EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Members are asked to review and determine the Borough Electoral Cycle, having regard to the recent public consultation on the option of changing the Council’s electoral cycle from elections by thirds to whole Council elections. In considering the matter, the Council may, by special resolution of a Meeting of the Council and by two-thirds of the Members voting on it, resolve to move from the current scheme of elections by thirds, to whole Council elections.

RECOMMENDATION: THAT

THE COUNCIL DETERMINE, HAVING CONSULTED INTERESTED PERSONS, WHETHER TO MOVE TO AN ELECTORAL CYCLE OF WHOLE COUNCIL ELECTIONS EVERY FOUR YEARS, WITH THE EARLIEST EFFECTIVE DATE BEING MAY 2016.

REPORT:

1. Background

At the Meeting of the Council held on 10 April 2013, Members considered whether to review the current Electoral Cycle with a view to undertaking consultation on the option of changing the Council’s electoral cycle from elections by thirds to whole Council elections. It was highlighted that following consultation and consideration of the results, the Council may, by special resolution of a Meeting of the Council and by two-thirds of the Members voting on it, resolve to move from the current scheme of elections by thirds, to whole Council elections. At that time, the Council agreed to retain the status quo.

The full report submitted to that Meeting of the Council is reproduced at Appendix A to this report for ease of reference. Paragraph 6 of that report sets out the implications in respect of Electoral Review. A separate report on the Electoral Review was submitted to
the same Council Meeting where it was agreed that the Council’s request for an electoral review to be undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), be confirmed, in order to consider reducing the number of Members of the Council.

As Members will be aware, the LGBCE have since confirmed that the Council has been included in the 2014/15 Electoral Review programme.

As the early stages of the Electoral Review have progressed and specifically following the LGBCE’s presentation to all Members at the Civic Centre on 1 September 2014 to outline the Commission’s Review process, a number of Members considered it timely for the Council to again look at the Council’s Electoral Cycle.

It is pertinent to highlight that in authorities that have elections by thirds and following recent changes to legislation, the LGBCE is required to start Electoral Reviews of authorities with a presumption in favour of delivering a uniform pattern of three Member wards. Any departure from such a pattern would need to be justified on a ward by ward basis, having regard to statutory criteria. As the Council currently has six two-Member wards, an alternative option should the Council wish to retain a mixed pattern of wards, would be to move to a cycle of whole council elections.

Sir Tony Redmond, the Lead Commissioner for the Elmbridge Electoral Review, confirmed to Members at the presentation that the LGBCE will start with a presumption of three-Member wards based on the Council’s current Electoral Cycle of elections by thirds.

At the Meeting of the Council held on 1 October 2014, Members further considered the matter. The Council agreed to undertake a public consultation exercise regarding whether the Council move from the current electoral cycle by thirds, to full Borough Council Elections every four years, which would enable greater flexibility of Ward configuration for the future.

The report submitted to the Meeting of the Council on 1 October 2014 is also attached at Appendix ‘A’ for the sake of completeness. The two Council reports attached at Appendix ‘A’ contain all the previously documented considerations as to any change of Electoral cycle, together with financial implications etc.

2. Public Consultation Exercise

In accordance with the decision of the Council at its Meeting held on 1 October to undertake a public consultation exercise, the wording of the consultation material was agreed in consultation with Group Leaders. The public consultation ran from 7 October to 2 November 2014.

Residents of the Borough were encouraged to respond to the consultation via:

- The Council’s website together with front page headline advert banner;
- Council’s Face Book Page and Twitter accounts;
- Leaflets available at the Civic Centre, Centres and Libraries across the Borough;
- Council Noticeboards across the Borough;
- via the resident's panel group; and
- through Councillors encouraging their ward residents; and
- through the local media.

In addition, consultation was undertaken directly with the following:

- Members of Parliament;
- Surrey County Council;
- Runnymede Borough Council;
- Members of the Council;
- Claygate Parish Council;
- Local political parties.

The leaflet used in the consultation, as referred to above, is attached at Appendix 'B'.

3. Results of the Public Consultation Exercise

A total of 601 responses to the public consultation were received either by way of website or returned leaflet.

308 supported (A) retaining the existing system of Borough Elections by thirds; and
282 supported (B) change to whole council elections once every four years.
11 responses had not indicated a preference.

The literal comments received to the public consultation are attached at Appendix 'C'.

In addition, a letter and two e-mails via the Council’s ‘contact us’ facility were received in response to the consultation and are attached (with personal details redacted) at Appendix ‘D’.

Out of the 601 responses received either by way of website or returned leaflet, the following breakdown was received:

509 via the website; and
92 by returned leaflet.

4. Decision-Making Process

This is a specially convened Council Meeting called pursuant to Section 33(3) Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The meeting follows consultation with interested persons, in accordance with Section 33(2). The Council may only resolve to move to 'Whole Council' elections if there is a two-thirds majority of Members voting on it. For the purposes of calculating a two-thirds majority, the total votes cast will be the sum of votes for and against a proposal to move to 'Whole Council' elections. An abstention is to abstain from voting and is not a vote on the resolution for the purposes of the calculation.
Financial implications:
As referred to in the report and detailed in Appendix ‘A’.

Environmental/Sustainability Implications:
None for the purpose of this report.

Legal implications:
To comply with the requirements of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, as amended in Schedule 2 of the Localism Act 2011.

The legal process to effect change to the electoral cycle (including consultation and special resolution) is set out in this and the earlier reports attached at Appendix ‘A’.

Equality Implications:
The Returning Officer has responsibility to run fair, open, effective and transparent Elections.

Risk Implications:
Risks associated with the running of elections are captured in the Risk Register regularly submitted to the Electoral Commission and are referred to in the report.

Community Safety Implications:
None for the purpose of this report.

Principal Consultees:
Chief Executive and Returning Officer and Head of Legal Services.

Background papers:
None

Enclosures/Appendices:
Appendix A – Previous Council reports on Review of Borough Electoral Cycle;
Appendix B – Consultation Leaflet;
Appendix C – List of literal comments received in response to consultation;
Appendix D – Letters / Contact Us replies received in response to consultation;
Appendix E – Consultation responses by Ward and Polling District.

Contact details:
Head of Executive and Member Services – 01372 474174
Appendix ‘A’

Committee: COUNCIL
Date of meeting: 1 October 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject:</th>
<th>Review of Borough Electoral Cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lead Officer:</td>
<td>Chief Executive and Head of Executive &amp; Member Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portfolio Holder:</td>
<td>Leader – Councillor John O’Reilly</td>
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<td>Link to Council Priorities:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exempt information:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
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<td>Delegated status:</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Members are asked to re-consider whether to review the current Electoral Cycle with a view to undertaking public consultation on the option of changing the Council’s electoral cycle from elections by thirds to whole Council elections. In the event of such consultation and consideration of the results, the Council may, by special resolution of a Meeting of the Council and by two-thirds of the Members voting on it, resolve to move from the current scheme of elections by thirds, to whole Council elections.

RECOMMENDATION: THAT

(A) IN VIEW OF CONSIDERATION OF THE COUNCIL’S FUTURE WARD CONFIGURATIONS, MEMBERS DETERMINE WHETHER TO UNDERTAKE A PUBLIC CONSULTATION EXERCISE REGARDING THE COUNCIL BEING MINDED TO MOVE FROM THE CURRENT ELECTORAL CYCLE BY THIRDS TO FULL BOROUGH COUNCIL ELECTIONS EVERY FOUR YEARS; AND

(B) SUBJECT TO (A) ABOVE, THE PRE-NOTIFIED SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL BE HELD ON MONDAY 17 NOVEMBER AT 7.15 P.M. TO CONSIDER THE RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION AND FORMALLY DETERMINE THE COUNCIL’S ELECTORAL CYCLE.

