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Harrogate Borough Council Election Proposals

Public Consultation 2009

June 2009

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- 1.1 In February 2009 Harrogate Borough Council consulted residents of the District to seek views on the Harrogate Borough Council Election Proposals. A copy of the questionnaire can be found at Appendix A
- 1.2 The following questionnaires were returned:

Analysis of responses		
Total questionnaires analysed = 917		
	Questionnaires returned	Response Rate %
District Panel	858	57.2
Staff/Internet	35	
Councillors	3	5.6
Parish / Town Councils	17	22.4
Political Party	4	50
Total	917	

- 1.3 In total **917** responses to the **Election Proposal** questionnaire were received.

I Election Proposals

- A majority of respondents (52%) stated a preference for elections for the whole Council every four years . All out elections
- 22% of respondents stated a preference for elections three years in every four . Elections by thirds
- 26% of respondents stated a preference for elections every 2 years . Elections by halves
- One political party expressed a preference for either Elections by thirds or Elections by halves
- Respondents were given the opportunity to comment on the Election Proposals A variety of responses were received and all comments are shown in full within this report.
- Key reasons for favouring elections for the whole Council every four years . All out elections include:
 - If you are going to elect people you need to give them 4 years to ensure progress is made. Too much change stops things moving forward and people lose interestq
 - There are too many elections for most people to get interested in. I sometimes don't know what I am voting for! I think one serious vote would be welcome for a lot of peopleq
 - All out elections would give stability and time for the ruling party to carry out its election programme without the political in fighting to appease minority partiesq
 - Would make for substantial financial savingsq
 - All out election are more in line with other elections and allow parties to focus on all local issuesq
 - Greater stability in council membershipq
 - This should enable the elected Members of Harrogate Borough Council to focus on longer term strategies which should in turn provide better opportunities for long term planningq

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asked residents of the District the question **How do you think we should elect our Councillors?** They were also given background information (see Appendix A)

3.2 Respondents were asked how frequently they would prefer to see Borough Council Elections

- 52% of respondents stated a preference for elections for the whole Council every four years . All out elections
- 22% of respondents stated a preference for elections three years in every four . Elections by thirds
- 26% of respondents stated a preference for elections every 2 years . Elections by halves
- One political party expressed a preference for either Elections by thirds or Elections by halves

How frequently they would prefer to see Borough Council Elections?		
	Number	%
The Whole Council Every four years – All out elections	476	52
Three years in every four – Elections by thirds	202	22
Every two years – Elections by halves	238	25.9
Total	916	
Note 1 respondent expressed a preference for either Elections by thirds or Elections by halves	1	0.1
Total	917	

3.3 Respondents were asked if they have any comments to make regarding the Election Proposals, comments have been broadly categorised as follows:

- In favour of proposals for elections of the Whole Council Every four years . All out elections
 - 33 comments from residents
 - 1 comment from a Councillor
 - 10 comments from Town / Parish Councils
- Against all out elections
 - 10 comments from residents

e years in every 4 . Elections by thirds
residents
Political Parties
Councillors
Town / Parish Councils

- In favour of elections every two years . Elections by halves
 - 7 comments from residents
 - 1 comment from a Councillors
 - 2 comments from Town / Parish Councils
- In favour of elections every 3 years or every 2 years
 - 1 comment from a political party
- General political comments
 - 41 comments from residents
- Comments regarding Cost effectiveness
 - 20 comments from residents
- Comments regarding the current ward structure
 - 3 comments from residents
- Comments regarding election turn out at elections
 - 4 comments from residents
- Respondents who stated they did not have enough information to comment
 - 3 comments from residents

up of 1,500 local people. Panel membership was constructed in such a way that it would represent the District in respect of gender, age, physical/mental impairment and location of residence.

- 4.2 The gender split of those responding to the consultation was similar to the profile of the panel overall, although a slightly higher proportion of males responded to the questionnaire.

