

Election Cycle Consultation

Summary of Results and Data Tables

Introduction

Derby City Council is considering changing its current Election Cycle. We asked residents of Derby, as the city's electorate, to tell us how often they thought they wanted to vote for their councillors.

Under Derby's current model, voters go to the polls three times in every four years. On each occasion voting for 17 of the city's 51 councillors, except in the fourth year when there are no elections. This is known as a 'fallow' year.

Under the 'Whole Council Elections' model, voters would go to the polls once every four years, but all 51 of the available seats would be contested at the same time. Under this model there would be no Local Elections during the intervening period, unless a by-election was required for a councillor resignation, retirement or other reason.

Methodology

As part of the consultation, Derby City Council provided stakeholders with an online and paper survey.

An eight week consultation period was undertaken from 27 January 2020 to 23 March 2020. The survey was promoted on the Council website, social media channels and sent out to networks and partner organisations. A paper copy of the survey was made available on request and was on display in the main reception in the Council House and through the Council's libraries.

A note on the data in this report. Data from the closed questions is presented in the report as a % score, where the data is rounded up or down to the nearest whole percentage point, charts or tables therefore the results may on occasions adding up to 99% or 101%. If a table or chart does not match exactly to the text in the report this occurs due to the rounding up or down when responses are combined. Results that differ in this way should not have a variance that is any larger than 1%.

When reading the data, please note that there is a total number against all charts and tables; this is the valid response meaning that the results are based on all respondents giving a valid answer to a question.

About those taking part

501 individual gave their view through the online survey

6 via a paper questionnaire

3 sent additional emails or letters

1 meeting

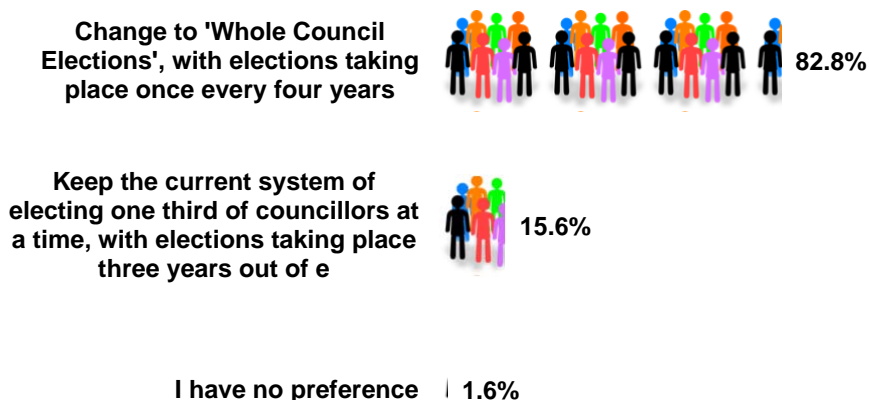
Which option would you prefer for Derby residents to elect their councillors?

The majority of respondents (82.8%) were in favour of a change to whole Council Elections, with elections taking place once every four years.

The consultation also received comments from Marketing Derby and the Renaissance Board supporting a change to 'Whole Council Elections' (with an additional email in support of Keeping the current method of Electing in Thirds). Appendix A.


The proposals were also discussed at the Voices in Action young people's board. (Appendix B).

Chart 1 - Which option would prefer for Derby residents to elect their councillors? (%)



Base: 506

Please tell us why you answered this way

	Theme	No. of responses
Please tell us why you answered in this way 	Change to four-yearly cycle	372
	Keep the current system of electing one third of councillors at a time	62
	No preference	4
	Total Comments	438

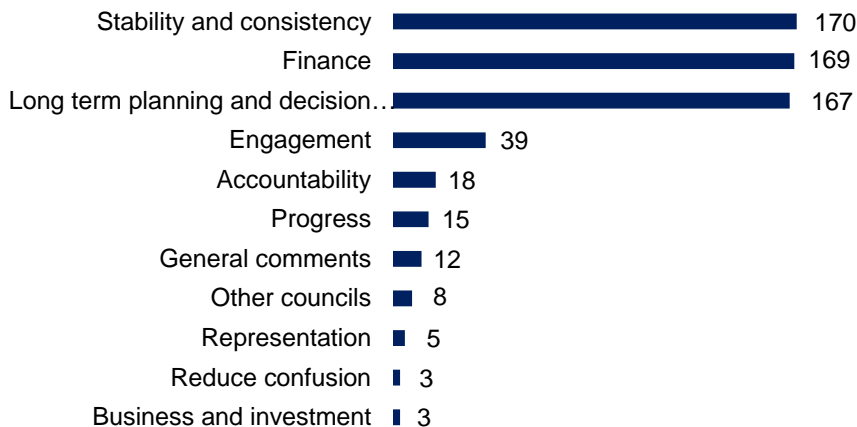
438 respondents took the opportunity to comment on why they answered in that way. Comments have been coded into themes under the election cycle options. Some comments touched on multiple themes and therefore may have been coded in more than one theme.

