

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EMERGENCY POWERS COMMITTEE - 18 AUGUST 2005

CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL: A PROPOSAL TO POSTPONE COUNCIL ELECTIONS UNTIL 2008

Report by the Chief Executive

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To inform the Committee of a view expressed by the City of Edinburgh Council that the next Council Elections should be postponed one year and held in 2008.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** In considering the future planning of Elections, specifically on the administration of the Scottish Parliament and Local Government Elections on the same day, the City of Edinburgh amongst other things formed a view that the next Council Elections should be postponed one year and held in 2008.
- 2.2** The City of Edinburgh Council agreed to write to all Scottish local authorities to raise the issue and request Councils to make representations to the Scottish Executive in support of this view.

3. ISSUES

- 3.1** The Committee may wish to consider the undernoted points when making a decision on the request by the City of Edinburgh Council:-
- there is a view that citizens of an authority's area should be provided with the opportunity to express a clear preference on the political governance of that local authority area;
 - it may be argued that the citizens of a local authority area should have the opportunity to pass judgement on the performance of the outgoing council of that area and to be given the opportunity to make choices on their areas future political direction in a clear and unambiguous manner;
 - it is argued that a separate election will also lead to a more vigorous discussion of local issues and ensure that local government elections are decided on local issues;
 - separate elections are likely to reduce levels of confusion for electors and politicians and to simplify the process for administrators and staff in all elements of the election;

- separation of elections is likely to be of assistance in giving the local government agenda a higher profile with the electorate;
- recognised that, traditionally, local government election turnout may be lower than at combined elections;
- recognised that there is a possibility of increased voter apathy or fatigue caused by holding of major elections on an annual basis over a number of years which could reduce turnout;
- the ability to focus information in a more specific and less confusing manner may help minimise any decrease in turnout and to introduce electors more easily to the STV process; and
- majority of spoilt votes at the Northern Ireland combined local and Westminster elections were caused by two voting systems being in place with multi "XXX" on the STV paper instead of the required 1,2,3 etc rankings.

4. CoSLA

- 4.1** CoSLA support the decoupling of the Scottish Parliamentary and local government elections.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** In the event that local government elections are held separately, local authorities and the government will both face substantial increase costs since at combined elections, many costs are shared for example, Presiding Officer and Polling Clerks (33% Local Government/67% Scottish Parliament); training of Presiding Officer and Polling Clerks - (100% Scottish Parliament), conveyance of ballot boxes/ballot papers - (33% Local Government/67% Scottish Parliament). Many other costs split 50/50.

6. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS - NIL.

7. RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1** The Committee is invited to give consideration to supporting or otherwise the view expressed by the City of Edinburgh Council that the next Local Government Election be postponed one year and held in 2008.

Fiona Lees
Chief Executive

11 August 2005

BW/SR

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Letter dated 13 June 2005 from Chief Executive, City of Edinburgh City Council to all Scottish Local Authorities Chief Executives.
2. Minutes of CoSLA Convention held on Friday 10 December 2004.

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers relative to this report should contact Bill Walkinshaw, on telephone number 01563 576135. Any person wishing further information on this report should contact Bill Walkinshaw, Administration Manager, on telephone number 01563 576135.

Implementation Officer: Bill Walkinshaw, Administration Manager.