to being subject to such a scheme under Chapter 1 of Part 2 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (c. 28), the desirability of securing that each electoral area of the district council returns an appropriate number of members of the council.

(4) For the purpose of sub-paragraph (3)(a) the Local Government Boundary Commission for England must have regard to any change in the number or distribution of local government electors in the area of the district council which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the making of the recommendations.

(5) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (3)(d)—

(a) a district council is “subject to a scheme of elections by halves” if one half (or as nearly as may be) of its members are to be elected in each year in which it holds ordinary elections of members of the council;

(b) a district council is “subject to a scheme of elections by thirds” if one third (or as nearly as may be) of its members are to be elected in each year in which it holds ordinary elections of members of the council;

(c) the number of members of the district council returned by an electoral area of the council is “appropriate”—

(i) in the case of a scheme for elections by halves, if it is divisible by 2;

(ii) in the case of a scheme for elections by thirds, if it is divisible by 3.

9.2. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (LGPIHA 2007) provides that a district council that elects by halves or by thirds may resolve to move to a scheme of whole-council elections.

9.3. A council must comply with section 33 of the LGPIHA 2007 when passing a resolution for whole-council elections and must not pass the resolution unless it has taken reasonable steps to consult “such persons as it thinks appropriate on the proposed change”.

9.4. Having consulted, a resolution to move to whole council elections is required:

(a) at a meeting which is specially convened for that purpose; and

(b) by a majority of at least two thirds of the members voting on it.

9.5 The resolution must specify the year for the first ordinary elections of the council at which all councillors are to be elected and in the case of this Authority could not be the same year as the County Council elections (as specified in the Localism Act 2011). The decision is subject to publicity and notification requirements.

- 9.6 If a Council passes a resolution to change its electoral cycle it may not pass another opposing resolution before the end of five years beginning with the day on which the resolution was passed.
- 9.7 If the Council resolves to move to whole council elections, the council must produce an explanatory document and make this available for public inspection at the council's principle office at all reasonable times and to the public by other means that it thinks is appropriate. The council must publicise:
- (a) that the Council has become subject to the scheme for whole-council elections under section 34 of the LGPIHA 2007;
 - (b) when elections will first take place in accordance with the scheme;
 - (c) how the explanatory document is available;
 - (d) the address of the council's principal office.

The Council must also give notice to the Electoral Commission that it has passed the resolution.

- 9.8 Legislation places several obligations on the Commission in conducting the review and it also places a requirement on the Authority to, if requested by the LGBCE, provide any information as they may reasonably require.
- 9.9 Whilst not directly related to this legislation, it is worth noting that there are other electoral changes potentially on the horizon, through the Elections Bill 2021⁴, that will make the management of elections more challenging (voter IDs, extended overseas qualifying rights to vote, new requirement for polling stations and staff) which will undoubtedly have further capacity and resilience implications. This will be cumulative if the Council continues with elections by thirds and, it is understood, that this will only be funded by central government in part through new burdens payments for a limited period.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Council has implemented a budget challenge process to identify potential savings that could help meet a projected funding gap. As part of this process, the move to four-yearly elections is estimated to generate savings equivalent of around £40k per year. The precise saving would depend upon whether the district elections were combined with any another election, and whether the formulation of the Fees and Charges Order for any elections paid for by central Government were included, as that varies from election to election. This saving could, potentially, increase if parish council election dates become aligned to the district in future.
- 10.2 There could be further savings if the overall number of members were reduced. For example, if there were to be a reduction of Members by approximately 10%, to 44, it would generate a saving of £25.5K (based on the current scheme of basic allowance of £5,100 per annum per Member). There could also be savings in other costs, such as the provision of IT equipment/licenses and subsistence. The reverse of this being that an increase in the overall number of members will cost the council more and there would be no opportunity to generate savings.

⁴ <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3020>

- 10.3 Moving to whole council elections would enable the Council to adopt a more strategic, long-term approach to policy and decision-making as well as to the budget setting process.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. The LGBCE has been clear in the preliminary stages with the Authority in that a retention of the status quo will not be accepted by the Commission given that 33% of wards now have a variance outside the 10% threshold and the Council elects by thirds with a mixture of single, two and three member wards.
- 11.2. Before any decision on whether or not to move to a scheme of whole council elections, the Council is required to consult and should also show regard to the responses in coming to its decision.
- 11.3. As explained in paragraph 15.2, since 2019 there have been significant challenges due to the volume and complexity of the elections and it has become increasingly difficult to recruit polling station staff, the recent being the most difficult. Without competent volunteers in post there is a risk to being able to deliver the elections without challenge.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. To retain elections by thirds would not provide electoral equality as all wards are not represented by three Members and the voter does not have an equal opportunity to influence the makeup of the council at each election. The Commission would seek to deliver a pattern of three member wards across the district and would only move away from this if a pattern of three member wards would significantly undermine their other obligation under law – to deliver electoral equality, reflect community interests and identities and promote effective and convenient local government.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report as this is not a procurement exercise or contract.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 The appointment of the Consultant to undertake the Boundary Review has assisted to alleviate some of the pressure within the Democratic Services Team whilst it is significantly under resourced.
- 15.2 If the Council were to move to whole council elections it would reduce fatigue amongst the Council staff, especially the core team who since 2019 have fielded a relentless

number of elections, with significant challenges. It would enable the core team to concentrate on other aspects of work and have the time to visit other authorities to learn and adopt improved practices.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – Electoral Review Timetable as agreed with the LGBCE (included within the briefing documents provided to Members on 14 July 2021.
- 16.2 Appendix B – Consultation Responses to ‘How should Councillors for North Hertfordshire District Council be elected?’