A change to whole council elections every four years.

Respondents who supported a change to whole council elections generally commented on the stability and consistency of the council (170 comments), finance and savings (169), long term planning and decision making being the reason they would like to see a change in the election system.

Chart 2 (opposite) shows how comments have been coded.

Chart 2 - Change to Whole Council Election every 4 years



Stability and consistency

170 respondents mentioned stability and consistency as their reason for wanting to change to whole council elections every four years.

“To provide a more stable council for a longer period of time to be able to achieve more results in the city”

Others commented that they felt the stability was linked to.....

“...give people time to learn their job and do it effectively”

Some respondents suggested that a change to the election cycle would help to deliver continuity.

“It would provide a clear indication of the wishes of the people of derby, and give councillors the chance to really work towards their commitments without the disruption caused by interim elections changing the balance of power.”

Others commented on the number of elections taking place in Derby.

“Too many elections currently - stability and savings (I’m doing elections) are more important”

Finance and budget

169 respondents commented on the potential cost savings with a change in election cycle.

“The current system wastes both money and time in a City that needs both. Money saved could be used to improve council services, in particular, mental health and disability provisions. Time to get councillors in place faster so they may start what they had been elected to do.”

While some of the respondents also commented on the potential of other forms of savings

“If it saves money then hopefully our Council Tax won't keep rising above a figure more than our income does. e.g. Council tax rise this year will be around 3.9% and income rise will be 1.7% . It will be less work for Council staff who have to organise and man the elections (and you will save on paying them very high amounts extra for election duties each time, as well as their salaries) You will save on printing and distributing election manifesto/polling cards etc. Continuance of one party makes more sense, if the correct and responsible party is elected in the first instance of course!”

“Saves time saves money gives chance to get things working”

Long term planning and decision-making

167 respondents talked about long term decision-making and planning. Comments here were closely linked to the theme of stability and consistency.

A number of respondents mentioned the current systems impact on projects and plans.

“The current system, used for many years, doesn't provide any stability for long-term planning by any political party and has resulted in stalled or projects scrapped which would have seen improvements to our city for all residents - the situation around the Assembly Rooms being a prime example”

“To give more time for council in power to actually execute rather than just plan and that plan be potentially thrown out by incoming different ruling party. More fiscally sound.”

Other respondents commented on the impact on the role of councillors.

“Gives councillors time to focus on election pledges and get the city moving”

The impact a change would have on local business was also a reason for some.

“A 4 yearly election cycle would provide businesses the stability to invest in the city and allow the council to plan for the long term. Investment in the city would greatly increase. It's a no brainer.”

Engagement

39 respondents talked about engagement of local people in democracy.

“I think having a focal point for the city's local elections would allow parties/individuals to campaign more effectively and potentially get residents voting who may otherwise not vote and/or be confused as to which wards/areas are voting in which years etc. Ultimately with voter turnout being at best 'okay' a change to how we vote as a city is needed, for better or worse, to try and encourage more residents to engage with their local political environment”

Others respondents felt that a change to the current election cycle would...

“I then know that I can vote for a party to take over and perhaps change the local party thinking at that present time.”

Accountability

18 respondents talked about the need for election systems to be accountable. Some commented on the role councillors have..

The current system isn't fit for purpose if all seats are contested at the same time I feel the councillors will actually do more for the voters and be seen more than they are at the moment as a lot of them feel they are safe from being out voted if the current system stays whereas on the other it will mean that they know their seat isn't safe

Others talked about the short term focus of the current system.

“...Current model focuses on short term with inadequate accountability”

Some felt that four year election cycle would lead to increased accountability.

“Improved turn out and accountability. Initiatives that receive funding likely to reflect the needs of the whole of Derby due to cross party talks rather than those policies of just one party.”