REPORT:

1. Electoral Review Implications

At the Meeting of the Council held on 10 April 2013, Members considered whether to review the current Electoral Cycle with a view to undertaking consultation on the option of changing the Council’s electoral cycle from elections by thirds to whole Council elections. It was highlighted that following consultation and consideration of the results, the Council may, by special
resolution of a Meeting of the Council and by two-thirds of the Members voting on it, resolve to move from the current scheme of elections by thirds, to whole Council elections. At that time, the Council agreed to retain the status quo.

The full report submitted to that Meeting of the Council is reproduced at Appendix 1 to this report for ease of reference. Paragraph 6 of that report set out the implications of any Electoral Review. A separate report on the Electoral Review was submitted to the same Council Meeting where it was agreed that the Council’s request for an electoral review to be undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), be confirmed, in order to consider reducing the number of Members of the Council.

As Members will be aware, the LGBCE have since confirmed that the Council has been included in the 2014/15 Electoral Review programme.

As the early stages of the Electoral Review have progressed and specifically following the LGBCE’s presentation to all Members at the Civic Centre on 1 September 2014 to outline the Commission’s Review process, a number of Members considered it timely for the Council to again look at the Council’s Electoral Cycle.

It is pertinent to highlight that in authorities that have elections by thirds and following recent changes to legislation, the LGBCE is required to start Electoral Reviews of authorities with a presumption in favour of delivering a uniform pattern of three Member wards. Any departure from such a pattern would need to be justified on a ward by ward basis, having regard to statutory criteria. As the Council currently has six two-Member wards, an alternative option should the Council wish to retain a mixed pattern of wards, would be to move to a cycle of whole council elections.

Sir Tony Redmond, the Lead Commissioner for the Elmbridge Electoral Review, confirmed to Members at the presentation that the LGBCE will start with a presumption of three-Member wards based on the Council’s current Electoral Cycle of elections by thirds.

The Review can proceed on the basis of current arrangements, or alternatively, Members may prefer to give further consideration to the matter of potentially moving to whole council elections every four years, which would enable greater flexibility of Ward configuration for the future.

2. Financial Implications

The previous report to Council, reproduced at Appendix 1 to this report, sets out in detail at paragraph 3, the financial implications and cost savings of moving from the current Electoral cycle by thirds to full council elections.

The following table provides an indicative summary of costs, taking account of any contributions from external parties. It should also be noted that the
occurrence of Borough By-Elections would be greater in a cycle of full Council Elections.

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<td><strong>County</strong></td>
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<td><strong>By Thirds Elections</strong></td>
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<td>£115,000</td>
<td>£95,000</td>
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<td>£594,000</td>
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</table>

Taking into account the opportunity to share fixed costs in combined elections, the table shows that over a 6 year period all out elections will cost Elmbridge Borough Council approximately £345,000 (an average of £58,000 p.a.) while elections by thirds will cost approximately £594,000 (an average of £99,000 p.a.). This gives an average annual difference of £42,000 p.a. If the table is extrapolated over a ten year period the difference rises to £50,000 p.a.

3. **Public consultation**

Should Members be minded to undertake a public consultation exercise, the consultation would take place during the month of October through the Council’s website and other interested parties such as Surrey County Council and Claygate Parish Council would be advised. A Special Meeting of the Council would be held on Monday 17 November 2014 at 7.15pm in the Council Chamber, to receive the results of any public consultation and to formally determine any change to the Council’s electoral arrangements. This
would enable any resultant decision to be included into the Electoral Review timetable.

**Financial implications:**
As set out in the body of the report.

**Environmental/Sustainability Implications:**
None for the purpose of this report.

**Legal implications:**
To comply with the requirements of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, as amended in Schedule 2 of the Localism Act 2011.

The legal process to effect change to the electoral cycle (including consultation and special resolution) is set out in this and the earlier report.

**Equality Implications:**
The Returning Officer has responsibility to run fair, open, effective and transparent Elections.

**Risk Implications:**
Risks associated with the running of elections are captured in the Risk Register regularly submitted to the Electoral Commission and are referred to in the report.

**Community Safety Implications:**
None for the purpose of this report.

**Principal Consultees:**
Chief Executive and Returning Officer and Head of Legal Services.

**Background papers:**
None

**Enclosures/Appendices:**
Review of Borough Electoral Cycle – Council Report, 10 April 2013

**Contact details:**
Head of Executive and Member Services – 01372 474174
Committee:         COUNCIL
Date of meeting:  10 April 2013

Subject:          Review of Borough Electoral Cycle
Lead Officer:     Chief Executive and Head of Executive & Member Services
Portfolio Holder: Leader – Councillor John O’Reilly
Link to Council Priorities:  All
Exempt information: None
Delegated status:  For Resolution

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Members are asked to consider whether to review the current Electoral Cycle with a view to undertaking consultation on the option of changing the Council’s electoral cycle from elections by thirds to whole Council elections. Following consultation, the Council may, by special resolution of a Meeting of the Council and by two-thirds of the Members voting on it, resolve to move from the current scheme of elections by thirds, to whole Council elections.

RECOMMENDED: THAT

(A) THE COUNCIL CONSIDER WHETHER IT IS MINDED TO MOVE TO WHOLE BOROUGH COUNCIL ELECTIONS ONCE EVERY FOUR YEARS AND IF SO, THAT THE RELEVANT CONSULTATION BE UNDERTAKEN, WITH A REPORT BACK TO AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL; AND

(B) ANY MOVE TO WHOLE BOROUGH COUNCIL ELECTIONS BE IMPLEMENTED TO EITHER COINCIDE WITH THE SAME YEAR AS ANY ELECTORAL REVIEW OUTCOMES OR, IN THE ABSENCE OF SUCH A REVIEW, AT A DATE TO BE DETERMINED FOLLOWING THE CONSULTATION.

REPORT:

1. Legislative Context

Elmbridge Borough Council has operated under a system of elections by thirds since its formation in the Municipal Year 1973/74. Currently, each Member serves a term of four years, producing a four yearly cycle of elections, allowing for Borough Council elections to be held in three out of four years and Surrey County Council elections to be held every fourth year. Ward boundary changes took place for the 2000 Borough Elections, leading to the whole Council being elected that year but no full Council Elections have been held since that time.
A move to whole council elections would mean that Borough Council elections would be held once every four years, rather than in three out of every four years.

Legislation introduced by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enables the Council to resolve to change its electoral cycle. Prior to this, the process of changing the electoral cycle involved seeking approval from the Secretary of State. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (s.33(5)(b)) gave Councils the opportunity to decide this issue themselves, subject to certain restrictions as to the years the whole Council Elections could be held in. However, the Localism Act 2011 has now amended the provisions of the 2007 Act so that Councils have the opportunity to determine their electoral cycle and when the whole Council elections would first be held.

If a Council wishes to move from thirds to whole Council elections, it must:

- Consult such persons as it thinks appropriate on the proposed change;
- Convene a special meeting of the Council;
- Pass a Council resolution to change by a two thirds majority of those voting;
- Publish an explanatory document on the decision and make this available for public inspection; and
- Give notice to the Electoral Commission.

2. Parish Councils

A move to 4 yearly elections will affect any parish councils, which within Elmbridge, specifically applies to Claygate Parish Council. The Parish Council would be consulted as part of the consultation process.

At present parish councils elect every 4 years and elections are generally combined with the Borough Election in that year. The next scheduled Claygate Parish Council Election will be held in 2015.

If the Council resolve to move to whole council elections every four years, any parishes with elections that fall in the years in the cycle when there will no longer be Borough elections would have to meet the whole of the cost of their individual elections in the same way they would at a by-election.