Table 1: Response by gender				
Gender	Respondents		Panel	
	No.	%	No.	%
Male	438	51.7	748	49.9%
Female	410	48.3	752	50.1%
Total	848		1500	
* 10 respondents did not supply this information				

- 4.3 The response rate of young people aged 17-24 and 25-34 was the lowest. The lower response rate has been noted in previous District Panel consultations and is assumed to result because young people may be less inclined to involve themselves in consultation activity and may also be more likely to move around (eg attend university etc) and not be readily available. Older age bands were correspondingly over-represented.

Table 2: Response by age				
Age (yrs)	Respondents		Panel	
	No.	%	No.	%
17-24	5	0.6	90	6%
25-34	22	2.6	203	15.5%
35-44	112	13.2	349	23.3%
45-54	172	20.2	402	26.8%
55-64	264	31	233	15.5%
65+	275	32.3	223	14.9%
Total	851		1500	
* 7 respondents did not supply this information Note circumstances of respondents may have changed since panel demographics assessed				

onse by age findings, the response rate of the highest in the panel and those respondents on were under represented.

Economic position	Respondents		Panel	
	No.	%	No.	%
Employed	309	36.8	839	55.9%
Self employed	95	11.3	173	11.5%
Unemployed/govt. scheme	13	1.5	11	0.7%
Retired	385	45.8	313	20.9%
Student	4	0.5	52	3.5%
Looking after home/family	34	4	112	5.8%
Total	840		1500	
* 18 respondents did not supply this information Note circumstances of respondents may have changed since panel demographics assessed				

- 4.5 The response rate from those with a physical/mental impairment was slightly less proportionately (6.9%) than their proportion on the Panel (7.6%).

Table 4: Response by mobility – Do you suffer from any form of disability?				
<i>Yourself</i>				
	Respondents		Panel	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	58	6.9	114	7.6
No	779	93.1	1386	92.4
Total	837			
*21 respondents did not supply this information				
Are you a full-time carer for a disabled sick or elderly relative or partner?				
Disabled	31	3.8	115	7.7
Not disabled	790	96.2	1385	92.3
Total	821		1500	
* 37 respondents did not supply this information.				

- 4.6 The response rate from respondents in the Harrogate wards, the Knaresborough wards, the Ripon wards and the rural wards broadly reflected the percentage of members from these wards on the panel.

	Respondents		Panel	
	No	%	No	%
Harrogate Wards	405		713	47.5%
Bilton	66		81	5.4
Granby	23		46	3.1
Harlow Moor	44		58	3.9
High Harrogate	35		59	3.9
Hookstone	40		71	4.7
Low Harrogate	19		44	2.9
New Park	25		60	4
Pannal	43		67	4.5
Rossett	35		72	4.8
Saltergate	17		38	2.5
Starbeck	22		32	2.1
Stray	27		55	3.7
Woodfield	9		30	2
Knarborough Wards				
Knarborough Wards	92		153	10.2
Knarborough East	31		59	3.3
Knarborough King James	37		56	3.9
Knarborough Scriven Park	24		48	3.2
Ripon Wards				
Ripon Wards	87		162	10.8
Ripon Minster	25		41	2.7
Ripon Moorside	31		56	3.7
Ripon Spa	31		65	4.3
Rural Wards				
Rural Wards	265		472	31.5
Bishop Monkton	24		40	2.7
Boroughbridge	27		22	1.5
Claro	9		36	2.4
Killinghall	19		32	2.1
Kirkby Malzeard	15		25	2.7
Lower Nidderdale	22		31	2.1
Marston Moor	23		34	2.3
Mashamshire	13		35	1.5
Newby	13		36	2.3
Nidd Valley	8		26	1.7
Ouseburn	19		18	1.2
Pateley Bridge	20		15	1
Ribson	10		32	2.1
Spofforth with Lower Wharfedale	23		36	2.4
Washburn	10		27	1.8
Wathvale	10		27	1.8

ifferent ethnic groups reflects the make up of the respondents classed themselves as British and 1.6% of other ethnic groups.