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 Presentation by the LGBCE to Members on 14 July and the accompanying LGBCE ‘Electoral Review of North Hertfordshire – A Guide for Councillors’ circulated to all Members on 14 July.
- 18.2 Council – 23 September 2021 – Electoral Cycle Consultation – Minute No. 52 refers <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MId=2614>

Electoral Review Timetable

Preliminary Period

Briefings	Attendees		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Initial Meeting	Council Leader Chief Executive	Chair Chief Executive	4 February 2021
Officer Briefing	Council Officers involved in review	Review Manager Review Officer	11 March 2021
Group Leader Briefing	Council Group Leaders	Lead Commissioner Review Manager Review Officer	3 March 2021
Full Council Briefing	All Councillors	Lead Commissioner Review Manager Review Officer	7 July 2021
Parish/Town Council & Local Groups Briefing	Not required	Review Manager Review Officer	TBC

Council Size

Activity	Involvement		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Develop council size proposal	Council Political Groups	Officers will be available to answer any technical queries on making a submission.	July 2021 – 21 January 2022
Submission of council size proposals	Council Political Groups	Officers will acknowledge receipt of submissions.	21 January 2022
Commission Meeting: Council Size	Not required	Commission	15 February 2022

Warding Patterns

Activity	Involvement		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Consultation on warding patterns	Council Political Groups General Public	Run consultation, collate & analyse responses.	1 June 2022 – 9 August 2022
Commission Meeting: Draft Recommendations	Not required	Commission	18 October 2022
Consultation on Draft Recommendations	Council Political Groups General Public	Publish draft recommendations. Run consultation, collate & analyse responses.	1 November 2022 – 9 January 2023
Commission Meeting: Final Recommendations	Not required	Commission	14 March 2023
Publication of Final Recommendations	Not required	Commission	28 March 2023

Order

Activity	Involvement		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Order laid	Not required	Commission	Autumn 2023
Order made	Not required	Commission	Autumn 2023
Implementation	Council	Not required	May 2024

Appendix B – Consultation Responses to ‘How should Councillors for North Hertfordshire District Council be elected?’

Note that not all respondents provided a reason for their choice. Responses that are disclosive and identify individuals have been redacted. No other changes have been made.

The responses have been collated in those that have opted for whole council/all -out elections and those that have opted for retaining elections by thirds

Elect all of our district councillors every four years (‘whole council’/‘all out’)

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response: All out elections
13034499871	More efficient process and easier for public to understand
13033847731	Whole council would prove more cost effective and would give members of the public a greater understanding as to who has been elected.
13032323309	Not only will money be saved if there is only one election every 4 years but the councillors will develop a better working relationship the longer they have to get to know each other.
13032006792	It will save money. It may also encourage more people to vote if it is only once every four years. People get fed up with frequent elections, I think.
13031938173	It must be a lot cheaper. The election process is not cheap and I speak from practical experience.
13031870843	It seems a simpler system.
13030669703	Hopefully will encourage more residents to vote once a year and reduce cost of elections.
13030124636	It potentially saves money and Wards are not continually trying to fight local elections. Every four years makes sense to the electorate without election fatigue.
13029370500	Cheaper
13029099923	It should be cheaper but more importantly it is a simpler process and therefore easier to understand and more transparent for the electorate.
13027300354	Savings in time and costs. Clean cut. Everything fixed for 4 years
13027046540	Whole council elections is far cheaper and as said costs may be able to be shared. Election by thirds is inefficient and hardly practical with some councillors able to effect little in just 2 years.
13026781435	Stability in the Administration over a 4 year period and therefore not the risk of constant changing in the Administration.
13026746841	Electing an entire council in one go will mean that it can make some significant improvements without worrying about political fallout. It will be more cost effective for the taxpayer.
13024850425	Saving resources is good. Hopefully it might raise turn out too if it's less frequent?
13024810285	Save money. More stability
13024788500	It must be costly to organise elections every year and it is also confusing for voters also.
13024683668	It feels like we are voting all the time and councillors do not change very often. With fewer elections it would be more of an event to vote for the councillors and may be more likely to get more people out to vote.
13024663200	Electing all the councillors at the same time is good because: 1. Control of the council will be up for grabs every time 2. Consequently higher public engagement
13024535466	A four year term would allow the administration to deliver its objectives without having to annually worry about electioneering plus it would save money that could be better spent elsewhere

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response: All out elections
13023989368	consistency of the team and costs saving too
13023908288	Give authority stability to pursue long-term strategies without needing to pause most years for an election period - let a newly elected administration have enough time to pursue its agenda properly. Save cost of running elections more often than necessary. Ensure that when elections are held they give genuine power to the electorate and encourage participation - some years under the thirds system there's little point voting, because even if all that third of the seats changed hands, the political control wouldn't. In mixed rural / urban district like North Herts, smaller single seat wards afford more focussed representation for the rural areas than massive three-seat wards.
13023887713	If it will save money, that is a positive reason and also it will save voters having to travel to polling stations and save money by having a single election instead of the present system.
13023778941	simpler system
13023426543	It is unfair that Keep it simple and do not discriminate against councilors who are elected on fewer votes.
13023411487	I have never understood why we had an election for three years out of four, compared with Parliamentary elections
13023361897	To allow completion of projects and help electoral commission to carry out and adapt to changes from the electoral list and also reduce work load for better focus in the preparation of the upcoming elections
13023207430	Might encourage more people to vote, if it's once every four years
13023196553	I hope that these changes would keep NHDC running smoothly. Any good change that saves money is always good.
13023067537	Simpler system with some savings. Four year terms would give councillors new to the position time to develop expertise.
13022972712	It should be more efficient and economic.
13022954945	A consistent approach and allows decisions to be bedded in by the councilors concerned.
13022940383	I think electing all councillors every four years would mean much better all round consistency and would save the council a lot of money by only having to go through the process once in four years.
13022939162	The present system is confusing and I believe the turnout every four years would be improved as it would be a bigger election.
13022900946	It's less confusing for residents, less time consuming, more cost effective for the council and gives all Cllrs an equal time frame to carry out their role.
13022834152	Not only would having fewer elections potentially save the council money, I also believe this simplification of the district election process would lead to an increase in voter participation.
13022766659	Hopefully turn out will improve if voters only need to vote once every 4 years
13022595359	To streamline processes and make the council structure more easier to understand.
13021720279	The current system seems unnecessarily complex by comparison. I can see no significant advantage in electing a third each year. I can't think many democratic institutions do this so why should we? Also it is much easier and cheaper to run one election every 4 years than run one virtually every year. But how does the County Council cycle fit into this? I guess there would normally be more stability in a 4 year term? However there would not be a significant election for 4 years if the council was behaving in a dysfunctional and ineffective manner. We would have to wait longer to show our displeasure in the polls.