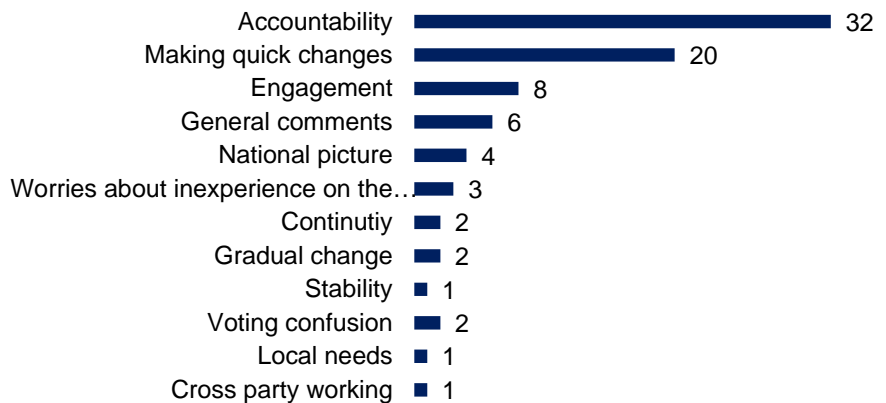
Other comments

Other comments under a change to four yearly election cycle included progress (15 comments), general comments (12 comments), other councils (eight comments), representation (five comments) reduced confusion (three comments) and representation (three comments).

Keep the same system of election in thirds

62 respondents who preferred to keep the same system of electing in thirds took the opportunity to say why they answered the way they did (Chart 3). Comments included accountability (32 comments), making changes quick (20 comments) and engagement (8 comments).

Chart 3 - Keep the same system of electing in thirds



Accountability

Respondents made 32 comments on accountability. Some respondents felt that electing in thirds was a way to hold the council to account.

“Accountability of the City Council cannot be assured by holding elections every four years, the best example of which is the current Governments actions in their first few months, after a General Election. Promises and commitment are easily forgotten once in power, and this applies to all politicians.”

And...

“Because it allows some limited regular accountability. If a clear and accessible process was added that allowed a councilor to be removed if they did not keep election promises or they misbehaved I would consider the single full council election as a good idea, but not without that”

...some respondents had other suggestions.

“I think it is important that voters can give their views on the Council's actions quickly, rather than waiting four years for an election. If they are all to be elected at the same time (and therefore almost certainly from the same party) it makes little sense to have three Councillors for each Ward, but trying to divide each Ward fairly into three would be a major task, whilst reducing the number of Councillors by tw-thirds would give them an excessive workload.”

To make quick changes to the council

There were 20 comments made in relation to the current election cycle allowed for changes to happen

“Electorate will have a more immediate opportunity to respond to a poor council. They can remove poor councillors more often. They can send a message to a poorly run council by voting a third or them out.”

“Helps keep the council 'honest', it gives less time for one party to run amok as some are prone to do. This is particularly the case when there are some general questions about electoral fraud in the wider arena that have not been addressed yet. Nothing should be done solely to save money, you should find cheaper ways to provide exactly the same service.”

Engagement

Eight respondents mentioned electing in thirds being about engagement in the local democracy process.

“...Elections by thirds encourage participation in local democracy. When elections are held most years, the electorate is canvassed regularly, politicians are encouraged to keep in touch with their electors and there is a built-in incentive for all political parties and independents of not losing seats if concerns are not addressed...”

“Keeps the familiarity of the election system. Some people find it daunting even if it's once a year. I think some people wouldn't vote at all if it was 4 yearly. Has a more immediate effect if political issues need to be addressed or ineffective leadership of the party that is in. Four years seems like a long time between elections.”

Other comments


Other comments talked about the national picture (four comments), inexperienced councillors (three comments), continuity (two comments), gradual change (two comments) stability (one comment), voting confusion (two comments), and cross party working (one comment).

No preference

Four comments were made from respondents who had chosen no preference.

“Derby City Council needs to be kept on their toes. Need to have confidence that their decisions will not be changed by the loss of one 'seat' on the council. Conflicting reasons to make the decision...”

Other comments

Other Comments 	Total other comments	128
---	----------------------	-----

A further 128 comments were made by respondents.