The 2007 Act enables the Council to make an Order to alter the years of the ordinary election of parishes so that they can coincide with a move by a Council to elections by whole Council. The Order can make transitional provision for the retirement of parish councillors at different times than would otherwise apply during that transitional period.

3. Financial Savings

A move to whole Council elections would lead to a financial saving for the Council in the three years where there was no Borough election. As there is no Borough
election in 2013/14, there is currently only budgetary provision for two by-elections and therefore the budget strategy for 2014/15 includes budgetary provision for a one third Borough election. Should the Council move to whole Council elections the budget provision required would be £178,000 every 4 years, rather than an annual cost in 3 out of 4 years of £151,000. As currently, where the Borough Elections coincide with other elections, any fixed costs incurred would be reduced by the level of contributions from external parties such as Central Government and the County Council.

A move to whole Council elections would also better utilise current resources to deal with the increase in the number of other elections e.g. Police & Crime Commissioner Elections, by phasing peak periods. In addition to the undertaking of elections, the three permanent FTE election staff would be required as currently established to carry out electoral registration, particularly Individual Electoral Registration which is to be introduced in 2014 and will impact heavily on the electoral registration function.

By-Elections are more likely to occur under a 4 year system because vacancies would need to be filled at the time they occur, rather than where for example a resignation is generally dealt with in the more frequent May Borough Elections, as currently. There are of course occasions when By-elections are held at other times of the year, depending on when the vacancy occurs. The estimated cost for a stand alone By-election is £10,000. An annual budgetary provision should be provided to allow for two By-Elections. In the year of whole Borough Elections, it would only be necessary to provide for one By-election.

Over a four year period, the cost of running the Borough elections would, excluding any contributions from external parties, reduce from £473,000 for three annual one third elections to £248,000 for one annual whole Borough election (taking account of budgetary provision for By-elections), producing an estimated saving over the three year period of up to £225,000.

4. The Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission undertook a review of electoral cycles in 2003 with the report entitled “The cycle of local government elections in England”.

The Electoral Commission, having taken into account the evidence and arguments presented during the consultation process, concluded that a pattern of whole council elections for all local authorities in England would provide a clear, equitable and easy to understand electoral process that would best serve the interests of local government electors. The Electoral Commission therefore recommends that each local authority in England should hold whole council elections, with all councillors elected simultaneously, once every four years. However, this is currently a matter for local choice.
5. Election Cycles Across Surrey

At present, there are a variety of election cycles throughout the County and the summary position is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>District or Borough</th>
<th>How elected</th>
<th>Parishes</th>
<th>No. of Parishes</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Thirds</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Epsom &amp; Ewell Borough</td>
<td>All out</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guildford Borough</td>
<td>All out</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23 plus one parish meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mole Valley District</td>
<td>Thirds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Reigate and Banstead Borough</td>
<td>Thirds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Runnymede Borough</td>
<td>Thirds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spelthorne Borough</td>
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6. Implications for any Electoral Review

Elsewhere on this Council agenda is a report for consideration regarding an Electoral Review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), specifically reviewing the number of Borough Councillors. The Minister for Local Government, Brandon Lewis, has agreed an approach with the LGBCE for shortening the timetable for implementing electoral reviews whereby any changes resulting from an electoral review can be implemented on the first practicable local election day (i.e. the first Thursday in May) following the Commission completing their review and their making the necessary Order, irrespective of when the Council would normally hold elections. To achieve this, the Secretary of State intends, as necessary, to use his powers under the Local Government Act 2000 to bring forward by Order the year in which a Council holds its elections. Once any review is undertaken, the Commission will liaise closely with the Council and with the Department about the timetable for implementation.

It is important to highlight that in authorities that have elections by thirds, following recent changes to legislation, the LGBCE is required to start Electoral Reviews of authorities with a presumption in favour of delivering a uniform pattern of three member wards. Any departure from such a pattern would need to be justified on a ward by ward basis, having regard to statutory criteria. An alternative option should the Council wish to retain a mixed pattern of wards, would be to move to a cycle of whole council elections.
7. Programme of Forthcoming Elections

The current election cycle is as follows:

European parliamentary – every 5 years
UK Parliamentary General – every 5 years (legislation passed in 2011 for 5 year fixed term Parliaments)
Police & Crime Commissioner – every 4 years
Surrey County Council – every 4 years
Elmbridge Borough – every 3 out of 4 years
Claygate Parish – every 4 years.

In addition, the Localism Act allows for local referenda to be held and there is always the possibility of a Government referendum, as was the case in 2011.

In terms of calendar years, the current cycle is as follows:

2013 – Surrey County Council Elections
       Borough By-Election for the Claygate Ward
2014 – European Parliamentary Elections
       Borough Elections
2015 – UK Parliamentary General Election
       Borough Elections
       Claygate Parish Council Elections
2016 – Borough Elections
       Police & Crime Commissioner Election

A move to full Council Elections could be undertaken at any time. Should the Council wish to undertake an Electoral Review, it would be appropriate to coincide commencement of full Borough Elections with the implementation of Electoral Review outcomes, where a full Borough election would be required. In terms of complexity, practicalities and managing risk as well as resources, it would be preferable to programme an initial full Borough election on a year without a Parliamentary General Election and specifically the implementation of Individual Electoral Registration.

8. Advantages of Elections by thirds and whole Council Elections

Arguably, primary advantages for Borough Elections by thirds include the following:

- Encourages electorate into the habit of voting in May every year.
- A Council is judged on its performance annually, rather than every 4 years.
- The electorate can react more quickly to local circumstances and Council decisions.
- The Council better reflects public opinion locally.
• There are more frequent opportunities for potential candidates to stand.
• Less likely for local situation to be influenced by national situation politically (i.e. whole Council election can be heavily influenced by low point in party fortunes nationally).
• Creates greater Member continuity, as a possible lack of continuity could occur if a large number of new, inexperienced Councillors were elected in any single year.
• 18 year olds do not have to wait so long before they can vote.

Arguably, primary advantages for Borough Elections by whole Borough Elections include the following:

• A Council has a clear mandate from the electorate for 4 years.
• An elector can vote for the whole Council, as well as a Councillor.
• Creates greater stability over the 4 year period with little chance, subject to by-elections, of a change in political control.
• Improves the strategic political management by enabling longer term planning as Elections by thirds encourages shorter term focus and planning.
• Increased continuity and certainty enabling stronger leadership as a result of four year terms.
• Avoids situation where political control of Council can change in election by thirds when some electors in two member wards have no opportunity to vote.
• Evidence suggests (according to Electoral Commission) that there is slightly higher turnout in whole Council elections.
• Evidence suggests (according to Electoral Commission) that the electorate associates more clearly with whole Council elections.
• Reduced expenditure for the Council because of fewer Borough elections.
• Reduced expenditure by political parties because of fewer elections.
• Given the increased type of elections eg Police and Crime Commissioner Elections and statutory referenda together with the resultant increased frequency and complexity of combined elections, all out Borough elections would allow for better phasing and efficient use of resources.
• Less campaigning needed by parties.

9. Summary and Next Steps

The recent legislative changes encourage local authorities to move towards whole council elections. If the Council is minded to move to whole council elections, there would need to be a consultation process undertaken, specifically the taking of ‘reasonable steps to consult such persons as (the Council) thinks appropriate on the proposed change’ (s.33(2) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, as amended in Schedule 2 of the Localism Act 2011. Whilst consultation is prescribed, the Council maintains discretion as to consultees. A light touch consultation is permissible, provided it is fair and explanatory of proposals.
Consultation on such a proposal could be undertaken with the public by way of the Council’s website and directly with the following:

- Members of Parliament;
- Surrey County Council;
- All Members of the Council;
- Claygate Parish Council;
- Other Council partners and stakeholders;
- Local political parties; and
- any other parties expressing an interest.