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response: All out elections
13021684793	Saving money.
13021521621	Having one election every 4 years would save money
13021353373	It saves money by not running elections so often. Means an administration has 4 years to deliver their promises, which supports longer term strategic planning and stability.
13021335856	Easier, cheaper, less hassle and stability
13021255421	Easier to understand Aligns councillors to the same term Cost and time savings Too many elections can make residents feel disengaged
13021124628	Enables the elected council to take a 4-year view of its programme and priorities, knowing they have enough time to tackle things other than just the most immediate short-term issues.
13020982982	A stable council over a longer period may be beneficial to delivery of longer term strategies as well as potentially saving money
13020879917	Probably less costly and much easier to know how long each Councillor will be representing the Ward
13020841115	Simplicity and cost seems to be the benefit to elections every 4 years. I also think having elections each year causes election fatigue within the electorate. If all seats are up at once it would feel more like everyone was in the same boats and elections would be more of an event.
13020840617	By keeping the continuity of the team for 4 years they could work together on projects seamlessly rather than having possible personnel changes each year
13020834905	Simplicity for electorate; reduce costs of annual elections and give some consistency to administrations so that they can commit to a 4 year programme with some confidence
13020809360	To me it is the most efficient option whilst making savings. Having a settled administration for a longer period should also assist in the formulation of policies and the running of the council.
13020772812	practical and efficient
13020737621	For anyone elected for the first time they need a settling in period before becoming ready effective. Just because someone didn't get the most votes doesn't mean they should hold the office for a shorter period as it's not a measure of their competence. It would seem to provide a fairer and more representative body of people.
13020710178	Electing the council every four years is better. This is in line with the arrangements in national elections. The suggested arrangements for the 'staggered' elections, in the alternative system, with periods of service dependent on votes received in the previous election, is unwieldy and could be confusing.
13020708569	Appears "tidier" and is a system we are familiar with viz the general election.
13020695921	Saving the council money which might otherwise be used for community projects, etc.
13020669991	It would be more cost effective
13020662915	Councillors would have longer to get to grips with the way their whole group of councillors can work together for the common good of their district.
13020649267	Cost savings and stability
13020631558	Having worked in the Democratic Services, my experience has led me to the conclusion that "all out" Council elections Re beneficial for the following reasons: 1. The obvious cost saving (especially pertinent when local authorities are being required to make increasing year on year savings/efficiencies). 2. Political stability - regardless of which party(s) is/are in control, a four year term provides for forward planning allowing

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response: All out elections
	sufficient time for the effectiveness of new performance measures and policies to be quantified. 3. Democratic Services (DS) staffing - the four year term may result in the odd "fallow" year for elections, but this year could be spent by DS staff on improving processes and procedures to allow for smoother and more efficiently run elections.
13020622056	Cheaper and more efficient
13020621874	It seems like the more sensible option, less complicated, less work and saves money.
13020604360	1. Frequent elections tend to mean that Councillors are more concerned with maintaining a political benefit than taking longer term decisions that are in the best interests of residents. 2. There would be a cost saving to the Council.
13020603166	Although electing all councillors at once could result in a completely new set of councillors and thus no prior knowledge of how councils are run, in practice, a large number of councillors will be re-elected and some knowledge of how councils are run will be retained. Hopefully there will be a reduction in costs. Wards may have a variable number of councillors which could mean that wards may not all be of the same size allowing a ward size to be reduced to ensure its population was similar in nature and its councillors could truly reflect the wishes of the whole population. Mandating that all wards had the same number of councillors could mean that a ward had to be composed of a disparate population meaning that a councillor may only reflect the wishes of part, albeit a majority, of the population.
13020591782	One election every 4 years saves time and money.
13020575939	I think every 4 years would give greater continuity
13020545655	Every 4 years would save money over the long term. I hope the Council can apply for funds to assist with the cost of boundary changes.
13020541898	Reduced election costs.
13020539525	This would save money that the council could spend on other issues.
13020528635	The present system is unwieldy, costly and puts pressure on both councillors and the administrative staff; a 'whole council/'all out' approach would be eminently more effective. Also, a 'thirds' system means that new councillors are plunged into council meetings, and so on, in a rather isolated manner, so many new councillors, or existing ones, would form a fairer base with which the council could operate. As local council elections are notorious for having very low turnouts, then a once every four years election may be beneficial in terms of an increased turnout of voters.
13020514235	Has strategic advantages. Allows voters more chance to see the direction the council will take over four years. Is more cost effective.
13020493419	Less elections
13020474639	Purely to keep is simple and reduce cost
13020450056	I think it makes it less confusing to members of the public, and potentially saves money.
13020389832	The whole council/all out options seems much more straightforward to understand and must be less expensive for the residents of the wards, as local council would not have to organise elections every year as opposed to once every 4 years.
13020377692	Sensible to have 1-, 2- and 3-member wards in a district with large rural areas as well as medium-sized towns. The situation where councillors would have differing term lengths in the by thirds option does not seem sensible. Having one election every four years allows the council to get on with running things without being overly focused on reelection.

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response: All out elections
13020375022	Re electing the council every four years means that the entire council can be held to account for outcomes that have been delivered in the last four years and for the proposals each party makes for the next four years. The current structure means it is quite disjointed and therefore harder to hold people to account and make rapid change if that is necessary.
13020356101	Much clearer, less confusing, likely to be less costly, and more likely to deliver a clear mandate for a set of policies put forward at the time of the election.
13020339319	Saves money. Might encourage more voter participation as current system is messy and hard to follow for most people. I believe the current council is too big and, in terms of allowances paid, far too costly for current times. Fewer numbers of councillors would be preferable and indeed I am in favour of Hertfordshire having two unitary authorities which would save us all a lot of money and enable more coherent structuring of services.
13020322552	You will get more response if its 4 years rather than dragging on yearly. You might also want to use this as an opportunity to have the candidates actually say what they stand for!!!
13020302722	This should make it easier all new councillor swipe clean
13020301384	Running elections are costly and people are pretty bad at turning up to vote. At least if there is just one election, you could advertise this more and encourage more people to vote.
13020300957	a) to save money b) do not like the system where there are people elected for different periods - very confusing to their constituents c) I would like to know why wards/boundaries are being changed - is that necessary?
13020300809	Saves money by not running an election every year. Also, stop swapping a 3rd of the decision makers every 12 months to allow councillors to work together over the full term to get their work done.
13020300373	Simpler and more straightforward
13020286901	Cheaper and more efficient and may lead to better political stability.
13020285648	Electing whole councils would hopefully save a considerable amount of money in not having to run these elections every year. Also it saves 'voting fatigue' and may prompt more people to express their preference once every 4 years
13020277781	Less time wasted than with elections 3 out of 4 years
13020275384	It will save money and, more importantly, reduce the public disinterest in local elections as there is currently with elections every year.
13020272672	Electing the whole council every 4 years is more practical, and likely to increase turn-out. As a voter, you get a better sense of the council as a whole rather than just those in your ward.
13020232207	This option will save money but also give residents the chance to challenge the status quo where a ruling party remains in place for longer than might otherwise be the case.
13020230887	Savings in cost, might encourage more turn out if whole council is being elected.
13019753532	Electing every 4 years allows the council to concentrate on delivering for the people of the area and not worry about having to run elections nearly every year. Bringing more stability. I do think recall should be implemented as well however in case it is felt a Councillor is poorly performing with no way to remove them for a number of years. I do like the idea that council changes as the mood of the population changes but wonder how useful it is other than a gauge at the national level of which party is in ascendancy while it not really helping the council to deliver for locals.
13019525678	Not so much change

