

THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF EXETER CITY COUNCIL

Guildhall
Tuesday 20 January 2015

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor (Cllr Prowse)
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Cllr Newby)
Councillors Baldwin, Bialyk, Branston, Brimble, Brock, Bull, Choules, Clark, Crew, Dawson, Denham, Donovan, Edwards, Foggin, Fullam, George, Hannaford, Henson, Holland, Laws, Leadbetter, Lyons, Mitchell, Owen, Pearson, Raybould, Robson, Sheldon, Shiel, Spackman, Sutton, Tippins, Wardle, Williams and Winterbottom

1 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Morris.

2 **ELECTORAL REVIEW OF EXETER**

The Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support introduced the report detailing the Council's initial submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on the future size and electoral cycle of the City Council. The City Council was required to undertake an electoral review of the City as more than 30% of its wards had a +/-10% variance from the average electorate. A cross party Electoral Review Steering Group had been established to consider the way forward with regards to the number of Councillors and the cycle of Elections.

The Leader, seconded by Councillor Sutton, moved the recommendation. In supporting the recommendation the Leader stated that the proposal for 39 Councillors and Elections by thirds was the right way forward to deliver and manage the services and responsibilities of the Council and the requirements of a growing city. To continue with the current cycle of Elections by thirds meant that the political parties were constantly engaged with the electorate and the Boundary Commission had advised that coterminosity with County Wards was not necessary.

Councillor Leadbetter, seconded by Councillor Baldwin moved an amendment that:-

- (1) Exeter City Council should comprise 36 Councillors; and
- (2) Exeter City Council should switch to All Out Elections every four years.

He stated that the reasons for the amendment were that all out elections every four years would give the ruling group an opportunity to plan ahead and provide some stability without the annual change and upheaval the present system created. This system would give electors a break from constant electioneering and allow them to judge the track record of the ruling group over a period of four years. Constant change and upheaval every year does not allow for a clear assessment of achievement.

The proposal for 36 Councillors would save money and it would be less confusing to the electorate to retain the names of the existing 18 wards, although with revised boundaries, as this would tie in with the new Devon County Council (DCC) division boundaries.

36 Councillors in 18 wards, with nine County divisions, was the most logical solution. All-out elections would give residents a break from yearly elections and the ruling group would have the opportunity to put forward policies which it could develop within a stable four-year period.

In supporting the amendment, some Members felt that setting the number of Councillors at 36 with elections being every four years would deliver savings to the Council with a reduction in Members' Allowances and in the costs of running an election. This amendment would also mean that the city boundaries would tie in better with the new DCC division boundaries and therefore be less confusing for the electorate.

The majority of Members supported the recommendation of the Electoral Review Steering Group which would ensure that the Council could continue to meet the needs of the electorate and deliver its services. There would be an increase in the electorate across the City as a result of the development proposals and this would increase workloads for Councillors, therefore 39 Councillors would be the more appropriate number required to meet the increase demands upon them. By having elections by thirds it ensured that the electorate were fully engaged in the democratic process and it also meant there were always experienced Councillors which provided continuity. Whilst coterminosity was helpful, it was not essential and that the new City wards did not necessarily have to be influenced by the geography of the County Divisions.

The Leader stated that there would be approximately 7,000 more electorate in the city by 2021 and therefore it was essential that the Council had the right number of Councillors to serve its residents. As the City Council had other elections - General, County, European, Police and Crime Commissioners there would be minimal cost savings when compared to having elections every four years.

The amendment was put to the vote and lost.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) Exeter City Council should comprise 39 councillors; and
- (2) Exeter City Council should continue to undertake its elections by thirds.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 6.55 pm)

Chair