

Proposed by Cllr Ciarán Reed, seconded by Cllr Oliver Cooper

This Council believes in the democratic right of residents to change the administration of the council at the ballot box.

However, the current electoral system for Three Rivers District Council embeds the status quo and reduces the value of residents votes when there are elections. A majority of wards could elect a councillor from a new party – resoundingly rejecting the administration – and yet the administration could be unchanged due to the thirds election system.

For these reasons, the Electoral Commission has told other authorities that moving to all out elections provides ‘stronger local democracy’, ‘greater clarity’ to the electorate and can encourage ‘greater understanding’ of elections.¹

The Government issued Best Practice statutory guidance in May urging councils to adopt all-out elections, saying: “All-out as opposed to multiple elections within the four-year cycle can enhance political stability and reduce ongoing campaigning that can hinder improvement.”²

Furthermore, this council recognises that the current thirds electoral system does allow for wards to reflect communities. With very different-sized settlements and parishes, the Electoral Commission’s preference to three-member wards in councils elected by thirds means that communities that are too small for three councillors are bundled with other communities in often illogical wards. This has a knock-on effect. To solve the problem of placing communities too small for three members into three member wards is splitting communities in larger settlements along illogical lines so that it is not reflective of their boundaries either.

Beyond the electoral issues and wards not reflecting communities, there is also the inevitable extra cost of holding more elections, with the cost of district council elections doubling in the last year. The council could therefore save money by holding elections every four years rather than every three in four years.

For all these reasons, this council therefore resolves to start the process to move from all-out elections from elections by thirds and instructs officers to begin the work on this.

¹ Electoral Commission: “[The Cycle of Local Government in England](#)”

² Ministry of Housing, Communities, & Local Government: “[Best value standards and intervention: a statutory guide for best value authorities](#)”