Following the consultation, an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council would need to be scheduled during the autumn, to consider the results of the consultation and determine whether the Council supports a resolution for the introduction of whole council elections in Elmbridge, possibly with effect from 2016. Should whole council elections be implemented with effect from May 2016, the Council would be tied to that electoral cycle of having whole council elections every four years thereafter. There is a requirement that two-thirds of the Members voting on the resolution at the Council Meeting must vote in favour for any such resolution to be approved.

Any decision on the part of the Council would in practice require the electoral arrangements of the Parish Council to change to bring their individual years of election into line with that of the Borough. Depending upon the transitional arrangements that the Council included in the Order, this could mean either a shorter or longer period of office for the councillors affected. Similarly for some elected Borough Councillors, their term of Office would not be the full four term during the transition period.

If, at the Extraordinary Council Meeting referred to above, Members decide in favour of moving to whole council elections, the following would apply:

- Election of all Councillors will be held every four years;
- On the fourth day after the Borough elections, newly elected councillors would come into office and sitting councillors would retire, as is the case currently;
- If such a resolution is passed, the Council must produce an explanatory document setting out the details of the new scheme and make it available for inspection (s.35(1)-(3)) - and generally publicise the new arrangements.

**Financial implications:**

Estimated savings of up to £225,000 over a three year period (£75,000 per annum) could be achieved by changing the electoral cycle from elections by thirds to whole Council elections, as detailed in the report. Where combined elections take place, the core costs are shared with other bodies and therefore the identified saving to Elmbridge Borough Council would be less.
Environmental/Sustainability implications:
None for the purpose of this report.

Legal implications:
Many of the legal implications are referred to in the report. The Council's power to change its electoral cycle is set out in Sections 31 to 36 and 53 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, as amended in Schedule 2 of the Localism Act 2011.

Equality Implications:
The Returning Officer has responsibility to run fair, open, effective and transparent Elections.

Risk Implications:
Risks associated with the running of elections are captured in the Risk Register regularly submitted to the Electoral Commission and are referred to in the report.

Community Safety Implications:
None for the purpose of this report.

Principal Consultees:
Corporate Management Board and Head of Legal Services.

Background papers:
None.

Enclosures/Appendices:
None.

Contact details
Head of Executive and Member Services – 01372 474174
We are interested in your views on whether we should change to ‘whole council elections’ every four years starting in May 2016 or retain the existing system of ‘elections by thirds’. A Special Meeting of the Full Council will be held on 17 November 2014 to consider the issue further and the results of this consultation exercise will form part of these discussions.

Please have your say by placing a tick (☑) in the appropriate box to indicate your preferred option:

Question: Please indicate whether you think Elmbridge Borough Council should

(A) retain the existing system of Borough Elections by thirds, with Borough Elections every three out of four years whereby a third of Councillors stand for election/re-election;

OR

(B) change to ‘whole council’ elections once every four years, starting in May 2016, where all seats on the Council will be elected at the same time.

If you have any comments or reasons for your choice please let us know:

Please complete your postcode:

You can respond to this survey online at www.elmbridge.gov.uk Alternatively please drop in or send this hard copy response to:
Elmbridge Borough Council
Civic Centre, High Street
Esher, Surrey KT10 9SD
We want your views on how often you vote to elect Borough Councillors

Elmbridge Borough Council is consulting on how often residents should vote to elect our councillors.

This consultation will close on Sunday, 2 November 2014 so we welcome your views before then. You can do this online via the Council’s website (elmbridge.gov.uk) or by completing and returning this leaflet to the Council at the Civic Centre, High Street, Esher, Surrey KT10 9SD.

The Council currently has 60 councillors who represent 22 wards across the Borough (population 131,500). Each ward is represented by either two or three councillors and each councillor is elected for a four-year term of office.

Currently, every three out of four years a third of councillors stand for election/re-election, this is called ‘elections by thirds’.

Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the Borough Council has the power to change its electoral arrangements to ‘whole council elections’ which would mean all seats on the Council would be elected at the same time once every four years.

An Electoral Review of Elmbridge Borough Council is currently being undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in order to consider reducing the number of councillors.

In authorities that have elections by thirds, the Commission is required to start reviews with a presumption of delivering a uniform pattern of three Councillor Wards.

The Council is considering a possible move to whole council elections to enable changes in Ward configuration and a reduction in the number of Councillors. If approved, the earliest date to hold whole council elections would be May 2016.

Advantages of the current system of electing by thirds include:

• More opportunity for electors to vote and participate in local democracy;
• Over 18 year olds and incoming residents have the opportunity to vote within 12 months, instead of 4 years;
• More opportunities for people to stand for election;
• Fewer candidates required for nominations, thereby reducing the chance of non-contested seats;
• A potentially greater mix of new and experienced councillors;
• Greater consistency of councillors by reducing the potential for large scale change at the same time;
• Political make-up of the Council is potentially more reflective of the changing views of the electorate;
• Greater accountability as Councillors are required to engage and defend decisions on a more regular basis.

Moving to all out elections could provide the following benefits:

• Wards of different sizes namely 3, 2 (or even single member Wards) could be maintained, which might better reflect the diversity of communities that make up the Borough;
• Greater political stability and ability to take a longer term view of policy implementation and decision making;
• Financial savings in the cost of administering elections;
• Reduction on time spent each year on election related activities such as canvassing in order to avoid interruption to Council business;
• Improved corporate and strategic planning over a four year period;
• Greater likelihood of contested elections and reduced likelihood of voter fatigue;
• Less confusion resulting from combinations of elections for different organisations e.g. Parliamentary; European Parliament; County Council and Borough Council.
Review of Borough Electoral Cycle – Public Consultation

Literal comments received to the public consultation on the option of changing the Council’s electoral cycle from elections by thirds to whole Council elections:

- If a four-year cycle is introduced, the Council will be unaccountable for that period and be able to bulldoze through even more unacceptable planning applications. Voters need to be heard and listened to every year.

- Get rid of all the unwanted immediately, so to start with sufficient new people to instantly control E.B.C. employees; plus it is the system for general elections (and EU elections).

- Current arrangement - It is more democratic.

- Councillors could more easily be replaced if not satisfactory, rather than waiting 4 years.

- Leave it as it is. A very expensive project. Will affect Long Ditton and other villages as may lose their identity. Boundaries changing will affect school places. Good to have elections as they stand now, as transient community. Have a wonderful service from our present councillors. Don't change it.

- DON'T WANT TO LOOSE VILLAGE I.D. WITH BOUNDARY CHANGES - TRANSCENT COMMUNITY - WORKS WELL

- BRING EVERYTHING IN LINE - BIT OUT OF DATE

- To save the council money and allow the resource released to be spent on service provision, rather than maintaining an overly complicated and anachronistic system. If the House of Commons can run on all-out elections every five years without democracy and the state crumbling, then I am sure that EBC can manage.

- Please please please reduce the total number too

- A cheaper and simpler system which should encourage more people to vote. At a time of financial stringency, substantial justification would be needed for the much greater cost of the existing system and the case has not been made.

- Please retain the existing system which not only keeps Councillors fresh and responsive to the electorate, but retains a greater degree of consistency and experience on the Council.
• Agree it makes more sense and better value for money.

• I would like to know who the absolute shower of councillors were that abstained on the crucial Morrisons supermarket vote. Their names have never been made public. The lives of Weybridge residents have been disrupted and the heart of the town has been torn out over the past year with still more Misery with a capital 'M' to follow.

• There are pros and cons in each proposal but on balance elections in thirds is preferable. Surrey County Council has used their 4 years without elections as a reason for pushing through contentious issues. More frequent elections with parties campaigning means local issues can be raised more frequently and the ruling party cannot sit back until the year before their election to act. Local democracy would be damaged with option 2.