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response: All out elections
13018605938	Opens the door to Proportional Representation which broadens the participation in the electoral process. The election process would also be cheaper/better value for taxpayers.
13017706564	It's much simpler and in line with the election of MPs. Would allow elected district councillors to plan to work together for four years without the disruption, costs and distraction of additional elections during that time. Could also coincide with General Elections and would therefore attract more voters.
13017629250	I do think this option could be more efficient, and if it is more economical, then even better.
13017627193	It seems to be a more straight forward process.
13017325130	One big election is cheaper I suspect than 3 mini elections
13017128444	Cost effective. Even better reduce number of councillors in each ward.
13016993182	Once every 4 years matches Parliamentary elections. It is simple to understand. It is cheaper to conduct. It would allow for more comprehensive and cohesive policies to be promoted.
13016927559	Although there may be a temporary loss of continuity, any opportunity to reduce costs needs to be taken. This option also seems more in line with the system for electing the national Government.
13016921766	Much more cost effective to hold less elections and possibly a better turnout if we the public have less to attend
13016862335	It's the only way to get new blood. We've had too many councillors witter on for years rather than get on and decide and do things
13016809578	I think you struggle to get people to come and vote anyway. If it is all done at once it may get more people interested
13016677905	All learning together. I suggest that roles shared out with perhaps a better option to apply the skills of new members
13016664952	avoids the prospect of a 'forever no overall control' council
13016585499	its cleaner / simpler and allows change
13016547552	I think it is better to have councillors elected in one go rather than in dribs and drabs. I find it difficult to follow elections when they variously take place every year.
13016545128	Less elections are beneficial, as voting each year could lead to more voting fatigue. Also I would find it easier to look at what the district council has done wrt manifesto or plans/promises.
13016535070	An election every four years is more straightforward and could save money. In the other system, where some councillors would be elected for two years initially, would not give them time to achieve much and is unduly complicated.
13047081514	For continuity and teamwork (although the parties are different, the expectation is there that there is a unified focus for the Council district area).
13046852002	So that there is true representation of the public opinion. Election by thirds allows bad councillors behaviour to 'be forgotten' if the election is two years on
13044765736	I believe that it would be more beneficial to keep in the same councillors for a longer period as one year is not enough time to carry out enough changes and for the public to make up their mind as to whether they should remain elected.
13043953696	I think that elections should be once every four years for all wards. Often difficult decisions have to be taken and with a system that involves an election every year often means difficult decisions are fudged, because of electoral advantages. There is also a cost element in elections every year and in the light of current economic circumstances, financial prudence is

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response: All out elections
	important. What I do not like in this proposed change is the idea of larger wards and an increase in the number of Councillors. From personal experience of a large City, this does not mean that there is a greater approach between Councillors, Candidates to the electorate. This also restricts local people wishing to stand in a district as they do not have the "election team" as the three main parties have. This part of the proposal is simply anti democratic. All Councils should be looking to how they can make local representation more accessible to more people, not seek to insure a three party rule for ever. It would be interesting to hear if any of the current Councillors have actually started to speak to, and explain to their constituents the new proposals. Or is it a hope that as few as possible comment, so as the status quo can be maintained, insuring a reduction in local democracy.
13043774027	It is expensive to run elections every 4 years. I would however prefer to see smaller wards with one dedicated councillors than 3 councillors per ward. The councillors elected are more likely to reflect their constituents if the wards are broken down into smaller areas.
13040578424	Cost savings. Also, a four-year council term served by essentially the same group of people means that inaction or poor outcomes cannot be blamed on turnover or individuals no longer in position, and successes and positives are more credibly claimed by and linked to that group. Therefore it is easier for voters to make a balanced judgement about whether a council and its leadership has been effective over a four year term. Working parties, committees and sub-committees might also have more continuity of membership. Having said all of this, this is not a huge issue for me either way. Something that would increase turnout for local elections would be more important, and that would seem to be unaffected by this. Also (not sure about this) is this proposal better/less disruptive for the schools used as polling stations?
13039297884	Save the NHDC money
13038123929	In a time of reducing local authority finances, all out elections must save the Council money and allow spending on vital projects to improve the district. Also, a four year period of administration is more likely to allow proper decision-making rather than continually having one eye on forthcoming annual elections.
13037417652	More cost effective. Less disruptive to the running of the council(s).
13036143072	Having just one election must be a good cost saving measure
13035508214	The All Out system is the one used by Herts County Council and works well. It give the administration 4 years of stability.
13035508166	It would give stability and consistency for those four years (at risk of electing a council of the 'wrong' political persuasion). It sounds as though it would save the council money. Perhaps voter turnout would be more if it was only once in four years.
13035376022	This option gives the local council stability over four years, as opposed to frequent elections and changes in the council make up. It is also a less confusing system for the electorate
13035255372	Much simpler to know who your councillors are and they have longer to work as a team, rather than constant chipping and changing
13035253731	From an elector's point of view, I can see no benefit in the thirds arrangement. Continuity within the council may be counter balanced by the disruption to business of new councillors taking seats and all the administrative arrangements associated with that. As someone (now retired) who has worked in a shire county with elections every 4 years and a unitary with the thirds arrangement, I found the 4 yearly elections provided better continuity in delivering services. Having 'purdah' every 3