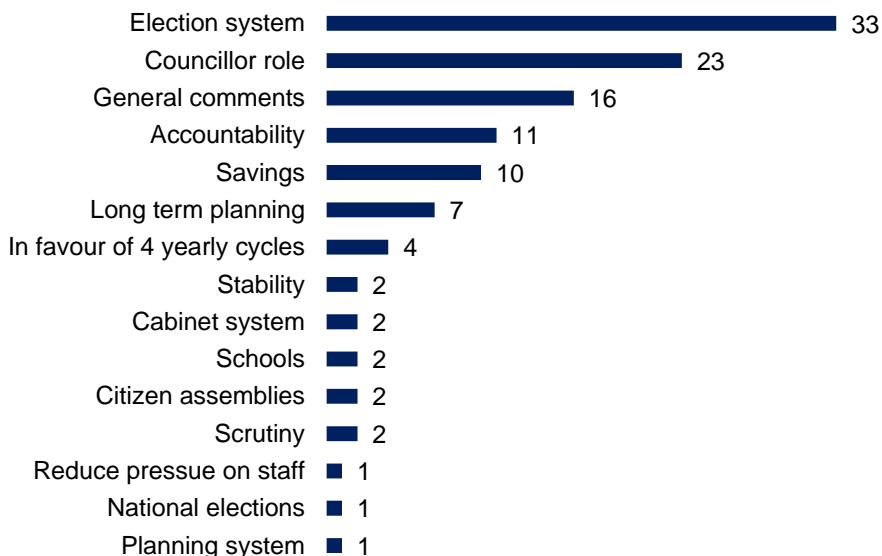
Chart 4 - Other comments

Election systems

A total of 33 comments related to suggestions to changes to election system some want to see use of technology.

“Electronic voting. Parties use these systems for leadership elections and yet we still need to go to polling stations for elections. I think electronic voting could increase turnout as it would be much more convenient for working people”

Some respondents suggested changes in the length of time elections were held.



“Perhaps WHOLE Council elections every THREE years rather than every FOUR which gives more emphasis on the governing body to deliver on promises and priorities. Keeps them more on their toes but is a more efficient way of running the democratic vote.”

While other comments suggested changes to the elections system

“Voting - currently still on a 'first past the post' system consider more radical, and democratic option of PR or AV. Expect there are models/examples of this in parts of UK. (Citizen Assembly - to consider as well, enhance promotion + involvement of Youth Council.”

Some suggested a reduction in the number of Councillors.

“A reduction in the total number of councillors, from 3 per ward down to 2 per ward. Would reduce costs even further. With the "Whole Council Elections" would not alter the makeup of the council with just 2 councillors per ward rather than 3”

Others asked...

“If a councillor changes his party then he should have to be re-elected before he takes up post”

Others wanted to change to the way the council systems.

“Dispose of the cabinet system and return to full councils. We all voted and paid to be represented not just the few who voted for the few in the cabinet.”

Councillor roles

23 comments related to the role of councillors.

Some respondents talked about the numbers of councillors.

“Reducing the number of councillors”

Others talked about engagement with councillors

“I believe councillors are considerably out of touch with the youth of Derby. I would hope that a 4 year voting system would persuade councillors to actively open space for debate with young voters instead of seeking approval from the same individuals who vote for the same representatives every year”

Accountability

11 respondents commented on accountability in relation to the political system.

“Move by councillors and politicians to remove some of more immediate accountability to local residents. By removing the ability for residents in areas that are unhappy to vote more frequently, albeit in a cyclical fashion, the option for councillors to 'sit' on their seat longer despite poor performance etc. is a worry. I would like to be proven wrong should this change be enacted.”

Reduced accountability could be potentially dangerous. Consider another consultation to return to voting 3 out of every 4 years if the 'Whole Council Elections' model proves ineffective.

Savings

10 comments referred to savings. Comments here were similar to those in the previous section

“The cost savings associated with electing once in four years is a fair point, and whether savings can be made in the thirds model ought to be considered. However, our local democracy should not be altered purely because it would save money.”

“Reducing the need for so many councillors which will reduce costs of councillors e.g. expenses”

And comments about the impact of the election system on...

The impact upon running a business if the political persuasion changes every year - the day to day economy gets lost in political ideology so lets have stability for 4 years (whatever political persuasion)

Other comments

Other comments included Long term planning (seven comments), support for 4 yearly election cycle (four comments), Stability (two comments), cabinet system (two comments), schools (two comments), citizen assemblies (two comments), scrutiny (two comments), reduce staff (one comment), national elections (one comment), planning systems (one comment).

Demographics

Chart 5 - Gender

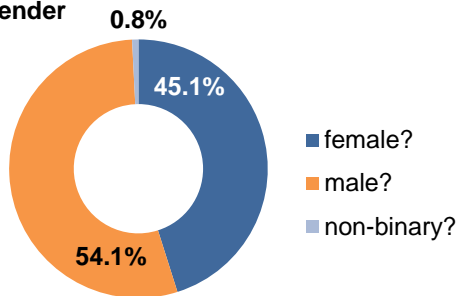


Chart 6 - age

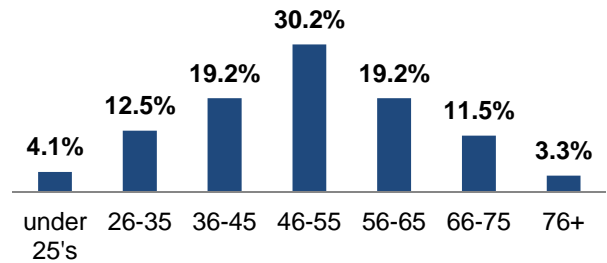


Chart 7 - Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?