• The current version provides a certainty of continuity.

• I believe that a '4 year whole council' would be a more effective governing body than the current system provides. In view of the probability of more 'devolution' to local authorities the extra experience and commitment that a, more or less guaranteed full term would mean will be a clear advantage. It obviously follows that I think the cost and time saving of the 'new proposal' would be another improvement.

• Why limit the choices to just these two? Why not offer the 'whole council' option on a THREE-year cycle? Or even better, why not an enhanced combination of both - viz: a 'HALF-council' on a FOUR-year cycle?

• I am concerned that whole council elections can result in a complete change of council with no continuity, and also no ability to express dissatisfaction with the council interim. The costs of keeping the existing system is not significant.

• If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

• Main reasons: Mix of experienced + new councillors; Voting more often; Gradual change of personnel.

• I believe the current system helps prevent people confusing central government inadequacies with local politics.

• By electing councillors by thirds will ensure that the administration works effectively for the community at ALL times instead of only at election year.

• A Frequency of option to 'have a say' and so more accountability. The 'SCC model' does NOT deliver this and produces complacency.
• The removal of yearly elections is a significant undermining of democracy. It encourages corruption and gerrymandering by the incumbent party of control as the electorate would have no opportunity to vote them out of office for up to four years. New voters to the Borough would similarly be prevented from having any say for up to four years. THIS CANNOT BE ACCEPTABLE IN A 'DEMOCRATIC' SOCIETY

• Four year plans can be made together as a council,

• Save money - everyone still serves for 4 years !

• In my opinion it is much better to have a mix of experienced and new councillors. This is particularly important in Planning Committees. If there were large numbers of inexperienced councillors, there is more likelihood of unwise decisions.

• Greater flexibility in number of councillors per ward, enabling local identity of wards to be better reflected.

• Voting more frequently increases the accountability of councillors.

• System A provides for continuity and stability at this time of unpredictability.

• Save Money; more important get bigger turnout and thus more representation.

• Option A is preferably as it allows for greater continuity and a mix of new blood and the voice of experience. Option B would lead to greater instability and uncertainty in the longer term.

• This way provides some continuity.

• Election by thirds retains some of the councillor’s experience from year-to-year. It also avoids too violent swings resulting from transient changes in public opinion.

• This cost cutting exercise should have been introduced immediately following the all out election in 2000!

• Gives better indication of accountability.

• The space provided fpr comments is inadequate. They will be sent separately.

• Administrative saving – hopefully.
• Let all the tax payers know this is going on by posting through everyone’s letter box notice of intent, not just this web site, you officers of the council have a duty to the local people for whom you work for. Please remember you work for the people.

• Neither, every three years, as we have 3 councillors. Fourth year could be Parliamentary elections.

• By maintaining the present system it is less party driven, but driven by individuals who would give good service to the borough. If elections were every four years, then if a party has said something detrimental before an election it could have an effect on who was elected, which people may come to regret soon after. The present system, although more expensive negates this problem to a certain extent.

• IT WILL SAVE MONEY.

• Current system is costly and leads to voting fatigue. Purdah periods every year are damaging to effectiveness of the council.

• Elections every 4 yrs result may lead to undesirable step change rather than gradual change. This is not good b’cos there is potentially large-scale loss of ‘corporate memory’ & resultant time-wasting. 4 year cycles means that someone interested in being a Councillor would have only 1 chance every 4 yrs rather than in 3 out of 4 years. Finally, I feel it is very important to feel involved in the Council more, rather than less; every election results in involvement & info about local issues.

• Cost savings.

• More cost efficient.

• It will be simpler. And I think the number of councillors should be GREATLY reduced at the same time. We do not need so many.

• Saves money and allows greater long term planning.

• Option B would save a lot of money presumably.

• Definitely support whole council elections. This will save the Council money so it must be the most sensible option.

• Electorate is utterly bored and disinterested in annual elections. Introduction of all-out elections every four years would create a new momentum and
would give peoples' votes much higher relevance. In addition it would save money.

- Long term decisions can be made and also saves money.

- Electing all councillors at the same time leaves local councillors far more dependent on national politics, particularly in a General Election year. Election by thirds allows the political complexion of a council to change more gradually.

- The possibility of a wholesale change in councillors to protest votes against the existing national Government leaving us with an entire council with no experience at all should concern us all.

- Allows opportunity for residents to take into account changed local issues/concerns on a more regular basis.

- Have indicated (A) for the very reasons listed as advantages of the current system.

- The advantages of the current system outway the disadvantages, particularly regular regular participation in the democratic process, the ability to influence the make up the council, lack of temptation to work to one date every four years.

- Would ensure a mix of more experienced councillors with new ones. Councillors would be more accountable.

- Electoral voting system is fine as it is and gives a more balanced representation of views.

- Why change - the election of councillors works ... we don’t want to lose our identity and be blended with our wards!!!!

- I believe this will offer longer term strategy and more focus.

- An all out approach is cheaper and provides for a consistent government (barring by-elections) for the tenure of the council as a whole.

- Yearly change means that plans often don't get time to come to fruition.

- Logical and more democratic.

- A Frequency of option to 'have a say' and so more accountability. The 'SCC model' does NOT deliver this and produces complacency.
• Electing only a third of the Councillors each year is vital so that the Administrative Party in power can maintain continuity.

• The present system allows residents to make their views on their ward's Councillors felt at short intervals, keeping Councillors accountable and less likely to lose the perspective of their job being to represent their voters, not a party.

• It is well known throughout the County that other boroughs wish they did as we already do - keep as is more efficient and democratic.

• I favour a regular involvement in the democratic process and prefer the gradual changes in composition resulting from elections by thirds.

• Retaining the current system is in the interests of democracy as the new system would seem to reduce the number of councillors we have, thereby reducing the chance of us having a truly local councillor. There is also talk of the boundaries being moved which could result in Long Ditton being merged with Hinchley Wood or Thames Ditton: I am strongly opposed to this expensive exercise. It's bad enough that the Post Office do not recognise Long Ditton without our local council following suit.

• Councillor renewal on a regular basis allows greater flexibility and ability to change with the changing times. Please retain the existing system.

• My councillors work at the local level and represent the local community. Moving to fewer councillors will reduce the intimacy we enjoy today. Additionally, we do not wish to lose our local identity. RETAIN EXISTING SYSTEM.

• Only if this does not preclude the reduction in the number of councillors.

• Council business would continue without a break otherwise it could become officer lead!

• Maintains continuity of knowledge of council business - at least two thirds of councillors at any time would know background when voting in Council.

• Saves money and stops councillors being in constant "election-mode" - which should in turn improve decision-making.

• Saves cost of having an election every year.

• Keeping local affairs in continuous focus and saving new voters from waiting up to 4 years.
• For sake of simplicity which might increase voter engagement. Maybe personal invitations/info to Rising 18 year olds remind/introduce them to work local councils do 'meet your local councillor' or some such.

• Worried that e.g. UKIP might hold the balance of power for 4 years.

• (B) would have a bigger impact, interest more of the electorate and most likely get a larger vote.
• Difficult to bring about change with existing system and inefficient use of resources.

• Whichever is more financially sound.

• More democratic.

• Inadequate notice has been given of the proposals. Apart from the web-site, which is visited by a small proportion of residents, you appear to have relied on local organisations to give notice of the consultation. 2. The period of notice of notice has been too short—compare the ten and twelve week notice periods required for consultations by the Local Government Boundary Commission. 3. Option B would almost certainly cost more as it would surely require more staff in a different role than

• Inadequate notice has been given for adequate consultation. Apart from the web-site, which I believe is only visited by a small proportion of Elmbridge residents, it seems that you have relied on local organisations to bring the proposals to notice.

