

# Shadow Dorset Council

Date of Meeting	Shadow Executive Committee - 15 October 2018
Officer	Chief Executive (designate) and Returning Officer – Matt Prosser
<b>Subject of Report</b>	<b>Parish and Town Council Elections – recharging structure</b>
Executive Summary	<p>There are currently 1834 parish and town council seats (this includes the new Weymouth Town Council) all of which will be elected to in May 2019. Additionally, during the past four years there have been 26 parish and town council by-elections held throughout the Dorset Council area, in addition to a number of parish polls.</p> <p>There is currently no standard formula used by the Dorset area councils with regards to the recharging for the administration of parish and town council elections within their areas. The current approaches are set out in section 1 below.</p> <p>In the light of the new Dorset Council being formed it is important that local councils are informed at an early stage about the likely costs that they will incur for both scheduled elections in 2019 and incidental by-elections to inform their budget-setting processes and decisions on the level of precept for 2019/20 and beyond.</p> <p>It is proposed that the Shadow Executive Committee consider the approach to be taken by Dorset Council in respect of recharging the parish and town councils in its area for the costs incurred in administering their scheduled elections, incidental by-elections and parish polls.</p>
Impact Assessment:	Equalities Impact Assessment: N/A
	<p>Budget:</p> <p>It is difficult to forecast the cost of running the parish and town councils in May 2019 as it is not possible to forecast the number of councils/wards that will be contested. In 2015, 33 parishes/parish wards were contested and approximately 89,000 electors (one third of the Dorset area electorate) were eligible to vote in parish elections. In 2019, there will be the addition of the new Weymouth Town Council and, as it is anticipated that all of its</p>

	<p>wards will be contested, up to 50% of the electorate could vote in both Dorset Council and parish or town council elections.</p> <p>It is difficult to advise each parish or town council individually of what the costs of their election may be as this will be dependent upon a number of factors e.g. the number of polling stations, the size of the electorate and the number of postal votes.</p> <p>To give an idea of costs, a recent by-election for a town council seat with an electorate of 6373 with 912 postal electors and 2 polling stations cost £4658.71. Obviously, the costs relating to the smaller parishes will be considerably lower, particularly if they are not contested.</p> <p>It is also important to remember that at by-elections the costs are rarely shared, but if the parish election takes place at the same time as a principal council or parliamentary election, many of the costs would be lower e.g. shared costs for polling stations and staff.</p> <p>Risk Assessment:</p> <p>Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the LGR Programme risk management methodology, the level of risk has been identified as:  Current Risk: LOW  Residual Risk LOW</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>It is proposed that the Shadow Executive Committee approve the implementation of the approach to recharging parish and town councils for the costs incurred by Dorset Council for administering their scheduled elections and by-elections set out in section 3 of this report with effect from 1 April 2019.</p>
<p>Reason for Recommendation</p>	<p>Parish and town councils need clarity about the likely costs that they will incur for both scheduled elections in 2019 and incidental by-elections to inform their budget-setting processes and decisions on the level of precept and beyond.</p>
<p>Appendices</p>	<p>Proposed recharging structure for a town or parish council election not combined with any other election</p>
<p>Background Papers</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Officer Contact</p>	<p>Name:  Jacqui Andrews – Corporate Manager (Democratic and Electoral Services), Dorset Councils Partnership  Julia Duncan – Senior Elections Officer, Christchurch and East Dorset Councils</p>

	<p>Kirsty Riglar – Democratic and Electoral Services Manager, Purbeck District Council Tel: 01258 484325 / 01202 795078 / 01929 557221 Email: <a href="mailto:jandrews@dorset.gov.uk">jandrews@dorset.gov.uk</a> / <a href="mailto:j.duncan@christchurchandeastdorset.gov.uk">j.duncan@christchurchandeastdorset.gov.uk</a> / <a href="mailto:kirstyriglar@purbeck-dc.gov.uk">kirstyriglar@purbeck-dc.gov.uk</a></p>
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## 1. Background

- 1.1 The Dorset Area councils currently take a variety of approaches to recharging parish and town councils for the costs of administering of their elections. East Dorset District Council, Purbeck District Council and Weymouth and Portland Borough Council currently recharge local councils for all actual and necessary costs relating to any all-out elections or by-elections. If a parish election is held at the same time as another local government election for either the District/Borough or County Council then the majority of costs will be split 50/50 but those specifically relating to the parish are recharged at full cost. For example, if a combined election is held, the cost of the polling station and staff would be split 50/50 but the parish would pay the full cost of the ballot papers for their area issued at the polling station.
- 1.2 Currently North Dorset District Council only charge for by-elections but absorb the costs for all-out elections held alongside the District Council elections. West Dorset District Council currently make no recharge for any all-out or by elections. However, both councils have resolved to introduce recharges with effect from 1 April 2019. The parish and town councils in these areas have been informed of the introduction of these recharges.