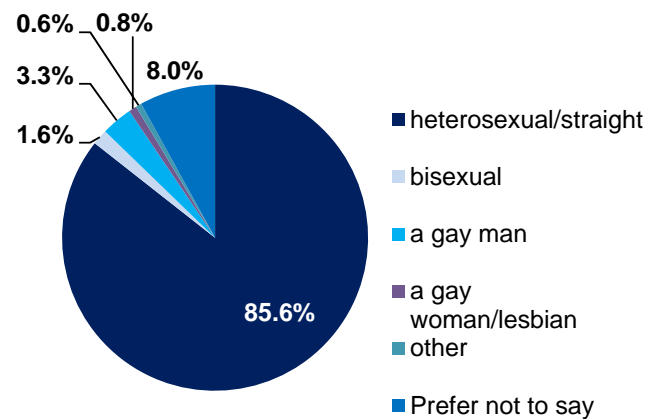


Table 1 – Ethnicity

■ Yes ■ No

	Number	%
Asian or Asian British – Indian	13	2.7
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	6	1.2
Any other Asian background	1	0.2
Black or Black British – African	1	0.2
Black or Black British – Caribbean	4	0.8
Dual Heritage - White and Black Caribbean	1	0.2
Dual Heritage - White and Asian	2	0.4
Any other Dual Heritage background	2	0.4
White - English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	433	88.7
White – Irish	5	1
White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller	2	0.4
Any other White background	13	2.7
Any other ethnic group	5	1.0
Total	488	100

Chart 8 - Sexual orientation



same as assigned at birth

- 51.8% of respondent said they had no religious belief, 35.7% of respondents said they had a religious belief. 12.6% preferred not to say.
- Of 35.7% who had a religious belief, 84.2% were Christians, 4.7% Muslim, 4.1 Sikh and 2.3% 'other'
- Respondents who identified as other ethnic groups included Scandinavian, European, French, Kurdish,

Data Tables

Which option would you prefer for Derby City Council residents to elect their councillors

	Number	%
Change to 'Whole Council Elections'	419	82.8
Keep the elections in Thirds	79	15.6
Don't Know	8	1.6
Total	506	100%

Are you...

	Number	%
Female	223	45.1
Male	268	54.1
Non-binary	4	0.8
Total	495	100

Is your gender the same as you were assigned at birth...

	Number	%
Yes	485	99.4
No	3	0.6
Total	488	100.0

What was your age on your last birthday?

	Number	%
Under 25's	16	4.1
26-35	49	12.5
36-45	75	19.2
46-55	118	30.2
56-65	75	19.2
66-75	45	11.5
76+	13	3.3
Total	391	100.0

To which group do you consider you belong?

	Number	%
Asian or Asian British – Indian	13	2.7
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	6	1.2
Any other Asian background	1	0.2
Black or Black British – African	1	0.2
Black or Black British – Caribbean	4	0.8
Dual Heritage - White and Black Caribbean	1	0.2
Dual Heritage - White and Asian	2	0.4
Any other Dual Heritage background	2	0.4
White - English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	433	88.7
White – Irish	5	1.0
White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller	2	0.4
Any other White background	13	2.7
Any other ethnic group	5	1.0
Total	488	100.0

Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?

	Number	%
Yes	50	10.4
No	432	89.6
Total	482	100

I consider myself to be...

	Number	%
Heterosexual/straight	416	85.6
Bisexual	8	1.6
a gay man	16	3.3
a gay woman/lesbian	4	0.8
Other	3	0.6
Prefer not to say	39	8.0
Total	486	100

Do you have any religious beliefs?

	Number	%
Yes	173	35.7
No	251	51.8
Prefer to say	61	12.6
Total	485	100

If yes, to which religion do you belong?

	Number	%
Christian	144	84.2
Hindu	1	0.6
Jewish	2	1.2
Muslim	8	4.7
Sikh	7	4.1
Other	4	2.3
Prefer not to say	5	2.9
Total	171	100.0