• Brings the borough in line with parliamentry & EU elections. Provides stability.

• I think that gradual changes of councillors, should voters' preferences change, would be less costly than a sudden one, when council policies could be overturned suddenly at great expense. Also, a certain number of councillors with expertise would continue in office. As someone who reached the voting age at 21, but had no general election until I was 25, I think making young voters wait until they are potentially 22 is a bad thing.

• A group that commences unpopular policies can be more swiftly removed.

• Elections by thirds offer more opportunity for participation in local democracy and require greater accountability from councillors. It is disappointing that this consultation has not been better publicised.

• I believe elections by thirds provides the opportunity for change within the council more regularly, yet also provides stability, in that the whole council is
not changed at once which could result in more upheaval and policy stagnation.

- The greater frequency of elections the less likelihood that the council will become stale.

- In Brief:- Elections by thirds provides at all times a core of experienced councillors and thereby greater decision consistency - a rolling programme of election which is more manageable and provides for greater participation of localised electors.

- Less cost, more dedication of incumbent.

- Flexibility for voters who, under the current thirds system, can express their pleasure or disgust over a Councillor's political activities more frequently, which is a good approach.

- The existing system is much more democratic. Stick with it.

- Option A provides continuity and partial change, rather than all-out change, which could be disruptive.

- It will be more cost effective

- I live in Molesey and I think it is important to retain the integrity of the Molesey wards and not be merged with neighbouring towns or non-Molesey communities.

- This enables the electorate to cast their vote every year in local democratic elections. It also enables new councillors to be introduced to their responsibilities by existing ones, rather than having a lot of new councillors all at one time. We only get to vote once every 5 years nationally - this is an essential opportunity to exercise democracy on a frequent and local basis.

- I do not wish to have to wait 4 years between elections, running the risk that a majority party could make decisions in the early years after an election with impunity. Councillors should be required to defend decisions to the electorate frequently and run the risk of not being re-elected if they are party to decisions which are unpopular/not in accordance with the electorate's wishes.

- Whilst clumbersom the existing system provides more uniformity to council business. The positives you mention for the existing system (A) far outweigh the advantages of the suggested alternative (B).
• I am concerned about the possibility of reduced number of councillors & proposed boundary change number of councillors. If the population has increased, we surely need more rather than less councillors working for us.

• It will save on the heavy cost of elections & Councillor expenses.

• Save wasting even more money.

• I feel this would make it more likely that Moleseys community identity would be preserved.

• Neither of above - both are poor options. Prefer half of seats every 2 years. For 3 councillors then have 2 seats at one election and the other seat 2 years later.

• Local Government cannot be truly accountable if only a small part changes - like Central Government local councillors should be truly accountable to the electorate for what they have or have not done.

• B is easier to cope with.

• The current system requires councillors to account for their decisions annually and listen to voters on a regular basis, rather than allowing them to ignore what voters want for years until the next election approaches.

• Although I appreciate that the current system may be more costly to administrate and have other disadvantages, I feel that 4 years is too long a period between elections for Borough Councillors. I would think that the 'elections by thirds' procedure has evolved for valid reasons and therefore it should be retained but I would be happy to hear the counter arguments.

• The current system, with more frequent elections, allows better representation of the views of a changing population as people move into and out of the borough.

• I do not think the system should change to accommodate changes the Boundary Commission may or may not make. Current system ensures no one group is completely in control so ensures accountability and current system enables Councillors to actively engage with electorate every year - financial savings minimal seems more like a way for Conservatives to.

• The present system is too complicated - a straightforward change of all the Councillors is preferable.

• I like the idea of improved efficiency and it should be easier for the council to work harder at increasing turnout.
More diverse options of voters and councillors.

I strongly favour option B for the following reason: It avoids disruption to the Council's business activities every year when the 'one-third election' takes place; further it avoids the situation whereby the newly elected 1/3rd of councillors - who may well arrive with the intent of effectively addressing a current concern of some importance to Residents - may have difficulty in achieving understanding and support from the large majority of existing Councillors.

Less "voter fatigue"; would cost less than the current system.

I applaud the money-saving idea, but I think that the benefits of a) a mix of experienced and new councillors and less of a wholesale change, b) more frequent opportunities to have our say and not to be stuck with poor councillors for 4 years, outweigh this. I would be interested in the council exploring a 'middle ground' with e.g. half the council changing every two years.

I think that election by thirds is likely to result in a short term view which will hamper the council's ability to take a more long term strategic view.

A is disruptive to Council services and fewer councillors being elected at the same time would be more efficient and effective.

Same as E-Mail sent 5 minutes ago --post code corrected.

No change for 4 years, I do not think so. Less councillors, more bully boys forcing their views through. Changes

I think it is good to have a mix of new and experienced councillors also gives young people more say.

Having everyone new at the same time would mean less "old hands" would be around to help newly elected councillors to find their feet.

I think continuity is important, and also that living in such strange times politically, we should not allow the vagaries of party politics to derail fair and responsible local politics if we can help it!

Annually opportunity to vote keeps you in the habit of voting and keeps you more involved in local democracy. However, we need to increase voter numbers and I believe this would happen if more people had a postal vote and/or opportunity to vote on line.
• A potential change of control of a Council every year is not good for implementation of Council decisions, and can lead to lack of decision making.

• Knowledge on ongoing matters is important, this would be at risk if all councillors were to stand down every years. Also a completely newly elected body could be very disfunctional for several months.

• Enables long term strategy planning, more immediate effectuation of voting trends, lifts burden of political campaigning, significant cost saving.

• Financial and time savings to all concerned - especially for the voters

• Better mix of new and experienced councillors; more engagement by councillors with local people.

• I think we should regular elections every year. and i welcome a vote on this it would have been nice to be consulted.

• This will supply continuity.

• What comparisons are there between voter numbers for annual elections as opposed to elections every four years for the whole council? Can we have this information please?

• Current system prevents snap decisions being made based on current national situation that could have a dramatic effect on the make up/control of the council

• Better continuity & less disruption.

• All out elections assist political stability and allow the majority party to implement their manifesto commitments over the lifetime of the administration.

• I feel more involved - if I had to vote every 4 years, I wouldn't bother!! Should not use schools to vote in - there have to be alternatives.

• The public cannot understand the 'By Thirds' and are always left wondering why other councillors are not standing—i fact they think the other councillors must have resigned or their term of office has expired. Further, 'By Thirds' is intrusive on time and expensive, both individually to organisations as well as to the general taxpayer. Further, there is a tendency on the 'One-third' system for the other 'Two-Thirds' of councillors to largely disengaged from the election process.

• Less confusing.
• Councillors should be committed to saving money when it relates to them!

• This is not a second vote by the same person, my husband and I share this computer!

• Anything which makes financial savings is a good thing. I think people are more likely to vote once every 4 years than on an annual basis.

• A chance for the electorate to have a real impact every 4 years if they believe the incumbents have not met expectations and makes the whole council more accountable for its performance.

• Whole council will mean no continuity and possibility of 100% change of councillors.

• Ability to change things, more continuity, councillors are closer to voters than MPs, I don't like the cabinet system - all councillors should be equal, EBC is not a Parliament!

• Councils need continuity - if the whole council changes in one go, it will take about a year to get back on course and decisions will be delayed.

• A/ option ensures that there are people in place who have experience in running the system, a total crop of fresh members each would be a total disaster.

• So balance is preserved.

• Saving money if elections are held only every four years.

• I think the continuation of some experienced councillors alongside new councillors when elected is beneficial. An 'all new' group could be prone to errors through lack of experience.