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response: All out elections
	out of 4 years before an election followed by a hiatus whilst new committees were established felt disruptive and inefficient when compared with the whole council approach. I also think we should be aiming to achieve savings associated with fewer elections.
13109146676	The LGBCE will always aim to create a uniform pattern of 3-member wards where authorities elect by thirds. This means the current pattern of single, two, and three-member is unlikely to be retained in the upcoming boundary review. By electing every four years, rather than thirds, the LGBCE will be able to produce a pattern of new wards that will better reflect communities. This is because the Council can be comprised of single, two, and three-member wards that will better reflect the district's rural parishes and urban towns. Past LGBCE reviews of local authorities that include urban and rural areas, that elect by thirds, result in rural and urban areas being merged to ensure good electoral equality at the expense of community identities. Electing by wholes will lessen the chance of this happening in the forthcoming electoral review.
13108660462	1. Save money 2. Save officer resources 3. encourage public voting participation as its less frequent 4. Less tactical decision making by members
13108529089	More time to focus on being a councillor without a yearly cycle of elections.
13108303536	Allows for more focused attention on a more consequential election rather than drip drip drip of local politics
13108095017	Cost
13107355218	Assuming whole council elections would not use the awfully undemocratic 'first-past-the -post', it is a step in the right direction towards a fairer system. I'd much rather have proportional representation, which would mean bigger wards with more councillors.
13107294270	Better representation of voter choice. Doing by thirds is like FPTP the biggest party will get all councillors for a ward
13106980733	I think the current system is to bureaucratic and expensive. It seems to me that any way we can reduce the costs of local government should be done. Especially in this time when the needs of the population are so high for social care with the percentage of older adults increasing.
13106915547	Cost saving
13106312347	Having regard to many factors, the point I am most concerned about is that if all wards are 3 members this will likely result in some inappropriate wards that mix parts of towns and adjoining rural areas; these often have quite different concerns and issues and there is a risk that this could be detrimental to whichever of these areas is in the minority in the ward. My understanding is that this can be avoided by the 'whole council'/'all out' option since some wards could be 1 member or 2 members where this is a better fit for geographical boundaries. Therefore I take the view that 'whole council'/'all out' is in the best interests of residents in North Hertfordshire.
13103115034	It should encourage more interest and participation from the electorate as the council could change political control.
13093534650	We believe that moving towards all out elections would make the system of electing Councillors in North Herts more democratic as it would mean that every elector voted at the same time, rather than the current system where some wards only vote once every four years, and others that elect every year, thus giving each elector equal representation. We also feel that there would be a substantial saving to the taxpayer and the council by doing away with the additional elections. In addition, all out elections would also lead to more forward planning on the council, as all councillors would have been elected on their parties manifestos and would have a 4 year term to implement it, rather than the current system where councillors

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response: All out elections
	are elected on different mandates and issues that conflict with the direction the council is taking, leading to a lack of stability and good government.
13085551970	It is more cost effective. Also, and of equal importance, it gives the council stability and continuity, rather than the balance of power shifting every year.
13085246046	Potential for cost savings and greater councillor commitment to longer term projects as the need to retain seats is not an annual event in three years out of four.
13081493688	Enables the whole council to have the same term for all councillors creating greater certainty for the administration.
13081316467	As an ex-Councillor in a London borough I know it makes more sense to have an all or nothing result every 4 years - like happens with Parliament.
13081121339	I would have preferred it to have stayed as it is, but given the options, once every 4 years maintains the position where we have only one representative for the parish, thereby maintaining accountability.
13079291217	Simple solution.
13079211655	All three member wards would be inappropriate for North Herts - a gun has been put to our heads on this!
13078658049	Tired with voting, any change to less and more time to change cockups can only be a good thing
13078025517	It seems the best way for achieving goals instead of there always being the opportunity to having something cancelled.
13070103166	Less disruption with elections only once every four years, don't have councillors/parties always chasing the votes and purdah period. Having lived and worked in North Herts as well as other local authority areas, I found it more confusing and uncertain who was being elected when and where in North Herts. Don't think it's a good system.
13066109910	Electing every 4 years will be cheaper and create more stability.
13059348725	My former local council in Barnet was elected as a whole every 4 years, seemed to work okay. Tended to be interleaved with other elections so there were typically visits to the polling station every 2 years
13056755635	No long term planning with current model. Cllrs to focused on not rocking the boat to much to affect election each year. Better continuity on cllrs in roles and working with community
13053130558	It can be quite disruptive to have people in office only for a short time. The incentive to get things sorted is reduced and if a 'job' will finish within 2 years then one is likely to be complacent and have an unwillingness to engage with projects that need to be sorted. If people are elected for 4 years then time is given to get projects/ideas started and it can be seen through to completion. It is disincentivising to only have a few years to get things done. It is also compounded with the fact that a person got the least amount of votes, which is why they have less time. Not very helpful to feel that the job that they do is worth doing
13053090822	To me, it makes sense that a term of four years be brought in as preferable. This give Councillors time to complete decisions made in Council. Whereas, those on short term periods might be not have the incentive to complete work that they won't be around to see completed. If Parish Councillors can cope with four years, I do not see why District Councillors cannot do the same and be on par with County Councillors as well.
13049688264	Save admin costs etc.
13048555649	Having yearly elections, although not every year being the same councillor, is too frantic and may be stopping work being completed. Having a stable councillor base for 4 years sounds better for productivity

Elect one third of our district councillors every year ('by thirds')

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response : Elect by thirds
13033605174	If councillors are elected every four years, people will forget about the councillors and issues they they campaigned on, by holding elections more frequently will hopefully keep local topics in people minds
13032246858	Continuity of experience is helpful in any Committee, and more likely to serve the community well than a system in which abrupt changes of a whole Council are possible.
13032036215	Better continuity and long term planning
13031844652	Local politics should be different from national, if you vote for everyone at once it is more likely to reflect the national trend
13031832793	it is more representative of the current decisions taken by the council
13031649407	Electing Councillors by thirds will give people the choice to change councillors fresh (almost every year) and invigorate the Council regularly possibly with fresh blood and perspectives. It keeps the local democratic process dynamic and part of the annual fabric of life rather than one significant event every four years.
13030205539	Less of a lottery; gives the electors a regular chance to hold the Council to account; ensures a better range of experience among Councillors.
13027866948	Because councillors are generally affiliated to a party and this often overrides local issues. So the state of the party at the particular time of the election would have an undue influence. This is lessened by nmore frequent voting for a lesser prportion of the council.
13027636631	I think the 'electing by thirds' method is preferable as it allows some continuity in the council every year. With the 'one election every 4 years' option there could be a complete change in councillors and possibly a complete change in strategies etc. It seems very likely to me that this would probably result in costing a lot more than is saved by the fewer number of elections.
13027559247	Prevent sudden changes in policy
13027296279	my preference is to have "by thirds" electing councillors can be an expensive process and one could argue that moving to "whole council / all out" would be an efficient process /cost saving method. However, a "by thirds" option gives a bigger, broader, deeper voice for all elected individuals, across all parties. It also allows for transparency and clear boundaries for all
13027249231	I feel electing councillors one third at a time allows for a more balanced approach to appointing members, as any short term national or local politics that affect people's thinking will only influence a third of the council rather than the complete membership. It also provides a more regular "temperature check" off the local populations view of the council
13026594658	Electing by thirds provides a greater opportunity for local democracy to be shown.
13026519035	To me it is more democratic. It enables the electorate to make plain that they are against something that may affect the how we are treated. It tells councils how we, the electorate feel about their decisions more frequently.
13026473086	Elected officials need to be accountable to the electorate. It makes them more aware of them.
13026303419	Annual elections mean that the ruling party has to keep the requirements of the electors to a daily concern. Elections every four years mean that the politicians can forget about us for 3 years doing what they want and not what we want.

