
REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 17 APRIL 2013

PORTFOLIO: OVERALL STRATEGY & POLICY DIRECTION

REPORT FROM HEAD OF INFORMATION & CUSTOMER SERVICES

SUBJECT: PROPOSED MOVE OF THE DATE OF ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS TO THE DATE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN 2014

1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 That the Government be advised that it should seek to move the date of elections to principal Local Authorities, Parish Councils, and any council tax referendums scheduled to take place on 1 May 2014 so that they are all held on the same day as, and in combination with, the European Parliamentary elections in 2014.
- 1.2 That in order to ensure the effective administration of these elections:-
 - a) the Government be advised to publish all necessary legislation and fees at least six months in advance of the European elections; and
 - b) the Electoral Commission be advised to publish the relevant guidance at least six months in advance of the elections.

2 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Department of Communities and Local Government has issued a consultation seeking views about moving the date of the local elections from 1 May 2014, so that they take place on the same day as the European Parliamentary elections in that year.
- 2.2 Elections to the European Parliament will be held in the spring of 2014; under existing legal provisions on 5-8 June. However, the Council of the European Union has proposed moving the date of the 2014 European Parliament elections to 22-25 May. This has yet to be formally accepted, but in an indicative vote in November 2012 the European Parliament was supportive of such a change. This means European Parliamentary elections could be on either Thursday 22 May or 5 June 2014.
- 2.3 In 2014 there are elections scheduled to this Council, and to the Rawreth and Rochford Parish Councils.
- 2.4 Subject to the consultation, the Government is minded to move the date of all these elections so that they will be held at the same time as the elections to the European Parliament and combined with those elections. The Government is also minded to provide that annual meetings should be held in

the period beginning four days after the date of the elections and ending on 31 August 2014.

2.5 The benefits of holding the local and European Parliamentary elections in combination on the same day are:-

- it will be more convenient for voters to have to visit the polling station once only, meaning that more electors are likely to participate in the elections;
- 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 local authorities and central Government in funding the polls and for political parties in distributing election material and canvassing voters; and
- the Electoral Commission and local authorities will be able to focus efforts on voter awareness campaigns by concentrating efforts on one single election day.

2.6 Potential concerns about combining the polls are:-

- increased confusion among electors, particularly where two or more elections are held on the same day using different voting systems (for example in our District there are likely to be 3 polls, to which could be added a Council Tax referendum or other type of local referendum);
- practical issues relating to the administration of the elections can be more complex when they take place on the same day. However, in previous years, combined elections have been successfully undertaken.

3 RISK IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The risk outlined above in terms of complexity of administration of combined elections can be minimised by careful planning. If the elections are not combined and their timetables overlap there are also risks around running two separate election processes.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 If the local elections are held on the same day and combined with the European Parliamentary elections, this will reduce the financial implications for both this Council, Parish Councils and the Government.

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: _____

Head of Information & Customer Services

Background Papers:-

DCLG Consultation Paper, "Moving the date of English Local Government elections to the date of the European Parliamentary Elections in 2014".

For further information please contact Sarah Fowler on:-

Phone: 01702 318135

Email: Sarah.Fowler@rochford.gov.uk

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.