

Report to the Constitution and Member Services Standing Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting: 30 June 2008

**Subject: Government Consultation Document - Moving the Date of the
Local Elections to the Same Date as European Elections**

Contact for further information: I Willett (Ext 4243)

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Recommendations:

- (1) To consider the attached Government consultation document on deferring the date of the 2009 County Council elections from 7 May to 4 June 2009, the latter being the same date as the European election; and**
- (2) To make a recommendation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a response on behalf of the Council.**

Report:

- ...
1. A copy of a Government consultation document on the desirability of synchronising the County and European elections in 2009 is attached. Under the Government's plan, both elections would be held on 4 June 2009, which would necessitate the County Council elections being deferred from 7 May 2009.
 2. Consultation is necessary because it would be necessary to facilitate the change by making new regulations.
 3. The arguments for this proposal are set out in paragraphs 8-14. Some reservations expressed are set out in paragraphs 19-25. Reference to the practical issues involved are highlighted in the document. The approach now being canvassed was followed in 2004 when District and, Parish* elections were deferred and held on the same day as the European elections on 10 June 2004). In organisational terms, concurrent elections are a regular occurrence and although leading to more complexity, offer economies of scale which are favoured by Government. Practical considerations are probably secondary to the issue of principle involved.
 4. One member of Council has responded to an earlier item in the Council bulletin, namely Councillor S Murray. He has commented as follows:

"I am very much against this as I feel both sets of elections are different and should not be confused in any way in the minds of the electorate.

Local elections should remain just that - local and not be held on the same day as national elections.

The main motivation is to try and bolster turn out for the European elections – this should not be done in my view at the expense of distinct and separate local elections.

Please pass on my views to the panel”.

5. The questions the Council is asked to answer are set out in paragraph 28. The closing date for comments is 11 August 2008.
6. The Panel should note that the references to Parish/Town Council elections will not apply in this District in 2009 unless there are parish bye-elections.
7. The Panel will also note forthcoming consultation on weekend voting.