• I believe we should reduce the overall number of councillors.

• Simplicity, increased probability of clearer outcomes and I get tired of all the frequent voting correspondence I currently receive and feel I have to action.

• To reduce the number of councillors and save money.

• Benefits as described in the consultation document.
• Option A: people have democratic vote every year rather than once every 3 years. Less likelihood of complete change of councillors - so new can benefit from experienced and there's more continuity.

• I think the current arrangement makes for a more stable administration.

• The existing system makes the council more democratically accountable, it gives a good mix of new and experienced councillors, more frequent elections get people into the habit of voting and it is encouraging for young people to be able to join the register and exercise their right to vote soon after they are eligible. It is a much better system than waiting four years to replace the whole council.

• Why change something that isn't broken?????

• It is about consistency, efficiency and stability (from a policy implementation perspective) from where I see it and hence my preference for (B) above.

• I don’t believe a 100 percent new council would be efficient.

• We should reduce the number of Councillors by a Third. 2. We should reduce the cost of holding elections - however I believe the Council should outline what savings can be made by moving to Option B. Its also not clear to me who will make the decision to reduce the number of Councillors ? It seems perverse that the outcome would be determined by our councillors.

• It will save energy, money & time. Regrettably Councillors have little authority since the Thatcher days, budgetary constraints also limit their ability to do anything - so they are now just supervisors of staff action.

• Maintaining the "by thirds" system ensures that there is some continuity in the council and an on-going responsibility to the electorate.

• Less time/money spent on dealing with election matters.

• Cost; continuity; upheaval if no-one knows the job.

• Less expense and potential confusion: leads to better longer-term planning.

• Item A is fairest because if a valuable councillor loses his/her seat through an idiosyncracy one year - they can stand again the following year for a different ward.

• Provides a degree of continuity - always assuming that is a good thing, of course!
• Gradual change works better in local government than big changes every 4 years.

• It is our opinion that the eight reasons you list as advantages of the current system greatly outweigh the seven reasons for moving to all out elections. In short it is more democratic to maintain the current system.

• I THINK IT SHOULD PROVIDE MORE CONSISTENCY AND THEREFORE BETTER PLANNING.

• Councillors need to be accountable and when mistakes are made the electorate should have the opportunity to instigate a complete change. Additionally this system will save considerable expense in organising elections.

• Councillors tend to react more democratically when they realise their actions can have immediate repercussions even if outside their own ward. Just look what happens in the years without elections. Four years is too long to wait for a democratic process. Also, just imagine a single issue party being elected on the strength of national opinion - if it were no good at local politics, there would be four years before the electorate could deliver their verdict anywhere in the council.

• Cost saving.

• Makes more sense, try to line up with general election.

• I agree with your list of advantages for thirds. And councillors would be re-elected by their performances.

• Having read your benefits of both approaches and considering national practice I was persuaded to the every 4 years approach.

• Retain existing system please- otherwise you could get a council that is totally inexperienced - I belong to a couple of Committees and changing a third each time works well.

• I would feel much more engaged with less frequent elections, and also surely it must be a cost saving?

• We would have a better-spread-out debate, more community involvement, better chance for local politics [infrequent elections more likely to be contested on national politics] - all really important LOCAL stuff.

• Who are the Councillors ? Why do we see one or two of them ONLY at election time ?
Surely a single Full Ward Election every 4 years would be less cost?

Allows more immediate and direct responses from electorate, thereby judging the council on its ongoing merits - as opposed to the 4 year mandate which in inevitably going to focus on the bigger picture political aspect.

It would have been helpful to know how much financial savings would be made.

Whole 4 yearly council elections with multiple, but reduced numbers, councillors is a bad idea. Reduction of councillors means that each will be responsible for handling the concerns of a greater number of residents. If there are multiple ward councillors then it is democratically preferable that their term should not be identical to enable reflection of residents current views. This comment section is inadequate.

Ward boundaries need to continue to reflect the distinctive natures of the villages of the East Elmbridge area, i.e.. Esher, Claygate, Hinchley Wood, Oxshott, Cobham….

Cost.

It makes economic sense.

A 4 year period would give the incoming Council time to push through new ideas/policies instead of always wondering if they might lose a third of their Members at the next local election. It would also save the Council (therefore the electorate) a great deal of money if elections were only held once every four years.

Whole council elections mean councillors have to deal with the council as elected for four years not prevaricate on decisions hoping the balance may change in a year.

Would B be cheaper?

I and my family in Hinchley Wood consider the four-year 'whole council' elections proposal to be almost ANTI-democratic. As one who lived and voted in another country (the US) the importance of frequent involvement in local politics is vital. Once every four years is far to infrequent, as is FIVE years for national elections. There is little enough authority in Elmbridge as it is, and it certainly does not need decreasing in representation or changed boundaries.

This will reduce costs, particularly the high costs of elections. It will also facilitate reducing the number of councillors.
• With the existing system, for one third of councillors re-election is imminent (less than one year away). I think this helps them focus on the electorate. It means that electors may see councillors or prospective councillor one per year and literature explaining their current views on local issues.

• Not sure how (b) would work as most wards have three councillors so you would be electing three councillors per ward in one year????? - This is not clear so cannot comment other than to say the system seems to work so no need to change it.

• Proposal B it sermonizes with other elections and it as stated saves money.

• More likely to encourage residents to stay involved.

• Every 4 years would give a stable council for a sensible period of time. This would allow decisions to be implemented properly, rather than piecemeal or abandoned as a consequence of constantly changing councillors.

• I feel this has been rushed through by the council at a time of Austerity and also a bid to reduce the number of councillors. The current way of voting is much fairer and means no over all party can take it for granted they have a four year mandate to do as they please.

• I feel this system helps continuity. If all councillors new at the same time might be rather chaotic!

• In favour of changing all seats at the same time. I'm NOT in favour of the local Councillors being reduced in number by more than a small amount. 60 to 48 seems too much too quickly, it favours the large national parties and makes it harder for independents and resident's association councillors to be elected.

• I feel that the current system prevents dramatic changes due to "one-off" matters, or popular fads, that might happen by chance to be close to election time, thereby giving a more accurate reflection of residents wishes over the long term.

• I would like the boundary commission to consider reducing the number of councillors in Elmbridge.

• A simpler process which is easier to administer.

• IT WOULD BE MADNESS TO HAVE THE POSSIBILITY OF THE WHOLE COUNCIL OR EVEN A MAJORITY BEING CHANGED AT ONE TIME. STICK
TO THE WELL TRIED SYSTEM WE HAVE AT PRESENT TO PREVENT A POSSIBLE EXPENSIVE PERIOD OF CHAOS!!

- Election by thirds means annual democratic review of the Council's work and is a better way of keeping the Council responsive to local needs. Note that it would be uneconomic to apply the same method to Parish Council elections. However I have some concerns about the way in which an all 3 member Ward system will be arrived at. I hope there will be full public consultation on this, as the present exercise is to limited and too short notice.

- We need need to reduce costs incl reducing number of councillors. Need less constant change.

- Circumstances change as do the views that voters have about the council.

- I approve of the current electoral pattern as it allows for frequent reassessment of the elected parties. I will be very concerned if the Claygate ward is joined with any neighbouring ward - if the number of councillors representing Claygate is to be reduced (which I would be against) then I would reluctantly support a four-yearly election.

- Better and more immediately representative Council make-up. Greater mix of new and existing councillors. Greater consistency of councillors with less wholesale change.

- The present system works very well, and best serves the needs of the residents. a 4 year gap in local elections is too long. Surprised by the need only for a postcode - where is the security against potential fraud in this system?