Table 6: Response by Ethnicity				
	Respondents		Panel	
	No	%	No	%
British	834	98.5	1475	98.3
Irish			4	0.3
Any other White background	6	0.7	3	0.2
Caribbean			0	0.1
African			0	0
Any other Black background			1	0.1
White and Black Caribbean	2	0.2	2	0.1
White and Black African			3	0.2
White and Asian	1	0.1	1	0.1
Any other Mixed background	2	0.2	2	0.1
Indian			2	0.1
Pakistani	1	0.1	7	0.4
Bangladeshi			0	0
Any other Asian background			0	0
Chinese			0	0
Other Ethnic Group	1	0.1	1	0.1
Total	847			

*11 Respondents did not supply this information

4.8 Overall, the response rate is broadly reflective of the make-up of the District Panel, albeit that those over 55 years old are somewhat proportionately over represented.

How do you think we should elect our councillors?

We are looking at different arrangements for Harrogate Borough Council elections. We need to know what you think.

Elections 'by thirds' or 'all out elections'?

When all of local government in England was reorganised in 1974, the new Councils were given the choice of whether to have elections by thirds with an election every year; or to have arrangements whereby the whole Council was elected every four years.

All Councillors are elected to serve for a four year term.

In 1974, Harrogate Borough Council elected to have elections by thirds meaning that a third of the Council's 54 Councillors come up for election each year. The fourth year is when the County Council elections take place, as North Yorkshire County Council elected to have ~~all out~~ elections every four years.

Possible changes to current arrangements

The Government has now given Councils the power to look again at their electoral arrangements. We are, therefore, consulting the Council's electorate to ask for your views on whether we should keep the current arrangements or move to ~~all out~~ elections once every four years; or even to a new third option in which elections are held for half of the seats every other year.

The current arrangements

The current electoral situation in the Harrogate district is as follows:

- 19 urban wards in Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon;
- Each of these wards has two Councillors representing them;
- Elections of the urban wards are held in successive years;
- 16 rural wards make up the rest of the district;
- Each of these wards is represented by one Councillor;
- Elections for the rural wards are held in the third year together with the majority of the parish council elections;
- The district wards which make up part of North Yorkshire County Council are elected every four years with no district elections held that year.

Possible future arrangements:

There are pros and cons to all arrangements - some of them are set out below.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive or weighted in terms of significance, but it is hoped that it may be useful in helping those who wish to respond to this consultation come to a view.

voice' concerns via the ballot box:
erterm strategic issues;

g
ving of £60,000 over three years by holding elections

once every four years:

- Would reduce electorate confusion

2. Elections by thirds

- Elections three years in every four can divert effort into fighting elections and constant electioneering;
- Administration costs are higher;
- Opportunity for voters to make their voice heard more often;
- Ensures that a pool of experienced Councillors is always available;
- Avoids wasted effort in explaining confusing and complicated electoral arrangements because all levels of local Government would be elected at the same time.

3. Elections by halves

All of the above apply but savings would be reduced pro rata.

When would possible changes come into effect?

If there were a decision to change the electoral arrangements, the Council would need to pass a resolution confirming this change by 31 December 2010 with new arrangements coming into force in 2011.

Would any changes affect Parliamentary or European elections?

There are both UK and European Parliamentary elections on a minimum of a five-year cycle. This is not affected by local electoral arrangements.

Make your views known - All returns are anonymous

How frequently would you prefer to see Borough Council Elections ?

Please tick one box

The whole Council every four years - All out elections

Three years in every four - Elections by thirds

Every two years - Elections by halves

Do you have any further Comments to make?

Please specify

Would you like to take part in further consultations regarding Local Democracy? If so, please supply your name and address below.

Please note - This information will not be used in conjunction with this survey, but will be passed directly to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

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