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response : Elect by thirds
13026279463	It lets electors have an opinion more frequently and should avoid potential wholesale changes of direction after 4 years.
13026123309	Councillors and political parties are held to account more regularly so may be more responsive to voters needs. Gives more opportunities to debate local issues which may otherwise be confused with national ones. Allows for more gradual change rather than possible upheaval if a different political party wins a majority. Everyone knows how this system works.
13024639104	we feel the present system gives more continuity
13024543993	No time to embed plans if a constant change every 4 years
13024493361	Council will have some experienced members to guide others
13024157160	Enables new/fresh ideas to be offered and opportunities for new candidates without having to wait four years.
13023508964	To protect ongoing projects which may already have costs attached Not sensible to change everyone (which could happen) at the same time. We see what happens at national level following a change of government.
13023283079	Four years is too long for a councillor to hold a position. Fresh people need to brought in regularly to bring about change and not become stale.
13023153567	The person with the lowest votes should not be given 4 years as they may be inexperienced or not very good therefore 2 years is long enough to test them out. There will be reasons as to why a person comes in second or third.
13022976387	The elections each year will surely help the council to track changing opinions
13022827278	The present system works well for the voters and four years is too long.
13022766764	This will give the Council a more balanced outlook which means that decisions made will be beneficial to the local people rather than dictates from central government.
13022740103	I feel that electing by thirds allows you to balance out any political bias that might exist over the four year period, IMO there is a 'danger' that a major political upset would unbalance any election which would then last for 4 years.
13021733698	Because the public have the opportunity to get rid of a council that is not performing and not stuck with a system where we have a whole unpopular council stuck in power for 4 years.
13021573270	I feel that elections by thirds will lead to a greater continuity of skills and processes with a more representative council less swayed to extremes by national politics or current events that might impact with 4 yearly all out/all in election process.
13021205813	Status quo is fine.
13021100452	It works the way it is.
13021057096	It enables fine tuning of the political mix, rather than just following the government of the day. Thus if an unpopular labour government were in power, there may a risk of losing all labour councillors, rather than just a third.
13021049221	Why change ? Current method works perfectly well . However this consultation seems pointless as you the councillors have already agreed to the change .So frankly this is undemocratic to my mind .
13021014555	I believe that it is important to retain experience rather than run the risk of a wholesale "clearout" every four years
13021009078	The present method provides continuity/ smooth transition. As the saying recommends, if it's not broke don't mend it....better still, just leave it alone!
13020991650	Local council needs to be flexible, to change gradually. Thirds means things can change more smoothly

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response : Elect by thirds
13020931517	It gives more options to change councillors if they are not fulfilling their election manifesto and other candidates in 2 or 3 place time to showcase what they can do.
13020914372	A single 4 yearly election increases the influence of the then current national government sentiment. This would be at the cost of local issues and democracy. The "by thirds" method is less prone to extreme swings and is more democratically responsive by responding more frequently to the electorates sentiment. Corruption aside the cost of democracy is simply not a measurement of it's effectiveness. Any changes to the existing democratic procedure need to be considered on the basis of how the change effects the effectiveness of our local democracy. Measure representation, measure satisfaction, measure engagement. To measure cost indicates you've run out of ideas. You need to be thinking of efficiency and effectiveness.
13020884775	Allows for potential regular new impetus and ideas from newly elected members every year. keeps things fresh.
13020712600	Every 4 years for all councillors means council business is on hold for period before and immediately after election. With one third ejections, council business carries on uninterrupted. Every 4 years fit all gives big intake of new councillors, whereas the one third method of elections balances the spread of experienced and new councillors.
13020703011	Doing elections for everyone at the same time means council business is on hold pre and immediately post election. One third current position is not so disruptive. Also have mix if new and experienced councillors rather that big intake of new inexperienced councillors every 4 years
13020635563	Because the proposal will result in local politics becoming politicised as with national elections. It will be to the detriment of smaller parties and independants.
13020631917	I have chosen this option because it would give some continuity rather than the possibility of a completely new council every four years.
13020609901	I believe the current thirds process works well and allows councillors to be accountable to the public in a more frequent and democratic way.
13020568272	Changing whole council would give a completely inexperienced council - not efficient. Could also be wild swings in policy and waste of money, abandoning previous initiées.
13020554016	The 'by thirds' option allows for continuity
13020530591	Continuity and lower chance of large swings in council policy from one year to another.
13020516186	Electing counsellors on an annual basis provides more regular opportunity for citizens to engage in the democratic process and would require political parties to continue to engage with citizens on a continuous basis. It might also mean that one would avoid wild swings between one party dominating at one election and another dominating at the next.
13020497419	I'm not or have been a Councillor - changing /electing one third is obviously the best way , allowing change to take place with "members" overlapping aware of what has been "happening" in Council during the past 1/2/or 3 years. It's call continuous continuity allowing inhouse knowlege,experience to be shared. All change does not work as it creates stop start albeit every 4 years. Also every 4 years reflects voting patterns relative to the previous short period,which could be some political national event not really related to local council activities. If it's not broke , don't break it if it's been working.
13020437261	To prevent a sudden change in the political make-up of the council leading to a dramatic change in policy involving unpicking the previous administrations policies.

