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Council

15 March 2016

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Sports and Parks – Councillor A Khan

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Chief Executive/Returning Officer

**Ward(s) affected:**

**Bablake and Wainbody**

**Title:**

Parish Council Election Costs

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**Is this a key decision?**

*No*

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**Executive Summary:**

The Representation of the People Act 1983 allows a principal council to recharge the costs it incurs in administering parish council elections to those parish councils. This report reviews the options open to the City Council and recommends the basis for recharging parish councils for the costs of administering future elections.

**Recommendations:**

Council is recommended:

- 1) to recharge parish councils in the City the actual costs of running their elections, should their elections be contested. If the poll is combined with another poll then the costs that are shared costs would be split.
- 2) to charge a set fee to cover administration costs where the election is uncontested and delegate to the Executive Director of Resources the authority to review and update this as detailed in paragraph 5.

**List of Appendices included:**

None

**Other useful background papers:**

None

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

The issue was considered by the Cabinet Member Electoral Arrangements Advisory Panel

**Will this report go to Council?**

Yes – 15 March , 2016

## **Report title: Parish Council Election – Costs**

### **1. Context (or background)**

- 1.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983, Section 36(5) states that “All expenditure properly incurred by a returning officer in relation to the holding of an election of a parish councillor shall, in so far as it does not, in cases where there is a scale fixed for the purposes of this section by the council of the district in which the parish is situated, exceed that scale, be paid by the district council, but any expenditure so incurred shall, if the district council so require be repaid to that council by the council of the parish for which the election is held.”
- 1.2 In continually reviewing use of financial resources and delivery of services, it is appropriate for the City Council to recover its costs in administering the election process for Parish Councils.
- 1.3 The Council is required to give notice to the parish council of the estimated costs to enable the parish council to ensure that the costs are included in their budgeting requirements.
- 1.4 The next ordinary date for parish elections in Coventry is May 2019 which gives plenty of time for the existing parishes to prepare.

### **2. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 2.1 Make no charge to parish councils for their elections and the City Council meet all costs. This leaves the City Council bearing the financial costs of future parish council elections. This option is not recommended.
- 2.2 Only recharge a parish council if the election is contested. The charge would be the actual costs of running the election, if the poll is combined with another poll then the costs where shared would be split, but no charge be made for uncontested polls. However, the City Council still incurs costs associated with administering the election process, even if the poll itself is uncontested and it is appropriate to recover these costs. This option is not recommended.
- 2.3 Where parish council elections are contested, recharge parish councils in the City the actual costs of running their elections, should their elections be contested. If the poll is combined with another poll, the costs that are shared costs would be split. Where the election is uncontested, charge a set fee to cover administration costs which include providing notice of the election, nomination papers, checking nominations, statement of persons nominated and publishing uncontested election results. This is the recommended option.

### **3. Results of consultation undertaken**

- 3.1 Legislation allows for the Council to recharge costs and the Parish Councils have been informed that the City Council is considering this decision.

### **4. Timetable for implementing this decision**

- 4.1 The charges would be implemented from April 2016. This means that they will apply for the scheduled election to Finham Parish Council in May 2016 (and costs have been built into the new Parish Council’s budget for 2016/17) and for the date of the next ordinary parish

council elections in May 2019 for other parish councils. If the parish has a by election then the costs will also apply from May 2019.

## **5. Comments from Executive Director, Resources**

### **5.1 Financial implications**

5.2 The proposed rate based on current costs for an uncontested election is £250 to recover the costs of administration which include notice of the election, nomination papers, checking nominations, statement of persons nominated and publishing uncontested election results. The level of this charge will be reviewed by the Electoral Services Manager in the year before ordinary Parish elections and updated where appropriate to reflect costs by the Director of Finance following consultation with the Cabinet Member.

5.3 For contested polls the actual costs would be recovered based on current costs for each area. The figure to be used as an estimate only is for Allesley - £2,100, Keresley - £1,300 and Finham £5,000. These figures are if the polls are held on their own; if the poll is combined with another such as the City Council elections then the costs would be reduced by approximately 40%.

### **5.2 Legal implications**

The Representation of the People Act 1983, Section 36(5) provides for the principal council to decide whether to recharge the parish councils for any expenditure incurred in relation to the holding of an election for a parish.

## **6. Other implications**

*None*

### **6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?**

The proposals will ensure that the Council recovers the costs of activity carried out on behalf of parish councils.

### **6.2 How is risk being managed?**

There are no risks associated with this resolution.

### **6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

If the resolution is not passed the cost of these elections remains with the City Council.

### **6.4 Equalities / EIA**

There are no equalities issues.

### **6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment**

There are no implications in relation to the environment.

### **6.6 Implications for partner organisations?**

The implications for the parish councils are detailed in the report.

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