## 2. Accounting for combination

- 2.1 It should also be noted that if a parish or town council election took place at the same time as a Parliamentary or other election paid for by the government, for example, that of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the government would also expect all costs to be split proportionately. Below is an excerpt from the Returning Officers Expenses Guidance for the 2017 UK Parliamentary Government Election:

### Accounting for combination

- 8.6 Where two or more polls are combined, the costs attributable to the various electoral events need to be apportioned appropriately. For instance, where three polls are taking place in combination - the costs of any combined elements will need to be apportioned and divided by three. Where there are four polls, shared and divided by four etc.
- 8.7 Please explain clearly on all the forms how costs have been calculated with regards to the specific combination of elections. Advice is given under the various form headings regarding costs attributable to combination with instructions on how they should be apportioned.
- 8.8 Where a poll is taking place in only part of an area where another poll is taking place, costs will need to be apportioned in respect only of that area under combination. You must identify in your accounts and apportion correctly the elements of combined costs.

### **3. Proposed approach for Dorset Council**

- 3.1 It is proposed that in order to recoup the costs incurred by Dorset Council in administering the elections for parish and town councils, an approach be implemented replicating that which would have been implemented by the Dorset area councils on 1 April 2019.
- 3.2 This assumes that for a combined election, such as that in May 2019, the cost of the shared elements, such as polling stations and staff, be split 50/50 but the local council be recharged for the full cost of those elements specifically relating to the parish election, such as ballot papers.
- 3.3 In relation to elections that are not combined with another election, officers have produced a proposed recharging structure to be implemented by Dorset Council with effect from 1 April 2019. This is set out in the Appendix to this report. Due to the number of by-elections held for parish and town councils, it is considered that this structure will aid local councils in understanding the costs and will enable the Elections Team to calculate the costs to be recharged more efficiently.
- 3.4 Any recharge will be made in the same financial year as the election or by-election.
- 3.5 In relation to parish polls, the Local Government Act 1972 specifically states that the expenses of any poll shall be paid by the Parish or Community Council. The recharge would be therefore be based on the actual cost of conducting the poll.
- 3.6 If this approach is agreed, local councils will be informed of the decision to enable them to budget for the 2019 elections and any subsequent by-elections.

**APPENDIX – Proposed recharging structure for a town or parish council election not combined with any other election**

**ALL ELECTIONS** – *This will apply to ALL by-elections whether contested or uncontested*

<b>Nomination process</b> – <i>This cost is for the first part of the election up to the end of the nomination period</i>	<b>Cost</b>
This includes a request from 10 electors calling the election, checking of the request to ensure all electors registered within the parish area, setting up of the election on system, production and circulation of timetable and notices, booking of polling stations and initial contact with staff, contact with printers including quantities, checking, processing and validation of nomination papers, liaison with parish clerks, information provided to candidates including expenses claims and production of Statement of Persons Nominated.	£50

**CONTESTED ELECTIONS** - *In addition to the above cost the following additional charges would apply*

<b>General Administration</b> - This includes the appointment of polling staff, confirmation of polling station bookings, extraction and sending of data to printers, provide information to candidates, proof checking of poll cards, ballot papers, postal votes, phone calls and enquiries from public following the despatch of poll cards, dealing with new registrations and absent vote requests including posting of confirmations, appointment of counting agents and documentation required for the count.	£50
Employment of casual staff to undertake printing and publication of statutory notices in the parish/town council area <i>Note: Assistance is requested from parish/town councils to undertake these tasks in their local areas and this will only be applicable in the event that the parish/town council is unable to do so.</i>	Actual and necessary cost
Printing and outgoing and return postage (1 <sup>st</sup> Class) of Postal Votes	Actual and necessary cost
Opening of postal votes including checking of personal identifiers	£7.50 per 50 (or part thereof) returned
Printing of Poll Cards and Postage <i>Note: Rates as at March 2018: 10p per card plus 27p per card for postage (Polling Station and Postal Poll Cards)</i>	Actual and necessary cost

Delivery and collection of polling booths	Actual cost up to a maximum of £50.00 per building
Printing of Ballot Papers <i>Note: Rates as at March 2018: £6.65 per book of 100</i>	Actual and necessary cost
Polling Station Sundries Packs and Notices <i>Note: Approximate cost as at March 2018: £18 per polling station</i>	Actual and necessary cost
Hire of Building as Polling Stations <i>Note: Up to a maximum of £1,000 per polling station</i>	Actual and necessary cost
Staff for polling stations <i>Note: These costs to align with Dorset Electoral Administrators Group scale of fees and charges</i>	£335 – £460 per station (dependent on number of poll clerks required to comply with Electoral Commission regulations) plus training fee of £50 per Presiding Officer and Poll Clerk for training costs.  Staff mileage claims at 45p per mile.  Returning Officer fee based on 8p per elector will apply if election is stand alone
Preparation of Ballot Boxes including ballot box specific printing	£5 per box
Count Station	Included within polling station hire charge.
Staff for counting stations <i>Note: Polling station staff will be used as count assistants where possible.</i>	£15 per hour for each count assistant

	<p>Cost dependent on number of hours taken and number of staff required</p> <p>£50 per hour for any election staff attending and running the count as Count Manager</p>
<p>Overtime</p>	<p>Any overtime incurred by election staff in relation to the election during the election period. For example office being manned from 6.15am to 10pm on polling day</p>

NB: All printing and postage costs vary according to the volume of papers/packs required; the higher the volume the lower the costs for both.