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response : Elect by thirds
13020412046	A lack of continuity would result, plus a lot of ineffectiveness, if a significant number of Councillors were 'new' and having to feel their way.
13020410257	Changing the whole council at one time seems much more disruptive to the ongoing work of the council and also creates the risk of a whole council being swung but one short term issue which might be in the media at the time of the election. Anything which helps stability and slow considered change would be preferable
13020410018	This allows voters to consider at regular occasions how the councils responds to changes, such as future environmental or health issues, rather than waiting a full 4 years.
13020405836	Following a 4-yr turn-around of everyone on the council engenders short term politics/policies rather than future planning and management. one third ensures continuity of future policies and planning where possible
13020395762	to allow a continuity of at least some councillors to operate rather than have a period will have all new members and potential for disruption. I do appreciate that council officers services will continue throughout .
13020350302	With 'by thirds', I have an earlier chance to indicate my feelings on the record of the ruling party and to vote against their candidate every year.
13020348256	It is important to maintain continuity, rather than possibly have all councillors being replaced
13020327011	I prefer a gradual change in council representation than sudden sea changes. This means policies are likely to change less quickly.
13020318181	This would allow a more democratic council with a better politically balanced Council. A four cycle would reflect the political view at a single moment in time, the current one-third basis would more closely reflect changing opinions.
13020316166	"All out" elections mean disruption to Council activities when councillors are gearing up for an election or if many new people are elected. It also means four year cycles of policy and focus on local issues. As a resident I want a council that is responsive every year, and that has the chance to tackle longer term issues not governed by a 4 year cycle.
13020304753	It's one think to change from 'by thirds' to 'whole council'/'all out', and quite another to change boundaries as well. Consultation, and proposal, should consider thirds or all out only and not, boundary changes.
13020302068	To maintain the democratic situation so that if priorities change the member you elect can change and you do not have to continue with the same council makeup. Also you do not risk losing expertise all at once.
13020291242	It allows for a more "evolutionary" mode of council change, driven by average opinion over the years, rather than knee-jerk reactions potentially replacing the whole council every 4 years.
13020286699	I don't like the idea of potentially changing all councillors every four years. At local council level we need continuity not continual change.
13020283227	There would be far too many names to consider - many of which we would not be familiar with
13020283058	If it broken why change. What is broken is the FPTP system. It would be preferable to have STV as they have in Scotland & Ireland. Then we can perhaps move to a whole council election.
13020281364	To make the council accountable to the local electorate continually, not just once every few years
13020248014	More regular voting better informs councillors of current public views.
13020227922	To allow a greater range of candidates to be elected on an ongoing basis.
13020206461	why change for the sake of change and four years is a long time for a party to do damage.

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response : Elect by thirds
13020003308	I think getting new voices regularly is important as over a longer period people may become less enthusiastic and if all the council sit for 4 years that might be a problem
13019858257	At the moment we have councillors with some experience remaining in place which to my mind helps those with no or very little experience to steer through all that is involved in being a member of the council. If you change it to all change at once, you will face the prospect of losing that experience all at once.
13019824722	Smooth transition as the make up of the councils change
13019668711	This system is more balanced and includes retaining an expertise rather than all in / all out.
13019509377	By thirds is more representative of the public mood and opinion and less dependent on a single issue. Scrutiny is maintained by voters being able to consistently hold the council to account.
13019410486	1. This system will have been put in place for a good reason and unless that reason is no longer valid, and there is no indication that it is, then it should not be changed. 2. I have never met any district councillor so have little opinion of their actions or worth to me as a resident. 3. Wards will change no matter what method is used.
13019289641	Less chance of knee jerk reaction to current affairs. Councillors who know round the system and can help new members
13018260159	More accountability
13018107028	This seems a fairer way to go
13017917273	Whilst it is unlikely that all councillors would not get re-elected, if this were to occur there would be no continuity, with a completely new council finding there way.
13017647321	At least two thirds of the accumulated expertise is retained if elections are by thirds and can be passed on to incomers. Totally new blood every four years is risky.
13017363887	Focus needs to be on local issues rather than being swayed by major (and often misleading) national campaigns. The thirds option ensures experienced councillors can remain in position to train and inform new inexperienced councillors. More caution and accountability in awarding contracts. Do not go straight to the cheapest option. For instance with refuse collection it is important that recycling centres are performing to optimum ecological standards.
13017317491	To provide continuity and for experience to be retained.
13017209778	This gives some stability and makes local services less politically influenced by the performance of whatever government is in power. I think it would also dissuade government from radical changes in finance policies affecting councils.
13017148375	This system gives better continuity and stability to the council, avoiding a possible revolution every four years. Council elections tend to reflect national trends, which I consider undesirable, so a four-year election could cause an imbalance and result in reduced democracy. The proposal to change the system mentions cost savings but no estimates have been given. I would not want to consider a change without knowing the cost benefits.
13017063629	I have chosen this option because it appears to introduce an element of proportional representation. If I have understood it correctly it will discourage tactical voting & avoid wasted votes. I live in the Hitchwood & Offa Hood ward & as someone who would not vote conservative my vote is always wasted. With the proposed system there is an increased chance the election may return a non conservative councillor. This overrides my

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response : Elect by thirds
	feeling that electing every four years may save money. The description above indicates that the physical changes to the boundaries may vary for the two options which is something I do not understand or have any information on. Clearly the positioning of boundaries could (as has been indicated in the press about changes to constituency boundaries) influence outcomes.
13016987996	Election by thirds provide some degree of continuity while also allowing for gradual change. Whole Council elections could lead to abrupt and successive policy changes based on short-term thinking and political mood swings, and thus to erratic government.
13016936527	I think it will give better balance of the ward's views if they can elect a portion of councillors at a time. Also it will help councils with continuation of projects etc rather than the theoretical possibility of a completely new council for every ward on one day every 4 years so no experience or continuity at all- chaos.
13016934850	The danger with the 'all out' option is that experienced councillors could all be lost together, which might result in inexperience within the council.
13016701531	No strong preference, but "thirds" guarantees that some experience kept and, since councillors linked to national parties, any national political mood swings are smoothed out.
13016678939	By electing a third of the councillors each year it allows continuity of function with two thirds of councillors having experience at all times.
13016656946	Because it reflects changing opinion. An (almost) annual election means that the councillors has to continue to consider what the public want, rather than only having to do so once every four years and then forget about it. Also what is the point of having up to three councillors all elected at the same time for the same ward who will most probably all be from the same party? Annual elections means a council that has to listen.
13016650130	Elections by thirds, while administratively more costly, give residents a greater say in local democracy and increase the accountability of elected officials. All out elections can encourage apathy and increase the risk of residents voting for candidates of the same party out of fatigue and not reading all the individual literature produced by candidates during a campaign.
13016592318	Both systems have their merits. The 'thirds' system may be more complicated and expensive, but allows fresh thinking more often into the mix, and the more experienced councillors to help integrate new members into the system. The 'all out' system is easier to understand and may be less expensive, but hopefully allows some stability and experience to develop. However, thinking could become stale and problems arise if there are disparate views within groups which could escalate over this extended period of time, making them less effective.
13016545117	The opportunity for 'fresh blood' to keep energy and impetus going, and avoid stagnation. To make the council more representative over a 4 year cycle and less susceptible to spikes in electoral opinion. To reduce the impact of the boundary change review which I do not agree with.
13016539247	Electing a third each time means we retain a degree of continuity and experience which is important, rather than having a whole new batch of councillors starting from scratch, as could be the case in the event of a sizeable swing in the vote.
13046959961	I feel that this method provides a good barometer for parties to judge national performance. The 1/3 model means that, instead of voters voting en masse for one party at a national election, they tend to vote more locally as the focus is on the representative wanting to be a councillor. Aligning to the national polls means that you might end up

