

REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 16 JULY 2008

PORTFOLIO: OVERALL STRATEGY & POLICY DIRECTION

REPORT FROM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

SUBJECT: PROPOSALS FOR MOVING THE DATE OF LOCAL ELECTIONS TO THE SAME DATE AS EUROPEAN ELECTIONS IN 2009

1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 To respond positively to the principle of moving the date of the local elections from 7 May 2009, so that they take place on the same day as the European Parliamentary elections on 4 June 2009, whilst pointing out some of the practical difficulties that need to be overcome to ensure that any change goes smoothly.

2 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 There are a number of benefits to holding the local and European Parliamentary elections on the same day:-
- It will be more convenient for voters to have to visit the polling station once only, meaning that more voters are likely to participate in the election.
 - It will result in the election periods for the local and European elections running together and avoid the start of the European election period overlapping with the end of the local election period.
 - It will reduce costs incurred by the authority, returning officers and political parties in distributing election material, contacting voters, canvassing and holding the polls themselves.
 - Those responsible for voter awareness campaigns, particularly local authorities, will be able to concentrate their efforts in increasing awareness of one, single election day.
- 2.2 However, against this are issues around voter confusion, particularly if in addition to County & European elections Parish elections are included. The European voting system is different to that of both the County and Parish and therefore there is an increased risk of ballot papers being spoilt.
- 2.3 There is too the local issue that the European elections will be run on the existing parliamentary boundaries (assuming there is no general election beforehand), which will mean that we will need to share with both Chelmsford (part of the County election) and Southend (outside the County election). This will therefore have major implications for us in terms of handling the postal

voting process and the matching of the identifiers associated with it, including the ability of the different software suppliers to meet the challenges faced.

- 2.4 Unless the practical issues can be resolved any combined election proposal would prove extremely problematic locally.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 To recommend leaving voting arrangement as they stand.

4 OTHER SALIENT INFORMATION

- 4.1 Responses to the consultation need to be sent to arrive no later than 11 August 2008.

5 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The main risks are outlined in 2.2 – 2.4 above.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None specifically, although in theory there should be opportunity cost savings through running both elections to the same time frame.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

SMT Lead Officer Signature: _____

Chief Executive

Background Papers:-

Communities & Local Government consultation document: Moving the date of English Local Government elections to the date of the European Parliament elections in 2009.

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