

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD AT BY TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2023

PRESENT

County Councillor E Vaughan (Chair)

County Councillors G Breeze, D Bebb, H Hulme, P Lewington and P E Lewis

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors K Healy, D Meredith and S Williams and County Councillor G E Jones, who was on other council business.

2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

Councillor G Breeze was duly elected as Vice Chair.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2023 as a correct record.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE [STV]

The Committee considered the report regarding the issues of the possible move to a Single Transferable Voting (STV) system (as opposed to the current first past the post system). A report had been considered by Full Council on 5th October 2023 where Council resolved to ask for the issue to be discussed by the Democratic Services Committee before being considered again by Council.

The following issues were raised by the Committee:

- The cost of consulting the public and town and community councils is £50K, at a time when the council's resources are scarce and there are more pressing priorities,
- after consultation 66% of members would then need to agree to moving to STV and it was considered that this level of support would not be achieved in the council,
- the cost of an election and running a "Count" using the STV system would be more expensive, again at a time when the Council has limited resources,
- STV would benefit political parties and the voice of independent councillors would be lost, so damaging the democratic process,
- the process for voting is confusing and complex, which would lead to a lower voter turnout,
- unnecessary cost to residents,
- other councils have already dismissed STV,

- a multi member ward would lose the links which local councillors now have with communities,
- the bond between the voter and the councillor, as they would be voting for a party,
- the ward sizes would increase making them large and unserviceable and
- voters vote for the person and not the party.

In response to comments about the complexity of the STV system the Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer advised that research had shown that following the 2007 elections in Scotland, 84% of respondents to a survey claimed that the new STV ballot was “not very” or “not at all difficult”.

In light of the above, the Committee considered that the Council should not consult on the possible move to a Single Transferrable Voting [STV] system.

Recommendation

That based on the issues raised by the Democratic Services Committee, Council should not consult on the possible move to STV for future local elections.

County Councillor E Vaughan (Chair)