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response : Elect by thirds
	disproportionately having councillors aligned to the national party instead of the local interest, which can impact things when you need proper local representatives.
13042186787	Overall balance of the Council is less likely to be driven by national politics and therefore reflect local opinion without being driven by short term national issues.
13041375155	By electing on the 'thirds' principle - * the democratic process is kept more active * public awareness of the District Council is therefore enhanced and accountability increased *by 'thirds' the overall council will reflect shifts in opinion more accurately and easily ie an 'all out' pattern reflects opinion only once every four years * the 'thirds' principle better preserves member experience ie not all Committee Heads etc will be starting from scratch as they would after an 'all out' change * when rearranging ward boundaries the 'historic integrity' of Hitchin must be recognised ie any changes should be within the envelop of the town as defined by the former HUDC boundary/its non-parished definition * Given Hitchin's above average urban population increase since 2000 consideration should be given to awarding the town extra councillors preferably by reducing representation elsewhere to contain the size of the Full Council overall.
13038475104	Maintain some consistency with work being undertaken by the Council. All change every 4 years would lead to issues as experienced by US Legislature, every time the President changes
13037696563	It helps with the feeling of continuity in the NHDC, as there is consistently someone around who has already been there for 2+ years, rather than everything changing every 4 years. It also allows smaller and more subtle NHDC changes as we go rather than being stuck with what we chose up to 3 years ago
13035066904	I think it could be more disruptive to Council working to have potentially so many new cllrs every 4 years. It could also be more susceptible to single issue campaigns which might become less relevant in a year or two.
13108610026	Electing Councillors in 3rds is more democratic & allows us to hold our council to account on a yearly basis. It would be bad for the district to give any party or administration a 4 year blank slate without the opportunity to make our voice heard.
13108576127	I feel that the current system works well.
13107222368	I fear that changing everyone in one go means time will be lost training people up, and may leave a lack of "knowledge transfer"
13107077766	By staggering elections, it provides continuity. Councillors who have started a project but are not re-elected or don't stand can have more confidence that their work will continue. If it's only every 4 years, there is likely to be a significant learning curve for new councillors. There is then the potential for actions to fall through the cracks. I only discovered this survey late in the process when a friend stumbled across it. It also makes the assumption that everyone is happy/able to complete it on-line.
13106957952	Easier to react to change and implement incremental improvements with changing a third of the council each year.
13103481702	Don't want all councillors from the same party. Proportional Representation would be best, but 'thirds' is better than all at once.
13103044904	whats wrong with the current system ? its good that we have a system with a constant to see through longer term projects,
13099778340	I believe that by changing more frequently with those up for elections people are held to account better
13098179519	To provide continuity. To allow council members, especially leaders, to utilise their experience to support each other.

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response : Elect by thirds
13097318868	Provides more incremental, but more frequent and probably more consistent, responsiveness to changes in public opinion. The alternative would weaken the accountability of the council and distance it from the public.
13097222841	Generally, it is a good way of ensuring that councillors properly pay regard to the views of residents.
13094439298	More continuity, and councillors are better-placed for long-term planning.
13092788388	Electing Councillors 'by thirds', in my opinion, provides for more consistency within the council and less opportunity for 'knee jerk' reactions to a specific event. Meaning that we might be stuck with a council for 4 years having been elected for one specific issue which was current 4 years ago. I believe it would also provide for a more 'current' mix of opinion within the council.
13088713562	four yearly elections could easily distance the electorate from their representatives. Also by thirds allows for a poll of opinion that actually can change the balance of power rather than being stuck for four years.
13080780263	I think that the 'thirds' option makes for continuity -i.e. a newly elected councillor can pick up the gist of where current consultations have got to. They can learn how 'things are done'.
13080747313	No information has been provided as to the benefits of one system over the other. IF a system of Proportional Representation were to be introduced with the 'all out' approach, then that would be an improvement.
13078592881	Electing all of the councillors in one go gives an advantage to political parties who would out spend smaller parties and independents. The parties already choose candidates and the electorate need time to test, question and hold them to account. Saving money is not the best reason. NHDC should explain how this improves democracy.
13077723876	If it's not broken don't fix it! This seems to have worked well and tends to keep some continuity and cuts out the possibility of a whole new group of people trying to learn the job.
13073626894	No need to alter the current arrangements.
13070566016	Political parties will be voted for on their current performance. They will therefore have to continually act in the best interests for the community. Rather than "just before" elections every 4th year. It should also provide more continuity for the effective operation of the council.
13065012581	It maintains a dynamic council and potential engagement by the community who get to signal their views more often in an impactful way. The alternative may foster the embedding of ways of working over the 4 years that is detrimental to the community. Although potentially saving money in theory, in practice this may well not materialise or may not bring benefits to the community.
13062784700	Stops short term trends in political party politice affecting the whole council
13062284728	At least this way some knowledge and experience would remain on the council instead of potentially new people coming in who do not know what is going on - there is no need to change all the ward boundaries (or the NHDC logo)
13058413350	I think this is far more likely to promote good practice, with a roll over of expertise. It is therefore likely to be better long term financially. It gives more chances to vote, very properly, and so is therefore adding to the strength of local democracy. Nothing is more vital.
13058284397	Allows for some continuity whilst also refreshing/adapting to public opinion more regularly.

Respondent ID	Open-Ended Response : Elect by thirds
13056661871	With the whole council model there is no chance of the balance of the council being changed for 4 years, which could lead to complacency or worse.
13055432614	To help with continuity of governance
13054931751	Keeps the council motivated to serve constantly who they represent and not sit back and ignore the electorate for 3 years and then suddenly start working.
13050549956	I consider the current system to be very satisfactory. Therefore I cannot see any reason to change
13050543784	If the elected councillors proves to be poor, we are stuck with them for four years. By changing councillors the poor ones will be ineffective