- The present system works extremely well, whereby new councillors are integrated with experienced councillors, thus being less disruptive to the work of the council. However, this consultation process has been appalling, and I only came across the opportunity to express my view by chance. Why were not all households provided with a leaflet? Giving postcode only for I.D. could also be subject to fraud. Very unsatisfactory.

- Having local issues visited regularly, on a near annual basis rather than once every four years, encourages all Councillors to become more aware of the current local concerns and ensures they have to be in touch with the feelings of the local electorate on a more frequent basis.

- The current system should be retained because the elected councilors have to address local issues every year. It also provides a degree of continuity while giving a portion of the electorate the opportunity to remove councilors they are unhappy with.
• The current system ensures a degree of continuity while allows some residents to express their displeasure with elected officers without having to wait for up to 4 years.

• Option B - saves money.

• Better continuity. Retaining experience.

• Reduction in admin costs and continuity of councillors.

• I do not wish for the number of councillors to be reduced.

• Whole council elections too infrequent and it will be difficult to get candidates. Engagement would reduce further.

• More stability in terms of experienced councillors.

• Any changes that cut down on bureaucracy and make monetary savings are very welcome.

• Unnecessary local elections are a total waste of public money and leads to disillusionment with the electoral system and embarrassingly low turn-outs. Furthermore, 60 councillors for the Borough is far too many and another waste of money.

• Better continuity. I also strongly support a reduction in the number of councillors. I saw a figure quoted of 48.

• The advantages of the current system of election by thirds far outweigh any benefits of moving to all out elections. Please stay with the present system.

• Tidier and less confusing system. Less costly than more frequent elections. Enables retention of the 2-or 3-councillor wards. Current "villages" would better retain their separate identities.

• There are reasons to believe that keeping the electoral machine rolling evenly is more efficient than stop-and-start in 4-year gaps.

• I believe the current system is better than electing a whole council every four years. I would like this kind of rolling election to be used for parliamentary elections - it is more sensitive to the wishes of the electorate and therefore more democratic.

• I don’t agree with either option - annually is too often, no change to achieve anything. Every 4 years is too long. An 18 year old may not vote till they are 22. Why not every 2 Years?
• Increase public interest and reduce costs.
• The website is hopeless. nothing about the survey is on it.
• It will save taxpayers money and is plain common sense.
• Present system is more democratic... and it works! We need more councillors not fewer. I'd like to see the rationale behind reduction.
• Why change a system that works?! Voting every year allows for more stability with a good mix of new & experienced councillors. It's more democratic way of voting - every year.
• You shouldn't tamper with a system that has worked for many years. It's more democratic than 'all out' elections.
• This 'Survey' is open to abuse.
• Keeps councillors in touch with electors.
• I feel this is the better system. I don’t like the idea of less councillors and all out.
• A= mix new & experienced councillors. A less likely result dominance of 1 party
• Council will reflect electorates changing views.
• Absolutely not - I have lived here for 52 years and existing system has served the borough well. How could 60 new councillors ever compete with the experience of office.
• It is essential to have continuity. A completely new set of councillors would have no idea of what had gone on before.
• It is better to keep at least one person in place who knows what issues have arisen. Then having 4 new people in place who have to start all over again.
• Current system allows continuity and works well.
• Considering Elmbridge has the 2nd highest Council Tax in the UK, a reduction in the number of councillors is overdue. 60 councillors is far too many people to cover 22 wards.
Dear Mr Moran

The Residents Associations of Long Ditton, Hinchley Wood and Thames Ditton & Weston Green have responded to the consultation making the following points:

ELECTION OF ELMBRIDGE COUNCILLORS - VOTING FREQUENCY CONSULTATION

VIEWS OF THE LONG DITTON, HINCHLEY WOOD, THAMES DITTON & WESTON GREEN RESIDENTS ASSOCIATIONS

1. We feel that at this time of austerity and ever increasing cuts to budgets it is not terribly sensible to embark on an expensive change to the voting pattern of the Borough.

2. Should changes be necessary perhaps consultation should have taken place before the Council approached the Boundary Commission.

3. Any changes to the number of Councillors it seems will need a re-balancing of the number of Councillors from each ward, that will necessitate the re-drawing of some boundaries, and perhaps the disappearance of some wards all together. We feel that at this time when Localism is one of Central Government’s watchwords, wholesale changes that could adversely affect the identity of villages within the Borough is not in the interests of the residents of the borough.

4. We are not over-represented by councillors in Elmbridge compared with other Surrey boroughs and are in the middle tier. The redrawing of village boundaries will be expensive, a fact which the Administration has not taken into account and the Council should cease all activity down this road until it has first consulted the residents of the Borough. Any alleged savings claimed by the Administration would be minimal on an annual basis, and would almost certainly lead to councillors claiming larger allowances to compensate for increased work-loads.

5. Notwithstanding the views expressed about this whole exercise being undertaken and consultation being too late, we prefer election by thirds because it means there is more opportunity for electors to vote and participate in the local democracy on a regular basis allowing for the gradual change of the make up of the council. However we would wish to ensure that a clear message is sent to the Electoral Commission that residents would want to retain ‘community identities’

FRANK RENTON – Chairman Long Ditton Residents Assoc

FRANK DABELL – Chairman Hinchley Wood Residents Assoc

RHODRI RICHARDS – Chairman Thames Ditton & Weston Green Residents Assoc

Yours sincerely

Mark Herbert

Vice Chairman, Long Ditton Residents Association
Contact the Council

We will endeavour to respond to your comments or queries as soon as possible.

Contact Details

Title*
Forename*
Surname*
How would you like us to contact you?*
Email

Your address

Do you know your postcode?*

Address Line1
Address Line2
Address Line3
Town
County
Post Code*
Council Tax Band
Your comments or questions*

Yes (use address finder)
Claygate Lane
Esher
Surrey
KT10 0AQ

I have just completed the voting/election cycle survey and found the space for comments inadequate. Whilst definitely being against going to a 4 year voting cycle with reduced number of councillors I can understand the desire to make economies by going to a reduced frequency of elections. Might I suggest that a compromise might be achieved by opting for 2 councillors per ward, each serving for a 4 year term but with elections being held on a 2 year cycle. This would ensure continuity, with a minimum of 50% of councillors having at least 2 years experience, and at the same time enabling reflection of residents current views at twice the frequency of a 4 year cycle. Consideration also needs to be given to the size of electoral wards to minimise any increase in the number of constituents represented by councillors. It must be remembered that they are not full time paid politicians but volunteers who have to fit in the demands of their constituents and council role with their own employment/domestic routine.

Electoral Registration

Which area is best suited to your enquiry? *

Date/Time Created 13:47:06 28 Oct 2014

Note: On Line Requests : your query or request maybe covered by a specific service request form we would suggest you use a specific form where appropriate to speed up your enquiry.

If you wish to upload any supporting information then please use the facility below. Please note that attachments can be up to 2048 kb or 2 mega bytes in size.
Contact the Council

We will endeavour to respond to your comments or queries as soon as possible.

Contact Details

Title*
Forename*
Surname*
How would you like us to contact you?*
Email

Your address

Do you know your postcode?*
Yes (use address finder)

Address Line1
Address Line2
Address Line3
Town
County
Post Code*
Council Tax Band
Your comments or questions*

Which area is best suited to your enquiry? *

Date/Time Created 17:52:56 31 Oct 2014

⚠️ Note: On Line Requests : your query or request maybe covered by a specific service request form we would suggest you use a specific form where appropriate to speed up your enquiry.

If you wish to upload any supporting information then please use the facility below. Please note that attachments can be up to 2048 kb or 2 mega bytes in size.

Your personal data will be used in accordance with our Privacy Policy

Mandatory fields are marked with red asterisk.

Is your comment a Complaint
## Review of Borough Electoral Cycle
### Consultation Responses by Ward and Polling District

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