

**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:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. change the electoral cycle to all-out elections; or</li><li>2. endorse the retention of the current electoral cycle of elections by thirds.</li></ol> |
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### **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 law<sup>1</sup> 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'.<sup>2</sup>*

- 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:

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<sup>1</sup> Section 2, Schedule 2 Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009

<sup>2</sup> [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
<b>Council Size</b>	Total number of Councillors must be a multiple of <b>3</b> .	Total number of Councillors not restricted.
<b>Maximum size</b>	No maximum, although the submission must justify the number of Councillors the authority says are required.	
<b>Optimum Council size</b>	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
<b>Councillors per ward</b>	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.

<b>Current wards</b>	All wards will cease to exist and be replaced with new wards.
<b>New wards</b>	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.

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Retaining elections by thirds</b>	<b>Moving to all-out elections</b>
<b>Elections in 2022</b>	Will be the scheduled elections by thirds as the LGBCE review will not be complete.	
<b>Elections in 2023</b>	Will be the scheduled elections by thirds as the LGBCE review will not be complete.	
<b>Elections in 2024</b>	<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>
<b>Elections in 2025</b>	No District Council elections scheduled – County Council elections.	No District Council elections scheduled – County Council elections.
<b>Elections in 2026</b>	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.
<b>Elections in 2027</b>	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.
<b>Elections in 2028</b>	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.
<b>By-elections or any other non-scheduled elections</b>	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
<b>Parish elections</b>	Remain as now – no changes.	Remain as now – no changes.
<b>Options</b>	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*<sup>3</sup>. 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.



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
<b>Reasons given</b>	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 2021<sup>4</sup>, 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.

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<sup>4</sup> <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>